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# UNIVERSE

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# Catholics unite to demand Budget for the poor

**Andy Drozdziak**

In a landmark joint letter, Catholic bishops and lay groups are urging Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to not neglect the poor ahead of the Spring Budget in March.

Catholic Bishops in England, and Wales, and Scotland along with CAFOD, CSAN, and the Catholic Union of Great Britain have written to the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, calling on him to 'put tackling poverty at the heart' of the next Budget, which will take place on 6th March.

The letter states: 'At the Budget last year, there was barely any mention of tackling poverty. We encourage you to make poverty reduction central to your next Budget and encourage you to publish an impact assessment of your policies in relation to poverty.'

Their call comes as the SVP revealed in its latest report that it had seen a 49 per cent increase in the number of requests for help to its support line; up to nearly 2,300 in the last 12 months. It demonstrates an alarming trend of reliance on charities like SVP to deliver frontline services. In the report, *From*

*the Frontline – Tackling Regional Inequalities from the Ground Up*, the SVP showed that, in 2022-23, it provided 80,000 meals in its St Vincent's centres and supported 19,000 people through its foodbanks, which it described as 'an unprecedented level of need.'

In addition, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) charity revealed the worrying statistic that six million people are now in very deep poverty – set at a household that is below 40 per cent of the median income after housing costs. That is a third higher than 20 years ago.

The joint letter between Catholic Bishops and lay groups, which is 'rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church', is the first of its kind and shows the deep concern that exists within the Catholic community for the poorest in society.

The letter calls for a fairer tax and benefit system and the restoration of the overseas aid budget to 0.7% of GNI, which was promised by the Government at the 2019 election.

**Continued on page 2**



**Pope Francis points the way forward to Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury as the two met at the Vatican to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.**

The week of events included an evening prayer service at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, during which the Anglican archbishop gave a reflection on the theme 'You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself' from Luke 10:27.

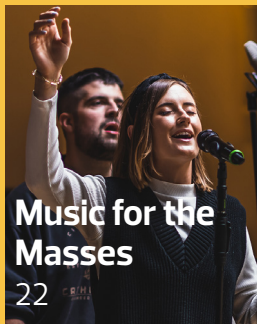
At the end of the service, the two commissioned pairs of Anglican and

Catholic bishops from 27 countries to "bear witness together to the hope that does not deceive and to the unity for which our Savior prayed."

Members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, who were meeting in Rome, also participated along with representatives of Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican communities in Italy.

Full story: see pg 15

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# Catholics unite to demand a Budget for the poor

Continued from page 1

The letter also calls for the Budget proposals to be assessed to ensure that any changes to tax and spending will benefit those on the margins of society.

Catholic Union deputy director James Somerville-Meikle underlined the importance of concern for the poor in Catholic teaching. “We strongly urge the Chancellor to use what may well be the last Budget before the next General Election to focus on the common good. Tackling poverty is something which Catholics care deeply about,” he said.

“This letter is a great sign of unity from the Catholic community in this country and sends a strong message that concern for the poorest in society needs to be front and centre of this next Budget.”

Director of CAFOD Christine Allen pointed to the words and example of Pope Francis. “Pope Francis has implored politicians and leaders to ensure that people living in poverty don’t end up as an ‘afterthought’ in their decisions. We know

that Catholics throughout the country in this election year will be urging the Chancellor and all political leaders to set out policies that help people escape poverty – both here at home and around the world,” she said.

Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop President of the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, said: “When I travel with SCIAF, I meet many people who are desperately poor. These are not to be passed over as anonymous and faceless.”

The letter concludes with an offer to the Chancellor to meet up to discuss ways of reducing poverty.

It was signed by Bishop Richard Moth Chair, Department of Social Justice, CBCEW; Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD; Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop President, of SCIAF; Raymond Friel OBE, Chief Executive of CSAN; Archbishop William Nolan, Bishop President, Justice & Peace Scotland; and Nigel Parker, Director of the Catholic Union of Great Britain.

*“This letter sends a strong message that concern for the poorest in society needs to be front and centre of this next Budget.”*

James Somerville-Meikle

## The letter to the Chancellor ...

Dear Chancellor

We are writing to ask that you put tackling poverty at the heart of your Spring Budget.

The Catholic groups and organisations we represent have a deep concern for the poorest in society, both in this country and around the world.

This concern is rooted in our faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In Pope Francis’s most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, he writes: “Amid the daily concerns of political life, the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a ‘right’ to appeal to our heart and soul.”

This is why we have come together to make this joint submission. Ahead of what is likely to be the last Budget before the next General Election, we urge you to focus on helping people escape poverty so they can live in dignity.

At home, this means making changes to our tax and benefit system to help families keep more of the money they earn and support those most in need.

This should include finally lifting the two-child cap on Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits; a policy which a parliamentary inquiry found had “evident, unintended consequences that no Government should be willing to accept”.

Internationally, this should include returning our overseas aid budget to 0.7% of GNI in line with the commitment made in your manifesto at the last General Election. Support should also be provided by the Treasury working towards debt-relief for low-income countries that need it.

This overseas aid budget should be used to promote integral human development amongst the world’s poorest. This money was never intended to be used supporting those seeking asylum in this country. Nor should it be spent without regard to a country’s human rights record.

At the Budget last year, there was barely any mention of efforts to tackle poverty. We strongly encourage you to

make poverty reduction central to your next Budget and encourage you to publish an impact assessment of your policies in relation to poverty metrics.

Catholic churches and charities are at the forefront of efforts to support people on the margins of society. We see the needs of the communities where we live and serve on a daily basis.

We would be happy to meet you ahead of the Budget to discuss ways of reducing poverty.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Signed by

**Bishop Richard Moth Chair, Department of Social Justice, CBCEW**

**Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD**

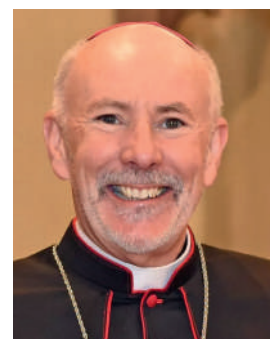
**Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop President, of SCIAF**

**Raymond Friel OBE, Chief Executive of CSAN**

**Archbishop William Nolan, Bishop President,**

**Justice & Peace Scotland**

**Nigel Parker, Director of the Catholic Union of Great Britain.**



Signatories on behalf of the Church included Bishop Richard Moth and Archbishop William Nolan



Chancellor Jeremy Hunt

# Cross of Wales is sign to all who believe in Christ

Archbishop George Stack has described the Cross of Wales as “a symbol, a sign, a sacramental expression of the unity of all people who believe in Jesus Christ” – for Wales and beyond.

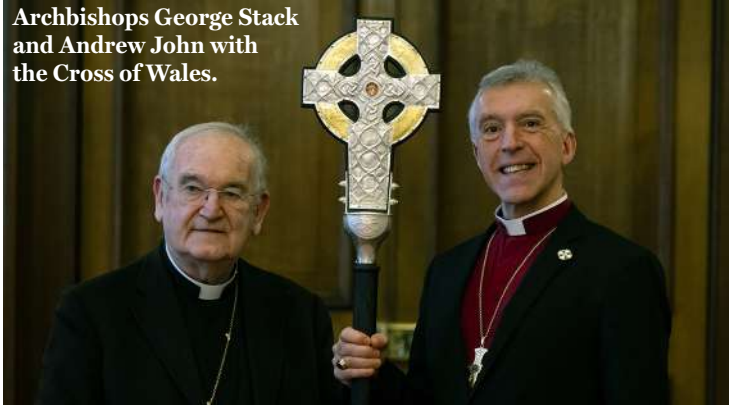
He was speaking after the official presentation of the Cross to the Anglican Church of Wales. It was a centenary gift to the Church in Wales from His Majesty King Charles III and contains shards of the True Cross, gifted to the King by Pope Francis.

During his coronation in May 2023, the procession into the Abbey included the Cross of Wales.

Archbishop Stack, retired Archbishop of Cardiff and Chair of the Patrimony Committee of the Bishops' Conference, attended the ceremony at Goldsmiths' Hall on Thursday, 25th January.

“Pope Francis was very anxious to make this ecumenical gesture,” he said. “It's around the Cross that all Christians gather with their different histories, devotions, and approaches to the mystery of faith.”

Archbishops George Stack and Andrew John with the Cross of Wales.



Describing how the Cross of Jesus Christ lies at the crossroads of human existence, Archbishop Stack quoted his favourite saying from the Carthusian monks who used to live at Charterhouse in London: “The Cross stands still while the world turns.”

“As we look at the Cross, venerate the Cross, embrace the Cross, we give thanks to God in Jesus Christ for reconciling the world to himself, in love, in forgiveness, and in reconciliation,” he said.

On its return to Wales, the Cross

of Wales will initially be displayed at St Deiniol's Cathedral, Bangor, the seat of the current Archbishop of Wales, Archbishop Andrew John, before beginning a tour around all the Welsh cathedrals with the aim of giving everyone an opportunity to see it.

Its use going forward will be shared between the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Wales.

Archbishop Andrew John said: “The Cross of Wales is a hugely significant ecumenical symbol. Taking its inspiration from the earliest



King Charles III hallmarking the King's mark on the silver Cross of Wales in 2022

roots of our Christian history, and inscribed in Welsh with the words of St David, the Cross will remind us all of the heart of our faith.”

Designed and made by master silversmith Michael Lloyd, in consultation with the Royal Collection, the Cross of Wales is crafted from recycled silver bullion, provided by the Royal Mint at Llantrisant, a shaft of Welsh windfall timber and a stand of Welsh slate.

Words from the last sermon of St David are chased on the back of the Cross in Welsh: “*Byddwch lawen.*

*Cadwch y ffydd. Gwnewch y Pethau Bychain*”, which translates as: ‘Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things.’

The silver elements of the Cross bear a full hallmark (of the London Assay Office), including the Royal Mark (leopard's head) which was applied by The King himself in November 2022 when visiting the Goldsmiths' Centre in London.

The cross was blessed by the Archbishop of Wales, ahead of the Coronation, at Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno, on 19th April.

## ‘Immoral’ Rwanda bill hammered by Lords and Jesuits

Andy Drozdziak

JRS UK has called on the Government to stop playing ‘party politics pantomime’ and to focus on refugees and asylum seekers as its controversial Rwanda passed its second reading.

Although the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill has cleared its first major hurdle in the House of Lords, swathes of criticism were levelled at the Bill in the upper chamber, with Lords saying it was ‘immoral’ and ‘repugnant’.

Sarah Teather, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS UK), warned of the consequences of passing the Bill. “We urge policy-makers to remember that this isn't about party politics pantomime,” she said.

“The Rwanda scheme will destroy the lives of people who have already lost everything. It is these people, women, and children- who should be foremost in this discussion. For them, we continue to oppose this Bill and the Rwanda scheme as a whole.”

During the debate, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby warned it is “leading the nation down a damaging path”, and accused the Government of outsourcing the UK's “legal and moral responsibilities”, signalling that he may yet seek to

block it.

“We can, as a nation, do better than this Bill,” Archbishop Welby said. “With this Bill the Government is continuing to seek good objectives in the wrong way, leading the nation down a damaging path.”

“A pick-and-choose approach to international law undermines our global standing and offends against the principle of universality that is their increasingly threatened foundation.”

Christian social policy charity CARE also warned that victims of modern slavery may lose out on crucial forms of support under the Rwanda scheme. The charity is concerned that ministers have been unable to thus far demonstrate that Rwanda can adequately support victims of modern slavery deported to the country from the UK.

Louise Davies MBE, Director of Advocacy and Policy at CARE, said: “The Rwanda Bill is an extension of the Illegal Migration Act 2023, which has the effect of penalising genuine victims of modern slavery who may be in the UK without their consent through trafficking.

“The Government must urgently clarify how it is going to meet its obligations to victims of modern slavery.”

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## In Brief

### Low grade claim investigated

The Department for Education is “urgently investigating” reports that Russell Group universities are asking UK students to meet higher entry standards than their international counterparts.

Robert Halfon, the universities minister, held talks with university leaders over claims that overseas students with significantly lower grades than UK applicants are being offered places.

An undercover investigation found that 15 Russell Group universities were offering international students one-year “pathway” courses, or foundation programmes, with low grade requirements.

### Copper thefts hit rail schedules

Organised crime gangs stealing copper cause equivalent of 72,000 minutes, or 50 days, of delays on the railways every year.

Soaring metal theft from signalling cable and overhead power lines is adding to the disruption and costly delays being suffered by millions of commuters and passengers, a group of MPs has warned.

Metal theft has surged in recent years, with a new report estimating that it has cost the economy more than £4.3 billion in the past decade.

### Betty’s last blast

Baroness Boothroyd wanted to use her final speech to criticise prime ministers for granting too many peerages to their friends or those with “fat bank accounts”. The former Speaker, who died last February, had intended to make a valedictory speech in the Lords before retiring, but ill health prevented her from doing so.

# SVP’s own levelling up agenda won’t leave anyone behind

**Andy Drozdziak**

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) has published a new report that highlights the faith-based charity’s role in delivering locally-based support to ‘left behind’ communities.

The research, *From the Frontline – Tackling Regional Inequalities from the Ground Up*, provides a snapshot of the St Vincent de Paul Society’s (SVP) community-based ‘levelling up’ work in 10 regional centres and through locally-based volunteer members, working in 17 of the 20 most deprived communities in England.

The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) is part of an international Christian voluntary network which is dedicated to tackling poverty.

The report highlights a 49 per cent increase in the number of requests for help to SVP’s support line, nearly 2300 in the last 12 months.

It also shows that, in 2022-23, the SVP provided 80,000 meals in its St Vincent’s centres and supported 19,000 people through our foodbanks, which the SVP describes as ‘an unprecedented level of need.’

Elizabeth Palmer, the CEO of SVP, said: “As a faith-based organisation that is rooted in communities across the country, our blend of tai-



SVP runs food banks and meal centres across the country, with demand soaring

lored local services boosts equality, provides opportunities, supports wellbeing and promotes a sense of community.”

The report urges policy makers to strengthen the social security system, which ‘is essential to address regional inequalities and support people in ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods.’ It also calls on the Government to recognise the role charities play in delivering national and local services and review the current model of delivering services for

communities.

“If national and regional inequalities are to be tackled, the role charities play in tackling poverty must be acknowledged,” the report states.

The final recommendation calls for power and funding to be devolved to local decision-makers. The SVP said: “We believe that the key to the success of a long-term strategy to address national and regional inequalities is to help local stakeholders deliver what’s needed by working closely with them –

drawing on their knowledge and insight of local challenges and solutions.”

Elizabeth Palmer said: “This report amplifies our belief that successful levelling up intervention lies in a wraparound and person-centred approach that can be delivered locally.”

**To read the report, visit the SVP website:**  
<https://svp.org.uk/levelling-up>  
**Gaps in safety net are getting wider: see pg 6**

## Help for prisoners’ children could stop problems in later life

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pact is calling on the Ministry of Justice to collect and publish information about children who have a parent in prison to help prevent future mental health problems, homelessness, and poverty among the group.

Pact is the national Catholic charity providing support to people in prison and their children and families.

Current estimates suggest that around 312,000 children are affected by this issue every year, but accurate, reliable and accessible data is unavailable.

But Pact said it was important the issue was addressed. “Prisoners’ children, if not identified and supported, are more likely to suffer from problems later in life including mental health problems, home-

lessness, and poverty,” it said. “One study suggests they are also more likely to get involved in risky behaviours and crime. Supporting children with a parent in prison is a crucial part of breaking the cycle of intergenerational offending.”

An amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill, which is currently in Parliament, could help, however. Proposed by Lord Farmer, it

would require data to be published annually on the number of prisoners with primary caring responsibilities for children, and children with a primary carer in prison.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said it was shocking that we still don’t know enough about the children affected by parental imprisonment, and this amendment “would be an important step forward.”

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# Salford Christian charity invites Tories to see scale of food poverty

**Andy Drozdziak**

A North West charity wants a Tory MP or councillor to visit their Drop-In Centre to witness the reality of food poverty for the homeless in and around Salford.

Last week, Salford-based charity Loaves and Fishes held their Annual General Meeting, where both the Chair and CEO warned of the worsening situation for homeless people in and around Salford.

Loaves and Fishes supports the homeless, isolated and vulnerable in Salford and the surrounding area, with a specific focus on the problem of food poverty.

During the AGM, it was revealed that the Loaves and Fishes Drop-In Centre served over 60,000 meals, served at least 40,000 cups of tea and used 600 litres of milk. In the past year, homeless and vulnerable made 20,757 visits to the centre and nearly 2000 new people were registered on its database.

With councils struggling for funds, Chair Paul Ashton criticised the Government and its lack of support – and urged them to see the problem for themselves,



Chair Paul Ashton and CEO Jennifer Anne Smith

“We welcome visitors to our centre regularly, including MPs and councillors. I would welcome those in power to visit us also, to see both what we do and what is needed, and to meet the real people who are affected by their legislation – to see the faces of the invisible who cannot speak for themselves.

“To date we have not had a single visit from an MP from the Govern-

ment or councillor of that [Conservative] party. We invite them to come and see for themselves,” he told the *Universe*.

The Household Support Fund, which was set up in September 2021 to help vulnerable families with the cost of essentials like food, clothing and utilities, has provided around £1 billion per year. However, it is set to finish at the end of

March, and the Government is still reviewing whether to continue the scheme.

Mr Ashton lamented the charity's recent growth and is struggling to see a change. He said: “The truth is, we have become a bigger charity, not because we intended to grow but because the need for the help we give is growing. There is no end in sight in the rise of numbers needing Salford Loaves and Fishes.”

CEO Jennifer Anne Smith warned that cuts in payments to local government meant cutting back on support, and that there were not even enough spaces for street homeless in the sit-up service centres – where rough sleepers can stay inside but are not permitted a place to sleep. Currently there is a waiting list for the ‘A Bed Every Night’ scheme.

Mr Ashton said: “Within our own centre in Salford, we have been hitting new record highs in statistics – but in a way that we do not want.. Salford Loaves and Fishes received less than 1% of its income from statutory funding. The rest all has to be funded by donations.”

## Christian sacked for beliefs to appeal

A Christian school worker who was sacked because of her beliefs has won the right for her appeal against her dismissal to be heard by senior judges.

Kristie Higgs, 47, was sacked for gross misconduct by Farmor's School in Fairford, Gloucestershire, in 2019 after sharing Facebook posts criticising plans to teach LGBT+ issues in primary schools.

Mrs Higgs, supported by the Christian Legal Centre, took the school to an employment tribunal, arguing she had been unlawfully discriminated against because of her Christian beliefs.

In its ruling, the tribunal agreed her religion is a ‘protected characteristic’ as defined by the Equality Act but the school lawfully dismissed her. But Mrs Higgs' appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal in London was successful, and the case was remitted back to an employment tribunal. Her lawyers appealed the decision to order a fresh employment tribunal and have now won the right to have her case heard by the Court of Appeal, judges later this year.

Mrs Higgs said: “This has always been about my Christian beliefs and discriminating against me for expressing them.”

# Slavery victims' joy after support U-turn

**Andy Drozdziak**

The Medaille Trust has welcomed the Home Office's decision to withdraw a contentious policy that restricted protection for modern slavery victims.

The policy, introduced by former Home Secretary Suella Braverman in 2023, denied support for victims of modern slavery with a previous criminal conviction. This support includes accommodation, counselling and financial assistance.

The policy was heavily criticised for its potential to push victims, including those coerced into cannabis cultivation, sex work, or county lines crimes, back into the hands of traffickers.

A legal challenge was mounted by three victims from Vietnam, Poland, and Romania, focusing on the increased risk of re-trafficking due to this policy.

The revised policy now mandates caseworkers to evaluate all trafficking victims for the risk of re-trafficking before any support is withdrawn due to criminal convictions.

Ben Ryan of the Medaille Trust said: “This is a really welcome decision. We believe support should always be available to survivors of slavery to help them rebuild their lives and avoid the cycles of re-exploitation and abuse.”

Human rights campaigners and lawyers argued that the policy was a

breach of human rights laws, particularly those prohibiting slavery and servitude.

The Home Office's own data showed that, out of 253 trafficking victims considered under this policy, 252 were denied support.

It ensures that individuals facing a real and immediate risk of re-trafficking will not be disqualified and will continue to be eligible for support through the national referral mechanism, a key support structure for trafficking victims.

Ben Ryan said the support structures help slavery victims. “We have worked with many survivors who have been compelled into criminal activity by their abusers. Without support, these people remain highly vulnerable to re-exploitation, are disincentivised from co-operating with police to pursue their abusers, and would not receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.”

“Hopefully this move will prompt conversations in Government about the legality, morality and practicality of those proposed measures.”

Maria Thomas of Duncan Lewis solicitors described the policy amendment as a considerable victory for foreign national survivors of trafficking.

The Home Office responded by stating that the public order disqualification is essential to prevent the misuse of support available.



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**UNIVERSE  
CATHOLIC WEEKLY**
**COMMENT  
A damaging  
waste of  
public money**

It seems astonishing that a pupil has recently been granted permission to take Michaela Community School to the High Court over its strict policy on prayer. The school in north-west London, rated outstanding and led by Katharine Birbalsingh, is one of the best in the country and a key factor in its success is that it expects all students to observe the same, rigorous rules.

Michaela had feared that allowing pupils to follow their own prayer rituals during the school day was resulting in segregation between religious groups, which is totally against its ethos. It was well within its rights to stop this.

Even more extraordinary, however, is that the taxpayer, through legal aid, is funding the case brought against Michaela.

The principle behind legal aid is a good one: to ensure that nobody is denied access to the justice system because they cannot afford the often-crippling legal fees. So why, then, is part of it being allocated to fund a legal battle that many will consider to be motivated by politics and ideology, rather than a genuine grievance?

The sums involved are hardly small. The bill for the case so far has already been estimated at between £100,000 and £150,000, while a King's Counsel is representing the pupil.

Worse, the money is being used to fund a case that, if successful, is likely to have profoundly negative consequences for the school system as a whole. It could end up greatly diminishing an educational institution that has succeeded in lifting up children of all backgrounds in a deprived area of the capital. It would damage the authority of the headteacher to set the rules as she sees fit. It may well result in pressure on other schools to give special treatment to particular groups for fear of facing similar lawsuits, even if that undermines school cohesion and results in problems with discipline.

The judgment in the High Court case, which could cost £1 million, is now expected next month.

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in the news*

[www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk](http://www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

# Safety net's holes are too wide to stop people falling through

## A single person on universal credit now receives 20 per cent less than what it costs just to eat and keep warm. Donald Hirsch reports

The UK's income safety net is in tatters.

In principle, anyone without income can escape destitution by claiming universal credit or, if above pension age, pension credit. In reality, the value of working-age benefits has fallen to such a low level relative to need that they can fail to meet the most basic requirements of daily life.

Worse still, the majority of people without earnings will have to live on even less than these inadequate standard entitlements, for example because they exceed the benefit cap, because a family has more than two children or because the Department for Work and Pensions deducts money to repay loans, often taken out to stay afloat while waiting for universal credit to start.

The longstanding problem with the system is that it doesn't systematically cater for need. There is no single measure of subsistence.

I recently compiled a report for the Financial Fairness Trust, in which I calculated the value of benefits relative to two key essentials of life: food and energy. My analysis shows an unemployed single adult now needs 20 per cent more than they receive in benefits to cover even their most basic costs.

### Meeting food and energy costs

An unemployed single adult on universal credit currently gets £84.80 a week to live on (not including rent). Research on minimum household requirements shows, however, that in order to eat healthily in a warm home, a single person needs £104 for food and domestic energy alone.

Receiving 20 per cent less than this basic minimum means people have to cut back drastically not just on food and energy but also on meeting many other needs – including clothing, travel, basic toiletries and household goods.

On average, households in the UK allocate just 20 per cent of their income to food and energy in the home. And yet, even before the cuts the Government started making to benefit levels from 2013, a single person needed to spend an unrealistic 73 per cent of their benefits to meet these food and



energy costs.

My calculation shows that, one decade on, this figure has now risen to over 120 per cent. This makes a mockery of the idea that benefit levels are adequate for even the most frugal of lives.

### Low for years and getting worse

After the Second World War, the 'national assistance' benefit was set to cover average working class spending on some basic items. Since then, minimum support levels have mainly been updated only by the general level of inflation, and not always in a way that reflects the actual increased costs of these items. This financial support seems increasingly ungenerous in a society whose living standards are unrecognisably

higher than in the 1940s.

Then came the double whammy of the past ten years. First, in 2013, the Government stopped automatically uprating benefits even with inflation, causing a real-terms decline in benefits already regarded as providing only for basic needs.

Second, despite a link with the consumer prices index being restored in 2020, the following year the price of basics started to shoot up much more sharply than these upratings. As Peter Matejic, chief analyst at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity, has pointed out, since April 2021, benefits have risen 13 per cent but the price of food by 30 per cent and home energy by over 60 per cent.

When such essentials of life are

rising in price faster than other goods and services, true inflation is much higher than the official rate for the poorest groups. And the consequences are terrifying.

Fixing this broken benefits system after an election, with money so short, will not be easy. At the very least, there should be a commitment to start making improvements. Simply pegging benefits to prices is no longer enough. It entrenches these grossly inadequate benefit levels.

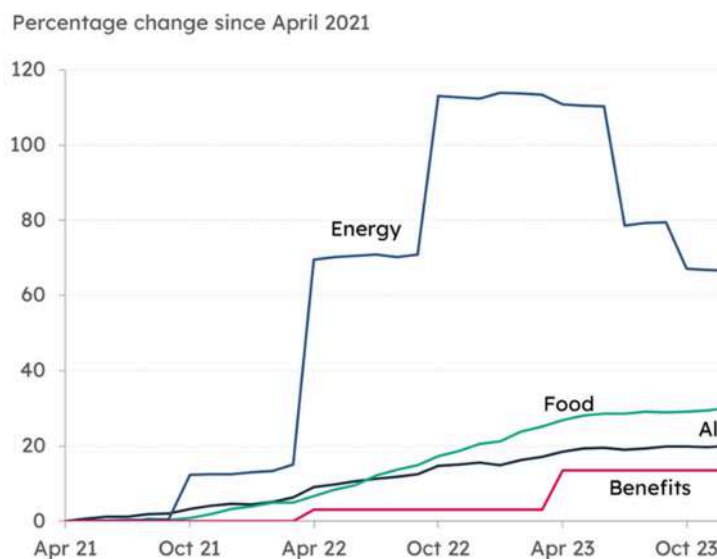
A good start would be a commitment to improving the value of the safety net as economic conditions permit. This would be a just alternative to putting all growth dividends into tax cuts.

This is in effect what the UK Government did for pensioners in the mid-2000s, when it guaranteed that the state pension and pension credit would increase as earnings improved. The result is that a single pensioner is now guaranteed not £84.80 but £201.05 a week to live on, which is close to (although still slightly below) the minimum actually required to live a decent life, covering a range of material basics and a modest amount of spending on leisure.

Most of low-income Britain has taken a substantial hit in living standards from the rapid increase in the cost of essentials. Pensioners, though, are better placed to weather this storm because their incomes have grown in better times. The poorest working-age adults now desperately need a system that allows them to similarly benefit from future growth.

**Donald Hirsch is a Professor of Social Policy, Loughborough University**

**Benefits have risen by 13% since April 2021, whereas overall prices are up 20%, with food up 30% and energy up 66% over the same period**



# Parish left in shock over sacred thefts

**Andy Drozdziak**

Parishioners at a Salford church have been left shocked and upset by the thefts of important sacred statues, one of which was sawn off by a portable electric saw.

Parishioners attending Mass at St Luke's, Irlams o'th' Height, Salford, which is part of Our Lady of Hope parish, arrived to find that the statues in front of the church have been stolen.

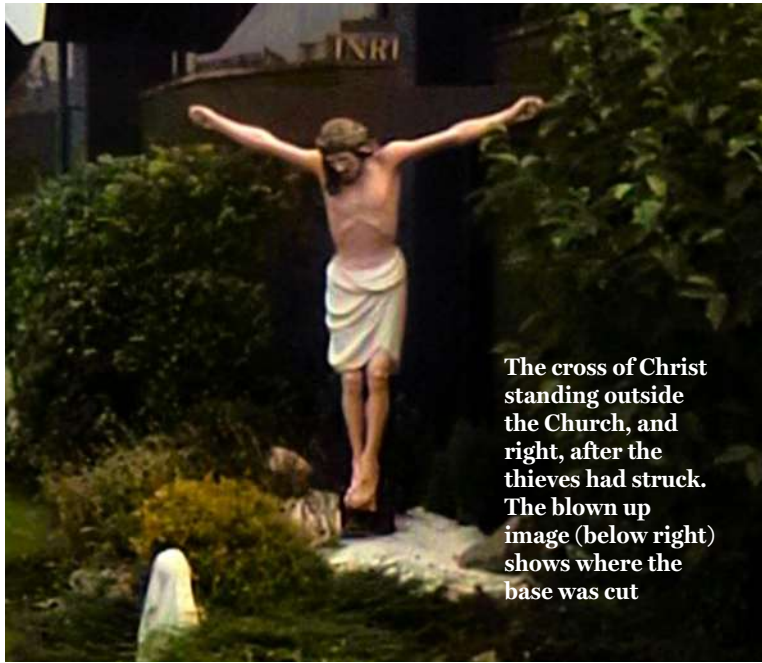
Thieves escaped with statues of Jesus on a crucifix, with the crucifix sawn at the base, a kneeling figure of St Bernadette and a kneeling angel.

While the police are investigating the robbery, parishioners and neighbours are trying to piece together information which may be useful in recovering the statues.

The theft is believed to have occurred between 8.30pm on Sunday 21st January and 6am on Monday 22nd January.

*Universe* columnist Paul Ashton, who is the parish communications officer at Our Lady of Hope, shared his, and the parishioners', shock at the thefts.

"The parishioners are shocked that such a theft should happen to us," he said. "This is definitely a planned and professional theft as they came with a portable electric saw. You can see how clean most of the cut is on the photograph."



The cross of Christ standing outside the Church, and right, after the thieves had struck. The blown up image (below right) shows where the base was cut

Mr Ashton underlined the importance of the statues to the parish community.

"The statue of Jesus on the crucifix was originally in our old church and means so much to us. It is not just our parishioners but also our neighbours who find it unbelievable that we should be targeted in this way," he said.

"It was clear that once the crucifix was sawn down that it was dragged to a vehicle in the car park. Neighbours have been very helpful with

doorbell footage and it is hoped that someone may have CCTV or doorbell footage of the car park entrance between those times to see any vehicle used in the robbery."

Parishioners and local people were quick to respond to the thefts and share their dismay at the news on social media. Writing on Facebook, Jez Raghallaigh called the thefts 'absolutely heartbreaking. Disgraceful.' Denise Hughes said it was 'outrageous', while Valerie Moran said it is 'so sad.'



Paul Ashton urged anyone with relevant information to get in touch with the parish.

He said: "We would ask anyone who is offered these statues to get in touch with us and we are grateful for any information that will help get these 3 statues returned to us."

• St Luke's can be contacted on 0161 736 2696  
Email: [communications@ourladyofhope.org.uk](mailto:communications@ourladyofhope.org.uk)

# CAFOD urges UK to think again as it pauses Gaza aid programme

**Andy Drozdziak**

CAFOD is urging the UK Government to reconsider its decision to suspend funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and warned that the move could have severe consequences.

The UK Government announced it was withdrawing its support for UNRWA following allegations that staff were involved in the 7th October attacks against Israel. The pause will last at least until the outcome of inquiries into the claims are announced, but CAFOD is warning that any delay in funding 'will harm vulnerable groups'.

CAFOD's Head of Middle East Region, Janet Symes, told the *Universe*: "We were shocked to hear the disturbing allegations against a small number of UNRWA staff. While we acknowledge the need for a thorough investigation which UNRWA initiated immediately, it is crucial to recognise the organisation's indispensable role in providing essential aid to those in urgent need."

"We urge the UK Government to reconsider its decision. As the largest provider of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, the UNRWA is crucial for offering urgent help to over two million Palestinians. Suspending its funding will harm vulnerable groups who depend on UNRWA assistance."

Foreign Office Minister Andrew Mitchell acknowledged that "UNRWA assets are essential to delivering in Gaza", but his colleague Lord Benyon said UK aid

will still reach Palestinians via other charities including the British Red Cross, Unicef, the UN World Food Programme and the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

However, Janet Symes underlined the need to restore the UNRWA funding. She said: "People in Gaza rely on UNRWA shelters. The UK's decision to suspend funding when the International Court of Justice has ordered urgent humanitarian measures, is alarming and could have severe consequences."

On Tuesday, UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres met behind closed doors with 35 donor nations and appealed again for a restoration of funding and new donations for the embattled UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

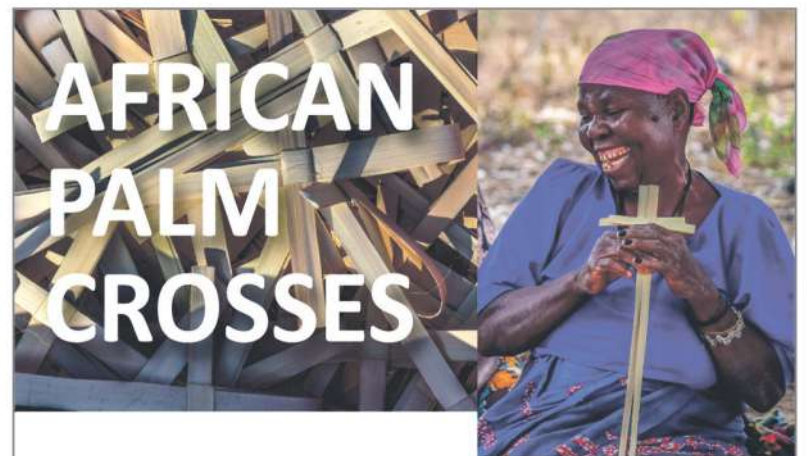
Palestinian UN ambassador Riyad Mansour told reporters that the secretary-general appealed to many countries that suspended funding to UNRWA after the allegations "to reconsider" and urged other countries "including those in the region, to step up to the plate."

With the United States, Germany, Australia, Italy, Canada, Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands also pausing funding, Janet Symes called on the UK and other countries to 'work together'.

She said: "The international community needs to work together to ensure a full humanitarian response and to safeguard the rights and well-being of those affected by conflict and displacement in the region. CAFOD believes an immediate and sustainable ceasefire is the only way to achieve this."



Lord Benyon



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## Keep singing

**Sir John Battle**



As someone with a long standing 'news addiction', watching the TV and radio bulletins, reading too many newspapers and now getting 24/7 reminders of headlines from news sites on my phone is consuming more and more of my attention and time and seems to have displaced listening to music in the car, and are surely making my driving responses worse!

So my New Year resolution was simply 'Less News and more Music', both at home and out and about.

Now a study from Exeter University has spelt out that "playing a musical instrument, singing or just attentive listening to music improves the brain's resilience and agility," improving mental health and holding back the development of dementia.

Nor is it just for older people. It would seem that the Church's music tradition latched on to this from its earliest days. Indeed, singing the psalms (accompanied by a lyre) is traditionally traced back to King David in the Old Testament, and ancient songs of praise and lament are echoed in the Gospel songs of the 20th century: *'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'* sang Bob Marley. The Irish singer Enya sang *'My life goes on in endless song/Above earth's lamentations/I hear the real, though far off hymn / That hails a new creation'* in her lyrics for her *wonderfully encouraging song, How Can I keep from Singing?'*

It would seem that when words fail us, songs, tunes, even just humming can carry us through both difficult and celebratory times.

The singing of the psalms is, of course, central to the Church's liturgy, not least the daily 'Prayer of the Church' ('The Office') preserved by the monastic tradition and the development of plainchant which is still regarded as a precious musical treasure store. Moreover the liturgy has inspired great musicians and lyricists. St Thomas Aquinas himself authored great hymns. More recently, lyricists such as Kevin Mayhew and Bernadette Farrell have opened up the music of the vernacular while brilliant contemporary classical musicians such as the Orthodox John Tavernor and Sir James MacMillan have carried Christian religious music to new heights in our culture.

Was it St Augustine who is reported to have remarked that "singing is praying twice"? Now the brain scientists are just underlining that our theology and liturgical practices have good deeply human developmental roots.

# Donaldson has gambled that deal on the table is best he will get

POLITICS

**Peter John McLoughlin**



The Democratic Unionist party (DUP) leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, has finally moved to restore power sharing in Northern Ireland after nearly two years of protest.

The DUP, which has the second most seats in the Northern Ireland assembly, collapsed the Government in February 2022 over the terms of the Brexit deal. Many unionists felt that the checks on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland served to separate the region from the UK, and so undermined the Union.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak attempted to address these concerns via the 'Windsor framework', negotiated with Brussels last spring. This agreement minimised checks on goods coming into Northern Ireland. But the DUP insisted that the UK Government had not addressed all of its concerns, and power sharing remained in abeyance.

Now, after months of further talks, Donaldson has decided that he has won enough concessions (or that he will not get any more). He has made clear his intent to lead the DUP back into power sharing with Sinn Féin, the largest party in the assembly, after agreeing a deal with the UK government.

### What's in the deal?

Donaldson has negotiated that there will be no routine checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain, and the extent to which the region follows EU law. Both of these elements were part of the original Brexit deal, which was designed to avoid the UK's departure from the EU creating a 'hard border' in Ireland. Such an outcome would have destabilised the Good Friday agreement and Northern Ireland peace process.

Donaldson also says that the UK Government will now pass legislation that will "strengthen the union". This is his main tool to reassure unionist voters.

Any legislation passed by the UK Government that affects Northern Ireland's constitutional position will have to be consistent with the Good Friday agreement. If it is not, there will be protests from the nationalist community. And any changes to the rules on goods entering Northern Ireland would need to be consistent with the Brexit deal and Windsor framework – otherwise the EU will be in opposition.



This might suggest that such changes are largely cosmetic, likely already approved by Brussels, or are practical changes that primarily address traders' complaints about the complexity of the existing arrangements, but which also can be sold as gains for Donaldson.

### Political fallout

But none of this will go through without fierce debate, particularly within unionism. Even the DUP meeting that led to the announcement of Donaldson's deal was a fraught affair, the location kept secret from party members until three hours before in order to avoid a media melee and loyalist protests.

Donaldson still has a significant challenge ahead to convince the wider unionist community that his deal really is a significant improvement on current arrangements.

His task will not be aided by the fact that the DUP will be returning to power sharing with Sinn Féin now holding the position of first minister. The DUP's travails over Brexit have seen a fall in its support, so the party can now only claim the role of Deputy First Minister. In practical terms, these roles have equal power, but even titular subservience to republicanism is ideological anathema to many unionists.

Symbolism remains important in

Northern Ireland politics, and Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill leading the Belfast assembly as First Minister would powerfully signal the end to what unionists once claimed was a 'Protestant parliament for Protestant people'.

### What happens next?

The UK Government published the details of the deal on Wednesday, with legalisation following on Thursday. The Stormont assembly will meet as early as today (Friday, 2nd February), when a new speaker would be elected. This, in turn, would allow eligible parties to nominate their ministers to the power sharing executive, as per the rules of the Good Friday agreement.

We can be certain that Donaldson will not be the DUP's nomination as deputy first minister, as he leads the party as an MP in Westminster and does not currently sit in the Stormont assembly.

### Donaldson's decision

Donaldson has clearly decided that it is more damaging to unionism, and to Northern Ireland's future, to remain in constant protest. The absence of government for two years has seen further pressures mounting on the public sector particularly.

Workers striking over continued pay erosion have recently directed their protests towards the DUP,

particularly as the UK Government offered a £3 billion support package to help address wage claims in an effort to restore power sharing.

However, there was also debate within the Conservative party over whether the British Government might soon abandon these efforts, suspend devolution to Northern Ireland, and run the region directly from Westminster.

Under the terms of the Good Friday agreement, that would mean the Irish Government would have a say in Northern Ireland's affairs, and recent opinion polls have suggested that Sinn Féin could soon take power in the Republic for the first time. Donaldson might tell unionists it is better to share power with Sinn Féin in Belfast rather than accepting their dictats from Dublin.

He will certainly argue that unionism must do more than protest, and instead become proactive to protect its voice and interests. But many unionist leaders have tried the same before, and all have been ousted at some point.

And Donaldson acts from a position of weakness, with unionists no longer holding a majority in the Belfast assembly for the first time in its history. He will need exceptional political skill to avoid the fate of his predecessors.

**Peter John McLoughlin is a Lecturer in Politics, Queen's University Belfast**



# Bishop joins Barnet's call for faith to lead peacebuilding

Bishop of Westminster John Sherrington joined the Barnet Multi Faith Forum's 'Together for Humanity' Vigil on 25th January. The event was an opportunity for faith leaders in Barnet to join together, acknowledge the immense suffering of those affected by conflict and resolve to be builders of peace in their own community.

The event, which took place at Middlesex University, Hendon, was organised to 'unite against antisemitism and Islamophobia, and mourn the losses in Israel and Palestine.'

Bishop John began the evening paying tribute to the work of the recently deceased Deacon Anthony Clark who served the Barnet Multi Faith Forum for over 15 years. Bishop John said: "To try and build bridges between people of different faiths was part of Anthony's make-up and probably shaped by the many and varied experiences of his life."

In 2023, Deacon Anthony was honoured at the London Borough of Barnet Civic Awards for Outstanding Service to the Community. Nominated by the Barnet Multi Faith Forum, he was recognised for



his dedication and commitment to the Barnet Borough community providing support and guidance to many individuals and organisations.

Bishop John said: "Ordained as a deacon in the Church, he was a man to serve others in his parish at Golders Green and the Hospital. His experiences of different cultures and peoples led to his desire to serve the Barnet Multi Faith Forum. I believe that his experiences helped him to see that only by dialogue and working together do we understand one

another, overcome division and prejudice and glimpse the mystery of God's revelation."

During the vigil, Dr Lindsay Simmonds, alongside her colleague and friend Julie Siddiqi MBE, spoke of the importance of building bridges between peoples and cultivating relationships that lead to peace.

Magen Inon continued this theme, speaking on his hope for peace, after his parents were killed during the 7th October attacks.

He was joined by a video of Hamze Awawde, who shared that

he and Magen have children of the same age and like to play football together. In many ways, Hamze said, this is how we build peace. Adults can often complicate matters, but peace is created when we live as neighbours, side by side, sharing life together.

Martin Russell, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Barnet, finished by reflecting that to build peace is to seek the good of others.

**Bishop of Westminster  
John Sherrington**



## Faith's a beautiful knock-out says Fury

Boxing champion Tyson Fury has praised the 'beautiful' faith of his upcoming opponent Oleksandr Usyk.

The so-called 'Gypsy King', speaking in an interview with boxing journalist Steve Bunce, said he and his rival were "the two biggest Christians in boxing".

Referring to the Ukrainian Usyk, he said: "Listen, being a champion is great. But to see someone who is also a world champion and has big faith in God is unbelievable. Beautiful."

Fury has battled mental health struggles, as well as drug and alcohol addiction, but regularly professes his Christian faith publicly. He often wears a cap with the words 'Jesus, El Ray Viene' (the King is coming) and making statements on social media such as "Thank you to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!" He has also confirmed his Catholic faith, telling people that 'he has the same opinions' as Pope Francis.

Fury has also tried to take his faith into the ring. After being ignored by longtime rival and opponent Deontay Wilder, Fury said: "He didn't want to give it back, so that's his problem – I'll pray for him so God will soften his heart."

The high-profile 12-round bout between Fury and Usyk is due to take place at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Saturday, 17th February.

The winner will be crowned as the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

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Father Hudson's Care is a Catholic charity serving the needs of vulnerable people, without discrimination, within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. It is motivated by Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching, and takes Christ's command to "Love one another" as its inspiration.

Father Hudson's Society today delivers a diverse range of services to older people, adults with disabilities, children and families, refugees and people experiencing homelessness, from purpose designed care homes, parish and community buildings, schools and a modern efficient office. Employing over 325 employees, its services are currently spread across Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire and West Midlands.

Due to the present incumbent retiring, the Board of Trustees is now seeking to appoint a practising Catholic as Chief Executive Officer. Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 there is a Genuine

Occupational Requirement (GOR) for the successful candidate to be a practising Catholic.

Throughout its history the organisation has continually changed in response to new challenges and areas of need, and trustees will expect the new CEO to play a full part in shaping and delivering future developments. The successful applicant will also have the proven ability to provide strategic direction, lead and develop teams, act as an ambassador with external stakeholders, drive excellence and maintain and grow a sustainable organisation. A degree and/or relevant professional qualification in social work, health, education, community work, finance or business management together with evidence of post-qualification training in relation to the Senior Management task is essential.

*The successful candidate will require an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (funded by FHC).*

**Closing date: 12pm Friday 9th February 2024; Interview date: Tuesday 27th February  
CVs not accepted - only application forms (see below).**

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If you would like to have an informal conversation about the role with the current Chief Executive Officer, Andy Quinn, please ring 07966 935533.

**For further details and an application pack, please see**  
<https://www.fatherhudsons.org.uk/vacancies/chief-executive-officer/399.htm>  
or email: [recruitment@fatherhudsons.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@fatherhudsons.org.uk) quoting post reference P1732

## In Brief

### Treatment left five with Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease was passed to patients given hormones extracted from corpses, scientists have shown for the first time.

Five people are believed to have developed Alzheimer's after they were treated with a human growth hormone that inadvertently contained the seeds of dementia, despite being no older than 55.

The tainted hormone was given to more than 1,800 children of short stature in the UK between 1959 and 1995 before being withdrawn when it was shown to trigger Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

### Early deaths from heart disease soars

Analysis by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) has found that 80 people in every 100,000 in England died from heart and circulatory diseases before the age of 75 in 2022.

This was the highest level since 2011, when 83 per 100,000 people died prematurely, and was the third successive year that the death rate has risen, coinciding with the pandemic.

### Working from your holiday home

Scottish civil servants have been told they may be eligible to work from abroad for up to a month every year.

The Scottish Government has issued guidance to staff stating that most roles were suitable for 'hybrid working', meaning they could come into the office on certain days and work from home on others.

As part of this, it said they could be allowed to log in from a foreign country for a maximum of four weeks annually.

### Rough ride for Ryanair

Ryanair has been forced to cut its profit forecasts after the budget airline was kicked off a string of travel agent websites.

The company posted a profit of just €15m (£12.8m) for the final three months of 2023, down 93pc from a year earlier, blaming higher fuel costs. It cut its forecast for a maximum annual profit by €10m to €1.95bn.

The results are a blow for chief executive Michael O'Leary, who is reportedly in line for a €100m bonus if the company posts a €2.2bn profit or shares hit a target of €21 for 28 days. The shares are currently trading at around €19.

# The merchants of death are getting rich on Israel-Hamas

## Terence Guay asks, where do Hamas and Israel get their weapons from?

The fighting continues between the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas militants in and around Gaza. The death tolls continue to rise, but where do the weapons keep coming from?

The Israeli government estimates that Hamas' surprise attack on 7th October 2023, killed 1,200 people in Israel.

Since then, both sides have fired missiles and rockets, mortars and other weapons at each other. Israeli missiles and bombs have killed over 25,000 people in Gaza, according to the United Nations. Hamas has launched over 13,000 rockets and mortar rounds into Israel and killed 189 Israel Defence Forces soldiers.

As a scholar of the global defence industry and international weapons trade, I see that both Israel and Hamas make some of their own weapons and get the rest from suppliers in other nations.

### Israel's weapons supply

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has been acutely aware that it is surrounded by hostile countries with many more inhabitants. Its defence strategy has emphasised self-sufficiency and advanced technology. This philosophy has been reinforced and refined by the nation's experience in prior wars in 1948-49, 1956, 1967 and 1973, as well as prior conflicts in Gaza and the West Bank.

And its defence spending matches this priority. In 2022, Israel spent 4.5 per cent of its gross domestic product on defence, a share that was the lowest in decades but more per person – US\$2,623 – than any other country except Qatar.

For a small country, Israel has a highly regarded defence industry, which can ramp up production on short notice in case of increased fighting. Three Israeli companies rank among the world's top 100 arms producers: Elbit Systems manufactures ammunition and artillery; Israel Aerospace Industries produces unmanned aerial vehicles; and Rafael makes air defence systems. Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries collaborated to develop the highly regarded Iron Dome missile defence system. The US provided development aid, and about half of Iron Dome's components are made in America.

Led by those firms, Israel has



gone from being a net weapons importer to the world's 10th-largest arms exporter. Much of its success in the weapons industry is a result of entrepreneurship and innovation within the overall economy, as well as civilian-military linkages. Since most Israelis are required to serve in the military, they develop decision-making and leadership skills at a young age. They also tend to be given tasks with high levels of responsibility. All of this contributes to the country's start-up and entrepreneurial culture.

Israel also imports weapons from other countries. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's arms transfers database, 68 per cent of Israel's weapons imports from 2013 to 2022 came from the US. Another 28 per cent came from Germany. Imports are funded in part by \$3.3 billion of military aid provided annually by the US, along with \$500 million for missile defense co-operation.

Since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, the US has provided more than 5,000 MK-84 munitions, a type of 2,000-pound bomb. As of late December 2023, the US had sent artillery shells, armoured vehicles and basic combat tools to Israel, delivered in 230 cargo planes and 20 ships.

US military aid to Israel also

includes stockpiled weapons. For years, the Pentagon has stored weapons in Israel, presumably for use by the US military. But the US has allowed Israel to draw down some of these supplies during the Gaza conflict.

In fact, the US has directed some of these stored armaments to be sent to Ukraine, which allows those warehouses in Israel to be restocked with more advanced equipment. Less sophisticated bombs and bullets shipped to Ukraine will free up space, to be filled with precision-guided munitions from the US Hamas' weapons supply

### The Hamas side

In response to Israeli blockades, Hamas has constructed an elaborate and extensive tunnel complex under Gaza and across the Egyptian border. Hamas gets most of its weapons from Iran. The weapons are transported through Egypt and smuggled into Gaza through the tunnels.

But Hamas' weapons also include AK-47 assault rifles from China and Russia, and rocket-propelled grenades manufactured in North Korea and Bulgaria.

In the murky global arms trade, it can be difficult to determine who is selling weapons to whom. A weapon manufactured in one

country could end up in the hands of Hamas by way of one or more intermediary countries. Like non-military goods, copycat armaments also are part of the weapons business. Hamas fighters are using a variety of Soviet-era weapon designs that have been copied and manufactured by China and Iran.

Hamas even manufactures some arms in Gaza. Local factories, some of which are within the underground tunnels, produce mortars, rockets, rifles and bullets.

Some countries, such as Russia, give Hamas permission to imitate their products. Iran trains Gaza-based engineers on design and production techniques. Ironically, when the Israeli military destroys buildings and equipment in Gaza, material from the ruins is recycled by Hamas factories into weapons.

As the war progresses, Israel will likely be in a position to restock its depleted weapons, so long as Washington continues to provide political and military support. But with Israel now occupying much of Gaza, it will be far more difficult for Hamas to reload. **Terrence Guay is the Clinical Professor of International Business; Director, Center for Global Business Studies; Penn State**

# Warm Kildare welcome home for St Brigid

**Andy Drozdziak**

A relic of St Brigid has returned to her home town in Ireland after around 1,000 years away, with a leading bishop declaring: “Today we have brought her home.”

Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, also expressed hope that the relic would help restore a spirit of hospitality in Ireland after recent unrest.

Hundreds of people gathered in Kildare last Sunday morning for a special service to mark the historic occasion, with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Nulty for the installation of the relic at Saint Brigid’s Church.

Bishop Nulty said: “Kildare is the home place of Brigid. Today we have brought her home.”

The homecoming event, which also saw a procession to the church, was held in what is believed to be the 1,500th anniversary year of St Brigid’s death.

Brigid, a renowned peace-maker, was buried beside the main altar at a monastic church in Kildare, with her grave becoming a shrine for visiting pilgrims.

Around 300 years later, when the Vikings were raiding Ireland, her remains were moved to Downpatrick Cathedral in present-day



Bishop Denis Nulty receives the relic of St. Brigid from Theresa Kilmurray of the Brigidine Congregational Leadership Team, Sr Rita Minahen and Sr Louise Cleary

Photos: Brian Lawless



Theresa Kilmurray, Sr Rita Minahen and Sr Louise Cleary with the relic in procession

Northern Ireland for safekeeping. There they were buried in an unmarked grave alongside Saint Patrick and Saint Columba.

Over the next centuries the location of the grave was apparently lost.

According to Christian history, in 1185 the Bishop of Down prayed to God to show him the location of the three saints’ relics and a beam of light shone on a spot of the church’s floor, leading to the rediscovery of the remains.

The relics remained as a shrine at the church for the next 400 years before it was destroyed by Lord

Leonard Grey, an appointee of King Henry VIII.

The relics were apparently saved and spirited away to the Continent, with tradition holding that three Irish knights took a fragment of St Brigid’s remains to a small town outside Lisbon in Portugal called Lumiar.

That relic is still venerated in the church of St John the Baptist in Lumiar today.

A portion of the relic was brought back to Ireland in the 1930s by the Brigidine Sisters in Tullow, Co Carlow. That is now being moved to St Brigid’s parish church in Kildare,

where it will be housed in a specially designed shrine.

The ceremony came ahead of St Brigid’s Day in Ireland on 1st February.

Kildare-based Brigidine sister Rita Minahen said the homecoming was a special day for the town.

“It’s very meaningful because we wouldn’t have a Kildare without her – Kildare owes its existence to St Brigid,” she said.

With legend suggesting that Brigid was born in a doorway, Bishop Nulty called on Ireland to rediscover its reputation as a welcoming place after several weeks during

which the news has been dominated by violence and gang wars, and tension towards migrant communities.

“I think that image of a doorway speaks to us in the Kildare and Ireland of 2024,” he said.

“An Ireland of one hundred thousand welcomes, *ceád míle fáilte*, but sadly as recent evidence suggests, not always if you are fleeing persecution, war or trauma. The scenes on some of our streets and the misinformation that passes unverified on social media disturb, because this is not the hospitality that Brigid espoused.”

## Workshops reveal scale of ports’ slavery concerns

Leading Catholic maritime charity Stella Maris is taking proactive measures in the fight against modern slavery with the establishment of a dedicated Steering Group.

The group comprises 23 representatives from a spectrum of stakeholders, including ferry operators, port owners, authorities, charities, Border Force, and the police.

It aims to build on the success of Stella Maris’ recent Modern Slavery Identification and Awareness workshops, and create a comprehensive action plan to help address modern slavery in UK ports.

Stella Maris partnered with Align Ltd in 2023 to hold six Modern Slavery Identification and Awareness workshops, led by an expert panel and those with lived experience of the issue. The workshops, funded by the Department for Transport through the Merchant Navy Welfare Board, explored critical aspects of modern slavery prevention, indicators of exploitation, risk reduction strategies, emerging threats, and access to support networks for survivors.

Many attending the workshops expressed concern over the scale of modern slavery in the maritime economy. Five key challenges were identified in combating the issue. These were: Lack of awareness and knowledge; difficulty in identifying victims; challenges in reporting and sharing information; trust and

communication issues; and organisational and leadership challenges.

Stella Maris CEO and National Director Tim Hill MBE emphasised the significance of the initiative.

“With over half of the workshop participants being aware of modern slavery victims being identified within or by their organisation, it’s



clear this is a big issue for the maritime sector,” Mr Hill said.

“The steering group provides a great opportunity to create a comprehensive and effective action plan for lasting change.”

Mark Gibbens, head of logistics at Drax Power Limited, expressed his commitment to the issue. He said: “My company operates a global supply chain, and the workshop has inspired me to join the Stella Maris Steering Group in 2024 to use our position to promote awareness of modern slavery, and to be proactive in improving our industry.”

**Pictured: Stella Maris CEO and National Director Tim Hill MBE**



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## Journalist opens up on near-death experience

A national journalist has described a near-death experience and spiritual awakening on a popular podcast.

James Macintyre, a freelance journalist and biographer, was the featured guest on a recent episode of *The Art of Dying Well* podcast, during which he gave a firsthand account of the life-threatening pancreatitis he endured in 2023. The illness led to a five-week coma and four-month hospitalisation.

The podcast, produced by the Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St Mary's University, Twickenham, aims to make death and dying something which can be talked about openly, without discomfort or fear.

Last May, Macintyre was rushed into intensive care at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London where doctors informed him that he had severe pancreatitis which could be fatal. After difficult conversations with medical staff about the possibility of dying, Macintyre was placed in a medically-induced coma to aid his breathing and survival.

During the coma, Macintyre nearly died when doctors performed emergency tracheostomy surgery. He pulled through, but awoke to the devastating news that his mother had died while he was unconscious.

Macintyre said: "Oddly, I knew when I emerged from the coma that mum had died. I may have overheard something semi-conscious, but I think my family were pretty careful not to talk about it. But I did know that she died. In fact, I think one of the first things I said was, you know, mum's died, hasn't she?"

This paired trauma led Macintyre into a deep reflection on living life to the fullest. "I was wasting my life before May last year. I was just drifting," Macintyre says. He credits his survival and new outlook to the excellent hospital care he received as well as his Christian faith. He now hopes to impart lessons about valuing each day, having an attitude of gratitude, and centring his life on eternity, rather than worldly pursuits.

**"It's important to realise that death and these kinds of experiences are not a medical failure, they are part of a natural process," says James on the podcast. Hear it at**

**<https://www.artofdyingwell.org/podcasts/>**



## Letters to the Editor

The Universe Catholic Weekly welcomes letters from our readers. Send your thoughts to Michael Winterbottom, at [michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk). Please endeavour to keep your letter short, and we reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and legal reasons. Please provide a name and address with all letters, but we are happy to anonymise your thoughts in print.

### Loss of respect for the Magisterium has cost us

The article in your Faith Alive section illustrates the collapse in acceptance of the Church's Magisterium in recent decades, which has resulted in the dilution of the faith as reflected in the catastrophic decline of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

St John Henry Newman documented this within the established Church of his day, and it was the rock-like certainty of the Catholic Church – *Semper eadem, Semper reformanda...* ('Reformed and always being reformed, always the same') that drew him across the Tiber. He could never have imagined that one day the same liberalism would be spreading into the Catholic Church. The disaster of the German Church should wake up our shepherds to show courage and confidence in "the Faith once delivered to the Saints" and which it is their duty to teach and preach.

**Fr Clive Dytor  
Chipping Norton**

### Celibacy protects our priests from family stress

On the question of priestly celibacy, it is better to have celibate clergy because they would create a larger recruiting

ground for our future bishops, cardinals and popes.

Further, some priests have to go into dangerous places and would it be fair to expose their families to such dangers? There is also always the question of who owns what if the priest dies; is it the Church's, or the wife's. The Church is not the only one of the Christian Churches with celibate pastors.

I knew of a holy man who thought deeply about becoming a priest. He married and soon afterwards his wife became pregnant. Unfortunately, he was left with a permanently ill wife and a child with a permanent major handicap following the birth. There were crises to both mother and child throughout their lives. How could a priest cope with a parish and all that, too? The poor man would be torn and he would be in an impossible situation.

Priest and clergy are so overworked that their parishioners should help them and society whatever way they can. I have seen priests just flop with pressure and exhaustion. Even in flourishing parishes they are under stress.

I approve of married priests in certain circumstances but the negative factors outweigh the positive factors, mainly recruiting ground for bishops.

One other thing: surely if we were to

accept married priests in the Catholic Church, they would have to be married before they were ordained, because ordination is a higher sacrament than matrimony.

**Catherine Venture (Mrs)  
St Austell, Cornwall**

### More police needed now, not after the crime

I am sure that I can not be alone in becoming increasingly fed up of hearing, after any violent crime has been committed that there will be an increased police presence on our streets, and that family support officers will be in attendance to provide reassurance to the community.

Am I alone in thinking that such measures as an increased police presence would be more effective if introduced *before* the crime took place, and we regularly were reassured by the sight of officers on our streets?

There are fewer police officers on the beat and the idea of prevention is dismissed as too costly. But as detection rates fall and crime rises, the conclusion must be that the system will continue to fail those whom it is meant to protect.

**Richard Guise  
Rye, Sussex**

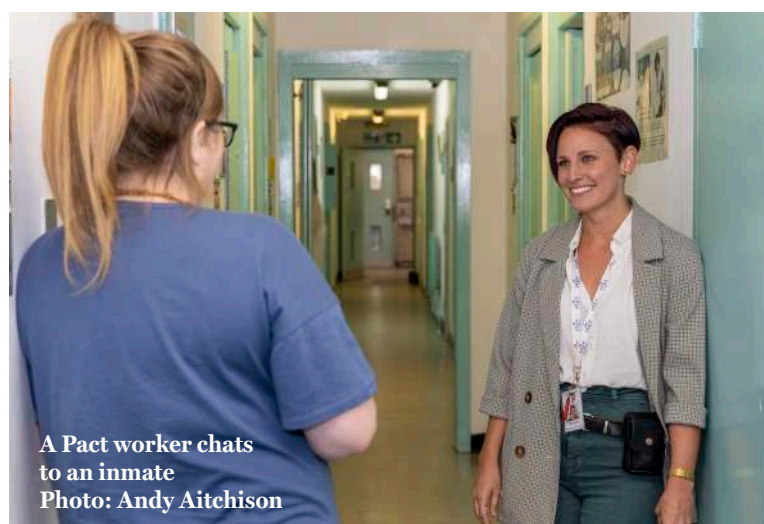
## Funding boost for Pact's work with female prisoners

**Theresa Alessandro**

Working in partnership with others is something Pact, the national Catholic prison charity, does very well. Recently, Pact has been successful in obtaining His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service grant funding for a new pilot project providing specialist family-focused support for women leaving prison.

Pact Deputy CEO Ellen Green said: "We welcome this opportunity to collaborate with third sector partners including Nepacs, to test a new approach to support women. During their sentence, women may have lost housing and work, and many have children who are affected."

We know from research that the needs of women in custody and on release are especially complex. Lord Farmer's 2019 review highlighted that women in prison face different challenges to men. Women often become involved with the criminal justice system as a result of poverty, homelessness, and substance misuse. They are likely to be victims of more serious crimes than those for which they have been convicted. Around half of women prisoners are mothers and 17,000



**A Pact worker chats to an inmate  
Photo: Andy Aitchison**

children are estimated to be affected by maternal imprisonment every year. On leaving prison, women may be seeking accommodation not just for themselves but a place where their children may be able to visit them or come back to live with them.

Through the new 18-month project, Pact will bring together partners from the criminal justice, probation and voluntary sectors to give women tailored support designed to help them settle back into the community and make good

connections that will support them to build, or rebuild, a stable life for themselves and their family.

On a visit with Bishop Marcus Stock to HMP New Hall we met one of Pact's newest members of staff who will be doing this project work. For some weeks before their release, Catherine will be helping women with emotional support and practical advice aimed at strengthening vital family ties ahead of their release.

This is an area of work in which Pact has a strong record. We know

how to help women in prison strengthen relationships with their family members and significant others, and this can offer important continuity as women move from custody to the community. As part of this specialist project, Catherine's work will continue in the crucial first couple of weeks after release, making sure each person is also linked in to sources of support like probation services, women's centres, and other agencies and charities. We hope that this co-ordinated and family-focussed approach will show good results when it is independently evaluated by HMPPS.

On that day at New Hall, a group of women met with Bishop Stock. It was very moving to hear how much they appreciated times of

guided prayer and meditation in the prison chapel.

They expressed how much they wanted to be part of a Catholic parish after they were released from prison because they felt the value of belonging to this community of faith while they were inside.

As Lent approaches, Pact encourages you to be open to women leaving prison and to children and families who have experienced having a loved one inside. This is not something that happens only to others somewhere else. There are children in our schools and families in our neighbourhoods, and readers of the *Universe*, for whom these circumstances and concerns are all too familiar.

**How can we help to make people affected by imprisonment feel welcome in our parishes and communities?**

- Come along to a Pact Justpeople Workshop and reflect on Catholic Social Teaching through the lens of imprisonment.
  - Sign up to receive Pact's Fresh Start newsletter and read more about what we do and stories to inspire you.
  - Include people in prison, and their families, in the prayer life of your parish.
  - And, respectfully, donations to support our work are very much needed and deeply appreciated.
- Pact's website: [prisonadvice.org.uk](http://prisonadvice.org.uk)

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## ROME

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

## Holocaust's horror must be remembered

Pope Francis highlighted the importance of remembering and condemning the horror of the Holocaust, underlining that hatred and violence can never be justified.

Praying for all victims of war and their loved ones, the pope also implored everyone, “especially those with political responsibility, to safeguard human life by putting an end to war.”

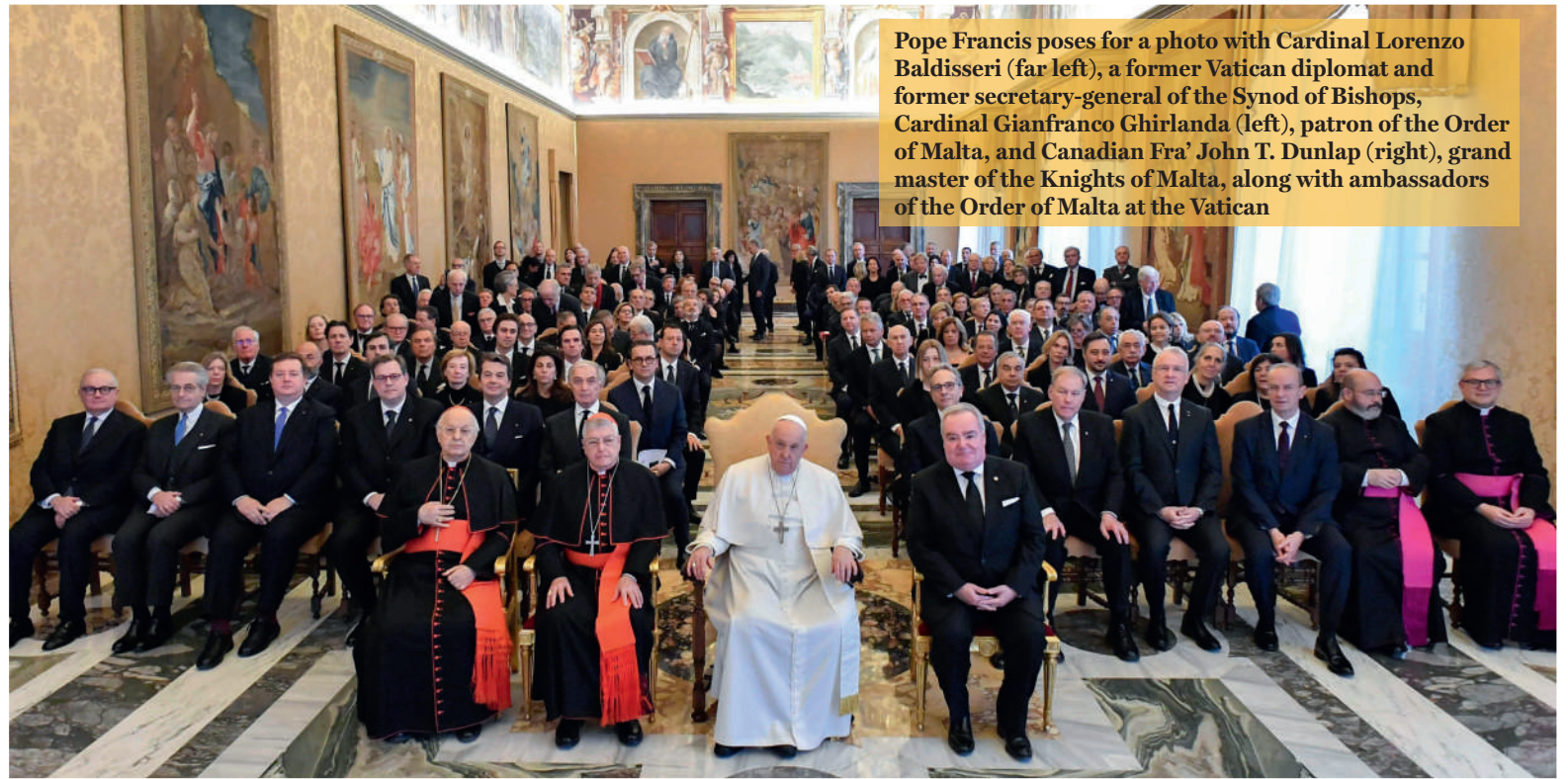
“Let us not forget that war is always a defeat. The only ones who ‘win’ are weapons manufacturers,” he told his general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI hall Jan. 24. Three days later marked International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

“May the remembrance and condemnation of that horrible extermination of millions of Jews and people of other faiths that took place in the first half of the last century help everyone not to forget that the logic of hatred and violence can never be justified because they deny our very humanity,” he said.

“War itself is a denial of humanity,” the pope said. “Let us not tire of praying for peace, for conflicts to cease, for weapons to be silenced and that exhausted populations receive assistance.”

The pope said he was thinking of the Middle East, Palestine, Israel and “the disturbing news coming out of the tormented Ukraine, especially the bombings hitting places where civilians go, sowing death and destruction and suffering.”

“I pray for the victims and their loved ones,” he said.



Pope Francis poses for a photo with Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri (far left), a former Vatican diplomat and former secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Gianfranco Ghirlanda (left), patron of the Order of Malta, and Canadian Fra' John T. Dunlap (right), grand master of the Knights of Malta, along with ambassadors of the Order of Malta at the Vatican

# You can't just keep the faith: you must care for the poor, too

**Justin McLellan**

Keeping the Catholic faith and caring for the poor, sick and afflicted are inseparable, Pope Francis said.

Tending to the concrete and spiritual needs of the world's marginalised “is not only humanitarian, like the meritorious work of so many other institutions: it is a religious action, giving glory to God in serving the weakest and testifying

to the Lord's preferential love for them,” the pope told ambassadors representing the Order of Malta.

Safeguarding the Catholic faith and honouring the poor “cannot be separated,” the pope said. “When we draw close to the least, to the poor, to the afflicted, let us recall that what we do is a sign of Jesus' compassion and tenderness.”

The lay religious order operates in more than 120 countries providing relief to areas hit by natural disasters, aid for the victims of armed conflict and medical attention to the poor.

Speaking to the ambassadors, Pope Francis said that the Knights of Malta's diplomatic activity is also the work of a religious order. “If it did not have the aim of bearing witness to God's love for those in need, it would make no sense for it to be carried out by a religious order,” he said.

Pope Francis said that as a body subordinate to the Holy See, the order's diplomatic representatives should have a “fruitful collaboration” with the Vatican representative serving in the same place.

“The order's bond with the pope is not a limitation of its freedom but a safeguard, which is expressed in Peter's concern for ensuring its greater good, as has happened more than once, even with direct interventions in times of difficulty,” he said.

From 2017 to 2022, the Sovereign Order of Malta had been involved in a papally-mandated process to revise its constitution and promote its spiritual renewal. In May 2023, the order returned to its normal governance with the election of a Canadian lawyer, Fra' John T. Dunlap, as grand master.

Dunlap attended the meeting with the pope, as well as Cardinal Gianfranco Ghirlanda, patron of the

Order of Malta, and Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, a former Vatican diplomat and former secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, who was a speaker at the conference the ambassadors were attending.

The Order of Malta's dependence on the Holy See “does not diminish the importance of its diplomatic representations,” Pope Francis told the ambassadors. “On the contrary, it allows their meaning to be even better understood as channels of the order's apostolic (and) charitable activity, open and generous especially where there is most need.”

The pope praised the order's “humanitarian diplomacy,” which he said is a “valuable witness (and) eloquent sign for other embassies as well, so that their activities, too, may be aimed at the concrete good of people and hold the weakest in high regard.”

## Pope confirms ‘this Church is for all’ in strong defence of blessings for same-sex couples

Making a list of which sinners are welcome in the church and which are not goes against the teaching of the Gospel, Pope Francis told an Italian newspaper.

The pope said people had asked why he approved the declaration permitting priests to give informal blessings to gay couples as long as it doesn't give the appearance of blessing the couple's union.

“The Gospel is to sanctify everyone,” the pope said in the interview with *La Stampa*.

Pope Francis reminded the paper that when he was in Lisbon for

World Youth Day he repeatedly said the Church is open to “*todos, todos, todos*” – everyone, everyone, everyone. “The son of God doesn't want a select group, an elite in his Church,” the pope said. “When they ask me, ‘But can these people who are in such an inappropriate moral situation also enter?’” the pope said, “I assure them, ‘Everyone. The Lord said it.’”

Asked specifically about the blessings of couples, the pope said it was important that the people requesting them are doing so with “good will” and that they are given

“precise instructions about the Christian life,” including an explanation that the Church is blessing them and not their union.

“But we are all sinners. Why then draw up a list of sinners who can enter the Church and a list of sinners who cannot be in the Church? This is not the Gospel,” he said.

The people who are “vehemently protesting” the decision “belong to small ideological groups,” although he accepted that bishops in Africa were struggling from a cultural point of view; they do not tolerate it.”



Pope Francis asked people to never forget the Rwandan genocide which killed more than 800,000 people almost 30 years ago. “It must never be forgotten, so as to not relapse,” he told representatives of Nolite Timere, an NGO which works with orphans at a facility outside the Rwandan capital, Kigali. The Holy Father praised their work

“which reminds us, in a world with more walls and divisions, that charity has no barrier.” Some 95,000 children were orphaned during the 1994 genocide.

Above, Pope Francis greets Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, former apostolic nuncio to Rwanda, and Bishop Ntivuguruzwa of Kabgayi.

# Love is the world's only path to Christian unity, says pope

**Cindy Wooden**

Divided Christians will draw closer to one another only by loving God and loving their neighbours, serving one another and not pointing fingers in blame for past faults, Pope Francis said.

Closing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an evening prayer service at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Pope Francis was joined by Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury. At the end of the service, the two commissioned pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops from 27 countries to "bear witness together to the hope that does not deceive and to the unity for which our Savior prayed."

Members of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, who were meeting in Rome, also participated along with representatives of Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican communities in Italy.

In his homily, Pope Francis reflected on the theme for the 2024 celebration of the week of prayer: "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself" from Luke 10:27.

The passage comes from a Gospel story in which a scholar of the law asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. After Jesus affirms the need to love God and one's neighbor, the scholar asks, "And who is my neighbour?"

"This question attempts to divide, to separate people into those we should love and those we should shun," Pope Francis said. "This kind of division is never from God; it is from the devil."

"Only a love that becomes gratuitous service, only the love that Jesus



Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby welcome ecumenical visitors to the service in St Paul Outside the Walls

taught and embodied, will bring separated Christians closer to one another," he said.

Although it was not advertised beforehand, Archbishop Welby also offered a reflection at the service, explaining that Pope Francis invited him to do so.

Christians, he said, as individuals and as Churches, can choose to be angry or to love. "Anger imprisons us; our rivalry or dislike of our brothers and sisters cuts us off from the freedom that God offers his Church."

But, the archbishop said, "a Church caught up in the fire of the love of God through the Holy Spirit will be a Church of reconciliation, of hope, a church of healing."

Christians, Pope Francis said, should never have to ask who their neighbour is because "each baptised person is a member of the one body of Christ; what is more, everyone in this world is my brother or my sister, and all together we

compose that 'symphony of humanity' of which Christ is the firstborn and redeemer."

Pope Francis urged people to ask themselves: "Do I, and then my community, my church, my spirituality, act like a neighbour? Or are they barricaded in defence of their own interests, jealous of their autonomy, caught up in calculating what is in their own interest, build-

ing relationships with others only in order to gain things for themselves?"

Pope Francis, Archbishop Welby and Orthodox Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate's representative in Rome, prayed before what is believed to be St. Paul's tomb, as well as praying for peace, particularly in Israel, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, South Sudan and Congo.

## Incurable does not mean we can stop caring

People who are terminally ill and their families should always receive the care and assistance they need, Pope Francis said.

Incurable does not mean "un-care-able," the pope said in a video message from the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

The pope's prayer intention for the month of February is dedicated to people who are terminally ill, and in his video message, he said, "Even when little chance for a cure exists, every sick person has the right to medical, psychological, spiritual and human assistance."

"Sometimes they can't talk; sometimes we think they don't recognise us. But if we take them by the hand, we know they are relating with us," he said.

"Healing is not always possible, but we can always care for the sick person, caress them," the pope said, quoting what St. John Paul II used to say was the true task of medicine, "to cure if possible, always to care."

Pope Francis noted the role of palliative care, which "guarantees the patient not only medical attention, but also human assistance and closeness."

"Families should not be left alone in these difficult moments."



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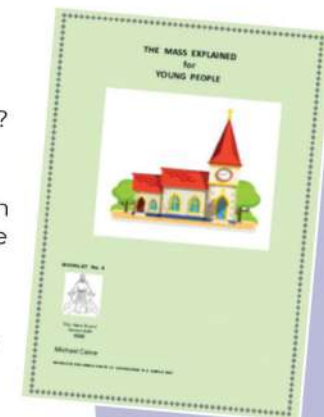
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## In Brief

### Much-loved priest killed in gunman

A retired Florida Catholic priest and his sister were revealed to be among the victims of a multi-location gun rampage which also took the life of another man, left two police officers injured and ended with the death of the suspect.

Fr Robert Hoeffner and his sister, Sally Hoeffner, were found dead at their Palm Bay, Florida residence as police were investigating a domestic disturbance at another area home that turned deadly.

Their car had apparently been stolen by 24-year-old suspect Brandon William Kapas, who loaded the car with a cache of weapons and drove it to a family gathering nearby.

Police were called to the home after Kapas became agitated and destructive, and in the course of his flight, Kapas killed his grandfather and injured two police officers before he himself was shot and killed.

Fr Hoeffner celebrated his 50th priestly jubilee in 2023. His career included becoming a founding pastor, celebrating Mass on TV and establishing a multicultural parish council. "I've had a glorious ride. I'm proud to serve and do wonderful things for wonderful people. I enjoy doing that," Fr Hoeffner said in his jubilee reflection. "I've spent 50 years doing absolutely incredible things and I am thankful to God for it."

### British Russian dissident disappears

A British-Russian dissident has disappeared from the Siberian prison colony where he is held in solitary confinement.

Vladimir Kara-Murza was sentenced to 25 years in prison last April on charges of treason and spreading false information about the war in Ukraine.

He has spent the last four months at the IK-6 colony in Omsk, where fellow dissident Alexei Navalny had previously been held.

But his wife raised the alarm on Monday when she said Mr Kara-Murza had gone missing.

### Chinese clone monkey

A monkey has been successfully cloned by Chinese scientists and so far, has lived for two years.

Researchers used the same method that created Dolly the Sheep in 1996 but none have ever lived for long. However, a modified technique designed to create a stronger placenta has seen a rhesus monkey be cloned, be born and live healthily.

# Pope issues plea for ceasefire as world stands on edge of abyss

**Carol Glatz**

Today's wars and conflicts have put humanity on the brink of the abyss, Pope Francis said, calling for a worldwide ceasefire to end a number of conflicts, including Ukraine, Gaza and Yemen.

"I will never tire of reiterating my call, addressed in particular to those who have political responsibility: stop the bombs and missiles now, everywhere," the pope said in an interview with *La Stampa*, an Italian newspaper.

"A global ceasefire is urgent: either we do not realise it or we are pretending not to see that we are on the brink of the abyss," he said.

Asked specifically about the situation in Israel and Palestine, the pope said that the Oslo Accord is "very clear with the two-state solution. Until that agreement is implemented, real peace remains distant."

The pope said the thing he fears most is a "military escalation" in which the conflict might "further worsen the tensions and violence that already mark the planet."

The recent attack on a US base in Jordan which killed three American servicemen, risked further escalation.

However, he said he is also hopeful because "confidential meetings are taking place to try to reach an agreement. A truce would already be a good result."

A key figure in the Vatican's ef-



More than half of Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed since Israel launched its retaliation for the Hamas attacks of 7 October, new analysis reveals.

The bombardment of southern and central Gaza has intensified since the start of December, with Khan Younis bearing much of the brunt of Israel's military action.

About 1.7 million people - more than 80 per cent of Gaza's population - are displaced, with nearly half crammed in the far southern end of the strip, the UN said.

orts concerning the Middle East, he said, is Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem. "He is trying with determination to mediate."

"The Christians and the people of Gaza - I don't mean Hamas - have a right to peace," the pope said.

The other priority remains the release of the Israeli hostages, he added.

The Holy See continues with its diplomatic efforts regarding Ukraine, particularly through the papal envoy, Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, who is working to "build

an atmosphere of reconciliation," the pope said.

It is also still mediating for the exchange of prisoners, the return of Ukrainian civilians and repatriation of Ukrainian children forcibly taken to Russia.

Asked if there were such a thing as "just war," the pope said it is better to use the term "legitimate defence."

"If thieves come into your house to rob you and attack you, you defend yourself. But I don't like to call this reaction a 'just war' reaction,

because it is a definition that can be exploited," he said.

"It is right and legitimate to defend yourself," he said, so it is better to discuss situations of legitimate defence, "so we can avoid justifying wars, which are always wrong."

He also highlighted the current conflict in Myanmar, joining the call of some Burmese bishops for turning weapons of destruction "into instruments for the growth of humanity and justice" and for allowing humanitarian aid to reach everyone in need.

## Netanyahu rejects withdrawal or prisoner release

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has denied reports he is planning to implement a ceasefire to end the war in Gaza.

He told an event in the occupied West Bank that fighting would continue until he had secured "absolute victory" over Hamas.

"We will not end this war without achieving all of our goals," he said.

"We will not withdraw the Israeli military from the Gaza Strip and we will not release thousands of terrorists," he said. "We will destroy Hamas, and bring our people home."

His pledge came as Israeli forces disguised as civilian women and medical workers stormed a hospital in the occupied West Bank, killing three Palestinian militants in a dramatic raid that underscored how deadly violence has spilled into the territory from the war in Gaza.

The Palestinian health ministry said Israeli forces opened fire inside the wards of the Ibn Sina Hospital in the town of Jenin.

The ministry condemned the raid and called on the international community to pressure Israel's military to halt attacks on hospitals.



Three Israeli gunmen, captured on hospital CCTV

A hospital spokesperson said there was no exchange of fire, indicating that it was a targeted killing.

The military said the militants were using the hospital as a hideout, without providing evidence.

It alleged that one of those targeted in the raid had transferred weapons and ammunition to others for a planned attack.

Footage from hospital security cameras showed about a dozen undercover forces, most of them armed, dressed as women with Muslim headscarves or hospital

staff scrubs or white doctor's coats.

One in a surgical mask carried a rifle in one arm and a folded wheelchair in the other. The forces were seen patting down one man who knelt against a wall, his arms raised.

The war began when hundreds of Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting about 250 others.

More than 100 were released during a weeklong ceasefire in November in exchange for Palestinians im-

prisoned by Israel.

In response, Israel launched a blistering air, sea and ground offensive that killed more than 26,700 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

The ministry count does not distinguish between fighters and non-combatants, but it says about two-thirds of the dead are women and children.

A strike on a residential building in the central town of Deir al-Balah on Tuesday killed 11 people, including four children, according to Associated Press reporters who saw the bodies at a hospital.

The conflict has also levelled vast swathes of the tiny coastal enclave, displaced 85 per cent of its population, and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

That humanitarian crisis may soon be exacerbated, the UN has warned, after several countries froze funding to the main aid provider to Palestinians in Gaza following Israeli claims that a dozen of its workers participated in the October assault.



# IS group claims responsibility for deadly attack on Catholic church

**Michael Kelly**

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for an attack on a Roman Catholic church in Istanbul during a Sunday Mass that killed one person.

The extremist group said that it “attacked a gathering of Christian unbelievers during their polytheistic ceremony” inside Santa Maria Church in the Buyukdere neighborhood in Istanbul.

Pope Francis has expressed his closeness to the small Catholic community in Turkey, and horror over the attack.

The shooting occurred just before noon at the church in the Sariyer district of Istanbul and was reportedly carried out by two masked men, according to eyewitnesses. Turkey’s Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya posted a statement on social media, saying, “We strongly condemn this vile attack.”

The area where the attack happened is popular with Christians in the 99.8 per cent-Muslim majority country of nearly 85 million people, being home to Santa Maria Catholic Church – known as the Italian church – as well as a Greek Orthodox church and an Armenian Apostolic church, all of which date from the 19th century.

Istanbul also is home to Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople,



Santa Maria Church

spiritual leader of the world’s Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said in a statement that “efforts continue to identify and capture the suspects who carried out the attack.”

“The investigation is being carried out in a multifaceted and meticulous manner,” Tunc added.

the Mass. “Our security forces are conducting a large-scale investigation into the matter,” he wrote.

“Those who threaten the peace and security of our citizens will never achieve their goals,” he insisted.

Local media reported that others were injured in the attack, but this was not immediately confirmed by the authorities.

Speaking at the Vatican during his traditional Sunday Angelus address, Pope Francis expressed his support as details of the incident emerged.

“I would like to express my closeness to the community of the church of Santa Maria in Istanbul, which suffered an armed attack during Mass that caused one death and left several injured,” he told thousands of pilgrims and visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square for his blessing.

Turkish security services have been engaged in operations against the Islamic State group in recent months.

In December, security forces detained 32 suspects over alleged links with an extremist Islamic militant organization which planned attacks on churches and synagogues, as well as the Iraqi embassy.

The group have carried out a string of attacks on Turkish soil, including against a nightclub in Istanbul in 2017 that left 39 people dead.

## Vatican backs China’s two new bishops

For the second time in less than a week, a Chinese bishop has been ordained with the approval of both Pope Francis and the Chinese Government.

Fr Anthony Sun Wenjun, 53, was ordained to the episcopacy Jan. 29 in Weifang, about 320 miles south of Beijing.

Pope Francis nominated Bishop Sun Wenjun “in the framework of the provisional accord between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China,” the Vatican said.

On 25th January Bishop Thaddeus Wang Yuesheng was ordained the Bishop of Zhengzhou, also in accordance with the Vatican-China agreement, which was originally signed in 2018 and has been renewed every two years since.

The text of the agreement has not been published, but Vatican officials have said it outlines procedures for ensuring Catholic bishops are elected by the Catholic community in China and approved by the pope before their ordinations and installations.

Bishop Sun Wenjun attended the Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai from 1989 to 1994 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1995 in Beijing.

Bishop John Fang Xingyao of Linyi, past president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, presided over the ordination.

## Assisted suicide lobby pushes New Zealand to expand law

A woman in New Zealand has called for the country’s assisted suicide law to be expanded to those who are not terminally ill, only two years after it was introduced.

Nicole Martin suffers from Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which gives her constant pain. Her health has deteriorated over time, as well as her ability to engage with hobbies and enjoy her social life.

Under the current law in New Zealand, a person can end their life by assisted suicide if they are thought to have six months left to live. But now Ms Martin is pushing for a change to the End of Life Choice Act 2019 to allow people like her, who are not terminally ill, to end their own lives.

Nicole’s husband originally wanted her to fight for life

Nicole said that “Over the years [my husband] witnessed the progression... for many years he wanted me to fight”. Nicole also shared that she wished to be treated in the same way as her pet dog had been when she was put down.

She said that people with degenerative illnesses may not be able to live a “fulfilling life” if they are bedridden and unable to see their friends and family.

New Zealand was the first country in the world to introduce assisted suicide by popular vote

Polling at the time suggests that as many as 80 per cent of voters were unclear.

Spokesperson for Right to Life UK, Catherine Robinson, said “Assisted suicide has only been available in New Zealand for just over two years, and yet we are already starting to see attempts to reduce the safeguards put in place to protect the most vulnerable people”.

“Once suffering is seen as sufficient cause for a person to end their life with medical assistance, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify placing any limit on this principle, as seen in Canada and the Netherlands with child euthanasia”.

“New Zealand could soon be yet another example of the very slippery slope that is created when assistance in suicide is legalised. Canada dropped the requirement that assisted suicide and euthanasia be available only to those whose death was “reasonably foreseeable” in 2021, only five years after the legislation was initially introduced”.

“Hopefully, New Zealand will have learned something from the disastrous experience in Canada.”

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

# Mexico's migrant population suffering again after fresh spate of kidnappings

**David Agren**

Shortly after New Year's Day, 32 kidnapped migrants appeared in the border city of Rio Bravo, Mexico, after a media storm over their disappearance – having been forced off an intercity bus by a drug cartel convoy.

The following day, 19 migrants appeared at the diocesan migrant shelter in Matamoros, just to the east, after paying ransoms for their release from captivity. "It's like that every day," Fr Francisco Gallardo, who heads migrant ministry for the Diocese of Matamoros.

"Everyone arrives kidnapped at the migrant shelter. People released from captivity arrive at the parish, at the Reynosa migrant shelter, too," he said.

Migrants have moved through Mexico in large numbers in recent years on trips rife with risks such as robbery, rape and extortion.

But kidnappings have become the true plague, with many migrants already struggling to keep life and soul together after making long journeys from their homelands, falling victims as criminal groups and drug cartels.

What makes their situation worse is that the kidnappers are often in cahoots with police, soldiers and immigration officials, who target people without papers. Victims are often abducted while riding intercity buses, but also forced off freight trains and grabbed in violent border cities. Victims then plead with relatives in their countries of origin or the United States to pay ransoms – usually via wire transfers.

"The kidnappers grab them off the buses and they take them to safehouses," Fr Gallardo said. "(The migrants) are physically and psychologically mistreated. They don't feed them, don't give them water. They're beaten and their families are also tortured because the families are asked for money."

Migrants risk kidnapping across the country, according to Catholics working in migrant ministries. But



Migrants chance the waters of the Rio Grande in a bid to reach the USA

this situation is especially dire in Tamaulipas, a state tucked into the northeastern corner of Mexico and bordering Texas, where rival drug cartels dispute corridors for smuggling drugs to the United States. Increasingly, the cartels smuggle migrants, too – forbidding anyone to cross the Rio Grande in certain places without paying them first.

"It's not a new method," said Fr Gallardo. "It's something that existed and continues happening."

The 32 migrants – 26 Venezuelans and six from Honduras – were abducted from a bus travelling between the states of Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas on 30th December. A media storm ensued and the migrants were left in a bus – presumably by their captors – outside a shopping centre in the municipality of Rio Bravo four days later.

Federal government officials

insisted the migrants were "rescued," but Public Security Secretary Rosa Icela Rodriguez said later some of the victims had paid ransoms.

The ringleader of the kidnapping was subsequently arrested, President Andros Manuel Lopez Obrador said. The president previously blasted journalists for "sensationalism" and insisted there was "a lot of government" involved in freeing the migrants – though he acknowledged the abductees were not rescued.

In comparison with other kidnappings, "these 32 (migrants) became known," said Scalabrinian Father Julio Lopez, director of the Mexican bishops' human mobility ministry.

"The current government is uncomfortable with the media coverage because the lack of governability is evident and it's obvious that this government's

security strategy is a failure," Father Lopez said. "Instead of worrying about the victims, the government's attitude is to worry about its image and divert attention from the problem because of its inability to face the situation," the priest said.

Human Rights First, a nongovernmental group, has documented more than 1,300 migrants and asylum-seekers suffering crimes such as kidnapping, extortion and rape between May and November 2023 – a time frame starting with the end of US law Title 42, which had returned many migrants to Mexico as part of a pandemic health provision as the US government implemented "asylum restrictions."

Several activists working with migrants in Tamaulipas said kidnappings started soaring at that same time.

"Right now kidnappings are the worst thing," said one of the

activists, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the topic. "(It) started spiking in June and has not subsided."

They attributed the attacks on migrants in part to "frustrations" with the CBP One smartphone app, which allows migrants to set appointments for entering the United States – a process which can take months to accomplish.

Many migrants, they said, wait for their appointments in safer cities such as Monterrey and Mexico City, but encounter danger while travelling to the border for their appointments.

"The cartel will target people with appointments," said one of the activists. "They're easy targets at the border if they have an appointment because they're going to be the most urgent to pay because they don't want to miss their appointments."

Sr Norma Pimentel, a Missionary of Jesus, who is director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, who works with migrants in both Texas and Tamaulipas, said that she has evidence many migrants missed their CBP One appointments due to kidnapping. She added that many migrants crossed the Rio Grande into the United States – often paying the same criminal groups for permission to do so – instead of waiting for appointments through the app due to the dangers of kidnapping on the Mexican side.

The activists in Tamaulipas said migrants started leaving Matamoros and Reynosa prior to Christmas due to safety concerns and heading for the border crossing between Piedras Negras, Mexico, and Eagle Pass, Texas.

"It's thought that this is the most secure spot on the Mexican side of the border, so many migrants seek out this area to cross," Dominican Brother Obed Cuellar said. "Here in Piedras Negras it's more a problem of police" extorting migrants than drug cartels carrying out kidnappings."

## US vote pushes likely rivals into tough guy mode over immigration

Catholic immigration advocates fear this year's presidential election could end up as a contest between two candidates trying to prove who can be the toughest against migrants.

"Everyone knows that the situation at the US-Mexico border is unsustainable," J. Kevin Appleby, a former director of migration policy for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, said. "The question is whether a package of restrictive

policies will address the issue or exacerbate it by driving desperate people to take more dangerous routes to remote parts of the border. What politicians in the US can't understand is, the forces that drive these migrants forward are stronger than anything that can be put in their way by the US."

Currently, the US Senate is debating giving the President the power to shut down the border if illegal crossings

reached a certain threshold. However, talks have become bogged down as Republicans look to tie in tougher rules on the southern border to aid for Israel and Ukraine.

President Joe Biden has offered some of his strongest rhetoric yet on the border issue, vowing to bring in stricter border controls. His likely rival, Donald Trump, has already said Republicans should not agree to any deals with Biden, as they

would be a "gift to the Radical Left Democrats."

Biden said, "Let's be clear. What's been negotiated would – if passed into law – be the toughest set of reforms to secure the border we've ever had in our country. It would give me a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed."

The bill allows for thousands more immigration staff and security officers, as well as

cutting-edge surveillance kit.

Appleby said that "as the Church has advocated, the most humane and effective way to regulate border entries is to reform the entire broken immigration system, including the creation of legal avenues to facilitate safe and orderly migration."

"It is ironic that immigration opponents who have agitated for these policies for years could wind up killing it," he added.

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WORLD SPOTLIGHT

# France's bishops give farmers strong backing as protests rise

**Caroline de Sury**

France's bishops have vowed to stand in solidarity with the nation's farmers after they launched massive protests across the country.

After days of demonstrations in local provinces, farmers have moved to block roads in and out of Paris, causing spectacular traffic jams of tractors and farm vehicles across the French capital.

The farmers are looking to pressure the government over the future of their industry, which has been shaken by repercussions of the Ukraine war.

Protesters hoped to create what they described as a siege to squeeze more concessions from the government, led by new Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, less than a month into the job.

While trying to increase food production and yet reduce the impact of agriculture on the environment, the farmers are faced with rising costs, including soaring energy prices. They feel they are being unfairly accused of going against ecological concerns by the European Union.

At the same time, a global food crisis caused by the Russian invasion on Ukraine – called 'the world's food storage' for its fertile land – has made prices for fertiliser, energy and other inputs for growing crops and feeding livestock much higher, and consumed the farmers' income.

Those protesting on the Paris highways held signs with messages such as 'No food without farmers', and 'The end of us would mean famine for you.'

The Church did not think twice about backing the farmers in their fight, with several French bishops issuing statements expressing solidarity with their struggle.

Bishop Jean-Marc Micas of Tarbes and Lourdes, the diocese of the famous Marian shrine, in the Pyrenees, personally visited the roads blocked by tractors to greet the protesters.



French farmers have taken their tractors on to the roads surrounding Paris, causing huge traffic jams

"The farmers I know are responsible people, sensitive to issues linked to climate and the environment," Bishop Micas said.

He expressed his "compassion, solidarity and commitment to stand alongside those who suffer."

"I invite the faithful of the diocese to do so in a sincere and determined manner, seeking to understand what pushes farmers to express themselves as they do, to know the reality of their daily life, to support their work by allowing its fair remuneration," Bishop Micas added.

Further east, near the Mediterranean, the bishops of the Montpellier province called for "justice and consideration" for the farmers, saying they understand their "legitimate concerns." "The cup is full," they said, denouncing the fact that imported products are exempt from the administrative, sanitary and economic constraints imposed on French farmers.

"Faced with rising costs that are crushing you," they said in a message of support to the farmers,

"ever more restrictive standards imposed on you, constant controls, excessive administrative procedures, you are suffering to the point of crying out in despair."

Led by Archbishop Norbert Turini of Montpellier, clergy added: "The constraints imposed by climate change and the need to protect the planet also mean additional costs for production. What is needed are urgent measures at national and European levels, in response to the just cause of the protesting farmers' demands for decent incomes."

They pointed out that some farmers commit suicide because of a "spiral of over-indebtedness."

In Brittany, bishops wrote in the same tone, adding fishermen to their statement. They denounced an unfair competition from "production from abroad where environmental standards are not binding, or even do not exist."

Meanwhile, Archbishop Jean-Paul James of Bordeaux, the region famous for its wines, addressed the wine world, which has been hit

hard by the crisis in a specific way.

"The French have changed their wine-consumption habits," he pointed out, and "exports are not providing the hoped-for outlets." He called for general solidarity with winegrowers, at a time when the need for them to change practices and reduce production, represents a serious threat to those who will fail to cope with these changes.

"We wish to express the Catholic Church's compassion for all those who devote their lives to working the land and raising animals to feed us," emphasised Bishop Philippe Christory of Chartres, a lowland region some 60 miles from Paris, which is a major economic area in French agricultural production.

"Our visits to farms and agricultural businesses give us an insight into the day-to-day efforts of everyone involved. We would like to thank the farmers who commit themselves unreservedly to this demanding profession, where they do not count the hours, where they face unpredictable weather conditions, where they have no control over selling prices," the bishop said.

The bishop also expressed his grief over the deaths of a 35-year-old mother and her 12-year-old daughter killed in Pamiers in southwestern France, when a car crashed into the tent where farmers gathered at a roadblock. The woman's husband and the girl's father was severely injured.

The tragic accident "touched our hearts and upset us. We are overcome with emotion and we wish to express the compassion of the Catholic Church towards all those who dedicate their lives to working the land and raising animals to feed us," Bishop Christory wrote.

## Anger as death row prisoner dies in agony

The US Bishops' Conference has reiterated its opposition to the death penalty in the wake of Alabama carrying out the first known execution by nitrogen gas.

Death-row inmate Kenneth Smith took 22 minutes to die after being suffocated by nitrogen, according to witnesses.

Smith – who had long fought his impending execution – said in his final statement, "Tonight Alabama causes humanity to take a step backwards."

He appeared to remain conscious for several minutes as pure nitrogen gas was pumped into his lungs; he shook and writhed on the gurney for at least two minutes, followed by several minutes of heavy breathing until eventually breathing was no longer perceptible.

Smith faced the death penalty for his conviction in the 1988 murder-for-hire killing of Elizabeth Sennett. However, the jury at his trial acknowledged that he took little part in the killing, and recommended that he receive life imprisonment rather than the death penalty. However a judge imposed the death penalty in 1996 in a now abolished practice called judicial override.

More than 100 Alabama faith leaders and community members – including Catholic priests and religious sisters – delivered a letter to Alabama Republican Governor Kay Ivey urging her in vain to call off the execution. However, many Catholics were disappointed that none of the state's bishops signed the letter.

Rather, Alabama's bishops declined to make statements on Smith's experimental execution, but referred journalists to prior teaching statements made against capital punishment several years ago.

In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis cited St. John Paul II's teaching to declare the death penalty was morally "inadmissible" and that the Catholic Church was committed to its abolition. The US bishops' conference said their policy remained the eradication of the death penalty across the country.

Alabama sought to execute Smith in 022 by lethal injection but botched the attempt after four hours of trying. Problems sourcing the necessary drugs to allow a second attempt led to the decision to use the untried method of nitrogen hypoxia.

Smith's lawyers claimed this would violate the US Constitution's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson dissented in Smith's final appeal, with Sotomayor saying Alabama was turning Smith into a "guinea pig" as the world watches.



Last week's cover photograph of the Universe featured news of the launch of a campaign by the Congregation of Jesus to have its founder, Mary Ward, declared a saint. Here we take a look at the campaign in more detail

# Let's make our Mary a saint

**“There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things - and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much”**

- Mary Ward, 1617.

Followers and supporters of Yorkshire woman Mary Ward (1585-1645) are launching a campaign to raise awareness and provide evidence for the ongoing case to have her officially recognised as a Saint by the Catholic Church.

The campaign launched as part of Mary Ward Week 2024 which takes place from 23-30 January to mark the anniversaries of her birth and death. This is an annual global celebration where her followers around the globe pay tribute to her life and achievements, including those who work at the 200 schools worldwide that have been founded in her name.

Mary Ward is the foundress of the Congregation of Jesus. They reside at the Bar Convent in York which is the oldest living convent in the UK, and are part of the Middlesbrough Diocese. The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto), a sister Congregation, founded from York, also counts Mary Ward as founder.

Sr Elizabeth Cotter, IBVM, Canon Lawyer, Postulator for the Cause of Venerable Mary Ward said: “As part of our case, we need to provide evidence that Mary Ward remains relevant today.

“Key to this was her passionate belief that ‘women in time to come will do much’, which has always been the driving force of followers who brought her vision to 42 countries from her time and up to the present day.

“This recognition by the Church would provide the women of our

time with a fine example of the Church's willingness to promote the dignity of women in a world which badly needs such witness.

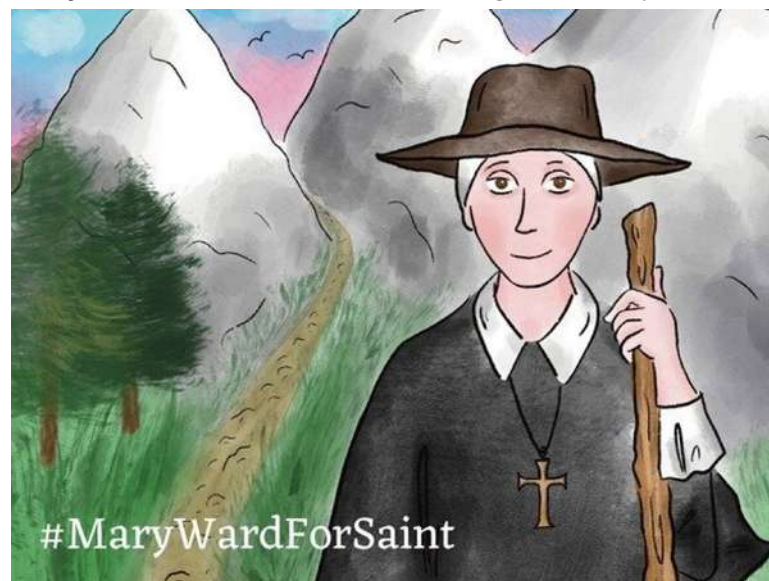
“For the hundreds of thousands of Mary Ward followers worldwide, recognition by the Church would validate the belief that Mary Ward is a saint for the modern world; she is needed as much by our 21st century world as she was in those dark days of opposition to women in the 17th century.

“Support for and belief in Mary Ward has never waned in more than 400 years, and her beatification and canonisation by the Church is long overdue.”

Sr Ann Stafford, sister in charge at the Bar Convent, said: “Here at the Bar Convent, we have been contributing to the ongoing global campaign to have Mary Ward officially recognised by the Church as a Saint.

“As someone who campaigned for the dignity of women all of her life, we truly believe that Mary Ward is a vital role model for our time.

“Please help our cause in any way you can. You can sign the petition, join the conversation across the social media platforms using #MaryWardForSaint, visit us at the



**Mary Ward:**  
“Key was her passionate belief that ‘women in time to come will do much’, which has always been the driving force of followers who brought her vision to 42 countries from her time and up to the present day.”

Bar Convent to discover more about Mary Ward, help us to raise awareness about this local woman who made international history, or let the Cause Office know if you can help us in other ways by emailing [causemaryward@gmail.com](mailto:causemaryward@gmail.com).”

During Mary Ward Week 2024 (23 Jan-30 Jan), special events ran throughout the week, and will continue until 17 February. Events included a talk on Tuesday 23rd January and the Annual Ecumenical Service on Sunday 28th January, where The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell gave the homily.

Visitors to the Bar Convent can see the permanent exhibition to discover more about Mary Ward and her legacy.

## Who is Mary Ward?

Mary Ward was born into a devout Catholic family after the English Reformation had taken place. She had a tumultuous childhood; her family were forced to relocate several times to avoid detection, they were linked with the Gunpowder Plot and she witnessed brutal persecution of her fellow Catholics, including the imprisonment of members of her own family such as her grandmother Ursula Wright and the martyrdom of her cousin, Fr. Francis Ingleby, on the Knavesmire, York.

Mary felt called to the religious life that had been banned in England some 70 years before and travelled to the continent where many other Catholics had fled. She and her companions founded the first religious congregation for women modelled directly on the newly-founded Society of Jesus (Jesuits), who take a fourth vow of universal mission to go wherever the Pope might send them.

Mary Ward believed that women were spiritually and intellectually equal to men, and deserved an education that reflected that equality. Providing a proper

education for girls was absolutely central to her work, and she travelled widely across Europe, founding schools in 10 European cities by 1628.

These views and methods were far ahead of her time, and the Catholic Church opposed her at every step, and even had her imprisoned.

In 1617, she famously said: “There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things - and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much”.

To put this into context, this is at a time when philosophers were debating if women even had souls; and her own religious adviser questioned whether women had as much religious fervour as their male counterparts due to the weakness of their sex. It was a firmly held belief that too much education would be too taxing for the female brain - even centuries later, in 1895, a manual on child development argued that if a girl overused her brain it would damage her ability to bear children, noting that ‘this New Woman is only possible in a novel and not in nature’.

Mary Ward died in 1645 during the English Civil War, having never seen her vision fully realised. She is buried in York. Across the global

Sister Ann Stafford with Mary Ward's C17th crucifix in the exhibition at the Bar Convent.



network of her religious congregation, the Bar Convent is seen as the focal point and home of the historic legacy of her work.

After her death in 1645, her followers continued her work and opened a secret convent in York. They were the first to open schools for girls in this country that offered the same education as boys. They continued to grow and there is now a global following of thousands of religious sisters, around 200 schools worldwide in Mary Ward's name, lay collaborators and Friends of Mary Ward.

Pope John Paul II singled Mary Ward out as an "extraordinary Yorkshire woman and a pioneer" in 1982 when he celebrated a Mass in York attended by 210,000 people. In 2009, she was declared Venerable by Pope Benedict XVI, which was the first step on the road to canonisation and sainthood. The next step is to have Mary Ward beatified, a task which is currently ongoing.

#### Why does Mary Ward deserve to be a saint?

Mary Ward pioneered a new way to live the consecrated life at a time when the monastic life was the only way acceptable to the Church. Believing that God's will was driving her towards this new way, Mary Ward persevered despite imprisonment and condemnation by the Church she sought to serve. Exonerated eventually, Mary Ward's holiness of life was recognised by the Church in 2009 when Pope Benedict declared her

'Venerable'. At a time when the worldwide Synod called by Pope Francis is urging stronger roles for women within the Church, Mary Ward is a prime role model for future generations and especially for girls.

Mary Ward's passionate belief that "women in time to come will do much" has been the driving force of those who brought her vision and values to 42 countries in every continent from her time and up to the present day. She continues to provide inspiration to the women of our time.

Recognition by the Church would provide a much-needed example of the Church's willingness to promote the dignity of women in a world which badly needs such witness.

- Her key values of Freedom, Justice, Sincerity and Joy, vital in her 17th context, retain their significance and importance in a world so devoid of these virtues today.

- Despite the way she was treated by the Church of her time, Mary Ward retained her love for it, urging her followers to "love the Church". She is a model of critical fidelity at a time when many struggle within the Church.

- Mary Ward lived and worked for the greater glory of God despite the obstacles in her way. Her life challenges us to do the same.

- Mary Ward was an Englishwoman who held fast to the Catholic faith in an era of persecution and hostility to the Church. By making her a saint, the Church would give recognition to

the many faithful women and men who hold fast to the faith despite difficulties.

For the hundreds of thousands of Mary Ward followers worldwide, recognition by the Church would validate the belief widely held, that Mary Ward is needed as much by our 21st century world as she was in those dark days of opposition to women in the 17th century.

#### Prayer for Mary Ward's Beatification

*God, Creator of all that is good, we thank you for giving Mary Ward to the Church and to the world. Impelled by the fire of your love she did not shrink from risks, labours or sufferings.*

*She lived and worked for your greater glory for the good of the Church, for the nurture of faith, and for the dignity of women.*

*She was a pilgrim, who spread the joy of the Gospel, a woman for our times.*

*Grant that, through the solemn testimony of the Church, the example of her life may be a light for all who seek God's will.*

**Amen**

Visit the website for more details and for the link to the petition: [www.barconvent.co.uk](http://www.barconvent.co.uk).



All photos by Charlotte Graham

One Hope Project has combined its experience in leading music for liturgy with their creativity to produce something brand new and original: a project entitled Mass Of Unity. One Hope Project's Joe Wells told Andy Drozdziak all about it.



# One Hope Project is styling its own music for the Masses

Over the last 12 years, the One Hope Project has seen again and again how powerful music and worship is in helping people to engage with God. This taps into their mission to help people worship Jesus, as they believe that every person was created to worship.

This new album and creative project from One Hope Project, *Mass Of Unity*, shares music and information about the Catholic Mass which intends to help people worship God more deeply every time they attend. They have produced something that is both liturgically appropriate and contemporary, while also being playable and singable for worshippers and congregations.

One Hope Project is a young and vibrant worship collective that have emerged out of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the UK. They desire to help build God's Kingdom on earth through impactful music, fresh creativity and building community with each other and across the Church.

## A new Mass setting

With young people often commenting that church music is from a time long gone, Joe Wells believes that schools, in particular, will benefit from the updated Mass settings.

"We at One Hope Project have been leading the music for liturgy at various events, parishes and schools around the country for the last 12 years. During that time, schools often asked us if we had any new music that would work particularly well for school Masses - so we decided to develop a brand new Mass resource with schools and parishes in mind," Joe said.

"We know how powerful music



and worship can be in helping us engage with the liturgy so we wanted to create something that would help people in parishes and schools do just that. The vision for the project is to share a new musical Mass setting, alongside original hymns that are liturgically appropriate, contemporary in sound, playable and singable."

## 'Perfect' for schools

The entire Mass has been filmed, which will be released on YouTube on 5 April, along with the full *Mass Of Unity* album. To compliment the film, a commentary has been recorded by Fr Paul Keane, chaplain to Cambridge University, who talks through various elements of the Mass. Joe Wells believes this would be 'perfect' to share with pupils in schools to help them appreciate the deeper meaning of Mass and encourage more prayerful

engagement in liturgies.

Teresa Cripps, lay chaplain / assistant head at Bishop Challoner School in Basingstoke, has used the setting already, and emphasised the 'accessible' nature of the music and songs. "Our school music and chaplaincy team played through this Mass setting when One Hope Project came to our school in December," Teresa said.

"It was great to see how easily the student musicians and singers were able to pick up the songs and play them through together. The setting is lovely; prayerful and accessible for all to sing along with. We're really excited about using these in our school Masses, as we think they are going to help the students engage with Masses more prayerfully and encourage them to sing along."

Bishop of Northampton David Oakley said: "Their recent album of

is a powerful anthem featuring lead vocals from One Hope Project's Joe Wells, in a song of praise to Jesus, about the saving power and love of God.

Its style draws on the singable melodies and themes from traditional hymns, while being contemporary in sound, combining old and new styles from across the spheres of church music.

Joe Wells spoke of the song's meaning and how Jesus is 'the only one worthy of our praise.'

"*Saviour King* draws on the epic biblical story of saving love between God and humanity," Joe said.

"It serves as a reminder that, after God created this beautiful world and all of us beautiful people, He is too good to leave us in the brokenness of our own wrongdoings. Jesus, the word of God, became flesh, came to show us how to love. He loved us so much by laying down his life and rising from the grave, defeating death. This saving work of Jesus, who is now in the glory of Heaven, means He is the only one worthy of our praise."

One Hope Project has also developed other resources that are designed to help people engage with the Mass more fully.

"All the music for this *Mass of Unity* is written to accompany the liturgy of the Catholic Mass," Joe said. "Whether you're a Catholic who is looking for new music and Mass resources for your church, or a member of another church family interested in liturgy and worship, we know you will find this project uplifting, prayerful and insightful." **To pre-order the sheet music for *Saviour King* and all other songs from the *Mass Of Unity*, visit the One Hope Project website: [onehopeproject.co.uk](http://onehopeproject.co.uk)**

music for the celebration of Holy Mass enables young people in a variety of settings such as parishes, schools, retreat groups, and every other youth liturgical celebration, to experience the riches and depths of Eucharistic liturgy. I cannot recommend these resources enough. You don't need to be young to appreciate this inspired liturgical music. The rest of the liturgical community will also find this music prayerful and a wonderful aid to worship."

## 'He is the only one worthy of our praise'

In the lead up to the launch of the Mass on YouTube and album on 5 April, three singles will be released. On 19th January, they led with their brand new, original contemporary hymn, *Saviour King*, available to stream on all streaming platforms. *Saviour King*

## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



# God and existence

There are two major things that I've become aware of, that have convinced me that God created the universe and life.

It is my humble opinion that all actions of all intelligent beings are created and executed for a purpose. We've only to examine anything we human beings create and do to know this.

Existence is the universe and life, and the universe can only be experienced through the senses of life, making life very special.

Recognising these two things has given me thousands of reasons for knowing there's a God, and to give you a clue as to what I mean, here are some examples.

Scientists tell us that all life began as simple living cells in the oceans, eventually evolving into life on land, which then evolved into plant and animal life, with thousands of species in each.

The plant life on land provides animal life with oxygen, food, heating, medicines and building



materials. It provides thousands of uses for animal life, which could not exist without it.

Life in the oceans depends entirely upon one of the lowest forms of life called plankton. This is the basis of all food systems in the oceans. If there were no plankton, there would be no sea life, yet many plant and animal life forms have

evolved in the oceans over time into plankton and thousands of other life forms.

**All these things give the universe's existence and life within it a purpose, but what is that purpose?**

The universe is made up of 'galaxies', which in turn are made up of 'solar systems', which in turn

are made up of 'suns', with orbiting 'planets, moons, and physical debris. It is extremely complex.

**What is the purpose of the universe without life? Even scientists don't know.**

When the universe is investigated, no one has yet come up with what could be called a purpose for its creation, except when we consider that other extremely complex creation, **life**. This does give the universe a purpose, but how do we know this?

Existence, which is the universe and life is so complex that it could not have just happened into existence, it must have been designed and then created by some mega-intelligent being.

**But for what purpose?**

Whatever the purpose, how could we human beings know about it? There is only one way, and that is if the creator told us, but how did the intelligent creator we call God do this? No matter how we search for an answer, there is only one source

for such information and that is: The holy Bible.

This book consists of the writings of ancient holy men selected by God called prophets, plus some of the Apostles of his Son, Jesus Christ. Their task was to make sure that all people at that time and in the future knew God's purpose for the creation of the universe and human life.

The Catholic Church, which Jesus founded, does everything it can to promote the reading of the Bible, making sure that its members know God's purpose for their existence.

This purpose is for the eternal spiritual soul of all human beings to live with God in Heaven for all eternity when their mortal bodies die, but they must earn it by obeying God's commandments.

**Read the Bible so that you understand God's purpose for our creation and have an easier time learning it.**

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



# We're losing part of our humanity as we turn away from letterwriting

Written a letter recently?

The number of letters we send continues to decline. No longer is the breakfast table littered with the torn open shreds of hastily opened envelopes: e-mail and mobile phones have taken over in their place.

The demise of the letter writing is a loss that is yet to be recognised.

One of my Christmas presents this year was the recently published collection of the letters of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. Without the option of the delete key these reflections and thoughts would have been lost.

Long, considered exchanges written in the quiet of an evening or hastily written notes written in transit on a plane, they make a fascinating collection of a life well-lived,

People save letters. They were handled by the writer. They are personal. Having been read once, they can be returned to and reread later. They have a degree of permanence. Just think what would



have been lost had the letters of the New Testament not been preserved for successive generations. They contain the seminal teaching of the early years of the Church and were written to confirm the oral teaching of the apostles and early disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. They are a sure source on which we have built our Christian faith.

Just as Heaney's correspondence gives us insight into his friendships with various literary people of his time, so do the New Testament letters tell a story of the formative communities of the early Christian era.

The story letter still exists and is often enclosed with the Christmas card. They can so easily become a

'me' story rather than an exchange of ideas in a reflective and considered manner.

Letters between friends and lovers can take many words to simply say "I am missing you, I love you."

Contrast that with the expressively public Letters to the Editor columns published by most

newspapers. Here the intention is to publish a reader's opinion for further comment. It is a way to put into the public forum an alternative point of view.

It is often said that you can determine the vitality of parish life by reading the weekly newsletter. It gives you a taste of what is going on who is involved, what kind of place it is, inward looking or outward going, self-concerned or missionary?

Finally, the hard letter to write, the letter of sympathy in bereavement.

When someone to whom you have been married for many years is taken from you through illness, old age or accident, an emptiness remains. It is then that the friendship of others becomes apparent, and their response sustains us.

It is their letter in the morning post that can give us a lift in difficult times.

Who have you written to recently?

# You hold keys to the Kingdom of God in your hand: you just have to use them

**‘In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, chapter 5), Jesus outlines the internal qualities necessary to enter into His Kingdom.’**

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

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

Let us deal with the internal component first.

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

A prime example of this is Jesus’s story of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee kept all the commandments in the wrong way because he was self-righteous and judgmental and looked down on the Publican who he despised. The Publican, on the other hand, knew he was a sinner, saying, “Lord have mercy on me a sinner.” He left the temple more justified than the Pharisee because



of his humble attitude which we find in the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

The Beatitudes challenge us to change our internal dispositions, to move away from self-righteousness and harsh judgments to cultivate a heart of purity, humility, peace, compassion, courage, mercy, and love. They invite us to let go of our pre-conceived notions and to see the world the way Christ sees it, to be filled with joy and peace, even in the face of persecution and to be peacemakers, spreading God’s love and hope to all those around us. If you want to appreciate a life based on the Beatitudes, look to the example of Jesus himself who embodied them all.

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

God’s kingdom, though it resides within you, is not a kingdom divorced from everyday reality. We are called to be a light to the world by the performance of “good deeds” and by following the Golden Rule laid down in the Sermon on the Mount: “*Do unto others what you wish them to do unto you*” (Matthew 7:12).

The parable of The Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) emphasises the importance of doing good deeds for those in need. The love that Jesus talks about is no pie in the sky feeling or

sentimental mood or self-congratulatory lip service. It is the real thing and consists in helping others: The sick, the lonely, the hungry, the stranger, the homeless, the jobless, and the needy in whatever form that takes. People will forget what you said, but they will never forget what you did for them when they were hurting or in need. By doing these good deeds of love, the Lord assures us, we will enter into his kingdom.

Love is at the core of God’s kingdom on earth. It comes in all shapes and sizes, and goes by many

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

Ultimately, your decision to put the kingdom of God first in your life is a personal one that requires courage and the willingness to take risks.

The reward of sharing the blessings of the Beatitudes and doing good deeds for others in need far outweigh any potential discomfort. By embracing the blessing of the Beatitudes within, and by reaching out to others through good deeds will bring joy to your life and create a more compassionate, understanding and connected world.

## Let go of your worldly attachments and embrace God

**“It is easier for a camel to pass through the needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Gospel of Mark 10:25**

The needle’s eye, according to some scriptural scholars, may refer to a narrow gate that merchants used to enter Jerusalem. And, since this small, oval-shaped gate could not allow a camel-with-baggage to pass through, a merchant traveller would have to remove the baggage first and literally push or pull the camel through the needle’s eye.

Everyone has had the experience of being burdened by some kind of attachment or baggage

that prevented him or her from being truly happy. No one can possess the happiness of the children of God, which is within, while being attached to material things. You cannot have it both ways. You must let go of your attachments; attachments to money, to power, to possessions, to persons, to things, if you are to enter the kingdom of God. Once you do this, you can fully enjoy the things of God’s creation because you are not attached or controlled by any of them.

The problem with the rich man in today’s gospel was not that he was rich but that he was attached to wealth and possessions.



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Learning from Job – and from Jesus

4th Feb – 5th Sunday (Year B)

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

**Job wrestles with the problem of innocent suffering**

Job said: “Do not human beings have a hard service on earth and are not their days like the days of a labourer? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like labourers who look for their wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I rise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing until dawn. My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to their end without hope. “Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good.”

**Responsorial: Psalm 146:1-6**

*R./: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.*

*Praise the Lord for he is good; sing to our God for he is loving: to him our praise is due. (R./)*

*The Lord builds up Jerusalem and brings back Israel’s exiles, he heals the broken-hearted, he binds up all their wounds, he fixes the number of the stars; he calls each one by its name. (R./)*

*Our Lord is great and almighty; his wisdom can never be measured. The Lord raises the lowly; he humbles the wicked to the dust. (R./)*

**1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23**

**Paul is prepared to be “all things to everyone,” to bring them the Gospel**

If I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do



**‘In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.’**

it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

**Gospel: Mark 1:29-39**  
**Even Jesus needs a quiet place to pray. Then he starts a new phase of his mission**

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**Learning from Job and Jesus**

The story of Job is a like a roller-coaster: He has made it big — happy home, good material resources, and he’s a regular religious observer. The Lord brags to Satan about him — what a virtuous man Job is — but Satan says that Job’s prayers might stop if his bank account was blocked. So the Lord reluctantly lets Satan do his worst, and poor Job doesn’t know what hit him. He speaks about the misery and emptiness of life. When some friends of his come along, offering religious comfort, it doesn’t seem to help poor Job.

We’re far removed from Job in time, but not that removed from his experience. The human condition remains what it was when Shakespeare said, through Hamlet, “Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them?” He continues listing various things “That make calamity of so long life; For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely, The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay, The insolence of office and the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes? ... Who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat under a weary life, But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscovered country from whose bourn No traveller returns, puzzles the will, And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of?”

We would have to be hermits to avoid seeing the pain and misery into which human life is so often plunged. We see the marriages heading for the rocks, people with nervous breakdowns, teenagers at odds with their parents, destruction and violence in our cities. At times it seems that the world in which we live is full of immorality, injustice, exploitation, and hypocrisy for its systems to operate. It leads some clever people like Stephen Fry to call God a sadist. We can repeat, maybe with less polish, most of the sentiments that Job speaks in the first reading.

What might a Christian have to say to Job — or to people who think like Stephen Fry? What can we say to the many brothers and sisters of Job who live in this world? There is no easy catechism answer to take away the pain they find in living? Maybe in dire situations it is not our task to speak, but to listen. The cry of emptiness, loneliness, despair, and pain may not be the most profound insight into life, but the cry is real, and honest, and strong. In a way, that cry is part of the Christian message; we even find it in the Saviour’s mouth on Good Friday. That cry today is part

of the Word spoken now, and it demands response.

What is our response to persons in pain? To some extent, we can see that response at work in the Gospel passage: the sick come to Jesus, and he heals them. He does not debate the meaning of suffering — he stretches out his hand and heals. Our first reaction is to think that here we cannot be imitators of Christ. But that is only true if we take the miracles of Jesus in a narrow sense. We cannot make illness go away with a simple action, as Christ could. But we can respond, and we can help to ease the suffering. We can let Christ himself act in us to fill the loneliness, care for the sick, to be with the fearful and the heartbroken.

Today’s Scripture challenges us to listen and to share. We are to follow Jesus not only in our happy times but also in times of loneliness, and even of tragedy. Like him we seek ways to reach out with love toward people who are worried, sick or depressed — to let the Lord use us to bless those situations somehow. Then when he calls us to himself — he will have let us be his eyes, his smile, his ears, and his hands, quietly at work in the world.

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■ QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

JENNA MARIE COOPER



# Must we burn incense – and why can't we forget about the 'Great Schism' of 1054?

**Q: How is it possible that the Orthodox practice of the sacrament of the Eucharist would ever be considered as the true body and blood of Christ from the Catholic perspective, simply because of an understanding outside of the unbroken chain of apostolic succession?**

A: For context, let us review what we mean when we refer to the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Historically, we believe that the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church was founded with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, shortly after Jesus' bodily ascension into Heaven. As Jesus no longer physically walked the earth as he once had, he entrusted the continuance of his saving mission to the apostles.

The apostles, in turn, spread throughout the world founding local churches (in some ways, the rough precursor to our modern dioceses), and ordaining their successors (early bishops) to take their places in the shepherding of these local churches. Many of these local churches developed their own distinct liturgical traditions and other customs influenced by local needs and culture.

Initially, the Universal Church was one unified structure of local Churches under the ultimate oversight of the pope in Rome, who was the successor to St. Peter as the leader of the apostles. But divisions and tensions began to arise even in the Church's first few centuries. Some of these tensions were at least officially resolved by the early ecumenical councils, which clarified disputed questions of Catholic doctrine. However, due to some complex religious and political conflicts, the year 1054 saw "the Great Schism," in which the pope excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, the bishop-leader of the local Churches in what had been the Eastern part of the Roman Empire – with the patriarch in turn issuing his own excommunication against the pope.

The Churches of the East, which rejected the universal authority of the pope, became known as the Orthodox Churches. Although there are some doctrinal differences between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox, for the most part disagreement on the role of the Holy Father remains the major obstacle to unity between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

We as Catholics actually do believe that apostolic succession is significant and meaningful enough



'The smoke that rises from the burning of incense has for millennia been understood by the Christian community as a symbol of the prayers of the faithful rising up to God.'

to allow for Eastern Orthodox Churches to have a valid celebration of the Eucharist. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: "The Eastern churches that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church celebrate the Eucharist with great love. These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all-by apostolic succession-the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy." (See CCC 1399)

Keep in mind that the apostolic succession in the Orthodox churches goes hand-in-hand with our shared sacramental theology. That is, Catholics and Orthodox not only share belief in the Real Presence in the Eucharist, but also a shared understanding of the sacrament of holy orders and thus the nature of the priesthood. This is in contrast to the various Western Christian communities we call 'Protestant,' because in addition to breaking communion with the Holy Father in Rome, the sacramental theology of Protestant denominations tends to be a fairly radical departure from what we believe as Catholics.

Similarly, there are other Catholic schismatic groups – with 'schism' defined as a refusal to submit to the authority of the Holy Father, as noted in canon 751 of the Code of Canon Law – which nevertheless have a valid Eucharist due to apostolic succession, despite their ordinations and celebrations of the Eucharist being generally illicit. One contemporary example of this would be the Society of St. Pius X.

But the Eastern Orthodox Churches are not to be confused with the many Eastern Catholic Churches. Eastern Catholics have different laws and a different liturgical tradition than Latin (aka 'Roman') Catholics, but Eastern Catholics remain in full communion with the Holy Father.

**Q: Our daughter has totally given up going to church because of the relentless use of incense at each Mass. It doesn't bother me, but I do notice a lot of people in the congregation that obviously have problems with it. Since it causes breathing difficulties for many people, is it really appropriate to use at Mass when it excludes**

**attendance by many?**

A: In principle, incense is indeed appropriate for Mass. The smoke that rises from the burning of incense has for millennia been understood by the Christian community as a symbol of the prayers of the faithful rising up to God. Even beyond this, Catholicism in general and Catholic worship in particular has a strong 'incarnational' dimension. Among other things, this means that the Church understands that we are both body and soul, and that the engagement of our five senses, including our sense of smell, can help us enter more deeply into prayer.

I can understand how the overuse of incense might be a health issue for some people, and it's unfortunate that your daughter is struggling with this. If you sincerely believe that the parish's use of incense is excessive, perhaps it would be worth having a respectful conversation with the priest. Also, most parishes do have at least one Sunday Mass that is celebrated in a less elaborate fashion, so perhaps your daughter could inquire as to whether there may be at least one incense-free

Mass per week. If worse comes to the worst, it would also be legitimate for your daughter to opt to attend Mass at another nearby parish which might not use as much incense.

**Q: I was very disappointed in your Q&A about why someone can't just attend Mass on Sunday and 'count' it for both Christmas and the 4th Sunday of Advent. There seems to be a genuine question of why we go to Mass in the first place. There is a real person, Jesus, who waits for us and wishes to hear all about our day, our dreams, our frustrations. How many Catholics are happy to give just the bare minimum? Unfortunately, there is a trend in the Catholic Church to become theologians at the expense of a relationship with our Lord.**

A: First of all, I do agree with you in principle: as Catholics, we should genuinely want a vibrant prayer life, and ideally we should all look forward to going to Mass, understanding it as a privilege and a joy, and not a chore to check off our list.

But like so many things in Catholicism, this isn't a matter of "either/or" but of "both/and." That is, we can both attend Mass out of a sincere love for God while at the same time also taking care to understand the extent of our actual obligation.

Logically, it would be silly for the church to articulate laws and obligations if paying attention to such laws was meant to be discouraged. One of the main reasons why the church spells out obligations in the first place is to help us to better love and serve our Lord. So, even if we as Catholics just do "the bare minimum" required of us by our state in life, this should be enough to help us grow in holiness if we fulfill these obligations with the correct disposition.

A healthy spiritual life is marked by a sense of balance and serenity. For those who struggle with any level of scrupulosity, stated obligations can be helpful insofar as they allow for objective knowledge of when one has actually fulfilled God's expectations. If the only guidance available on how often to attend Mass was something along the lines of: "Let your love for Jesus determine how often you go," this could set many Catholics up for a vain chasing of an impossible standard.

## REFLECTIONS ON PRAYER

The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst continues its reflections on various aspects of Christian prayer. This week the topic is ‘thanksgiving’.

# When we pray we are always saying thank you to God

The second element of prayer according to St Thomas Aquinas is ‘Thanksgiving’

In his Angelus address on 21st January, Pope Francis said the following: “The coming months will lead us to the opening of the Holy Door, with which we will begin the Jubilee.

“I ask you to intensify your prayer to prepare us to live well this event of grace, and to experience the strength of God’s hope. Therefore, today we begin the Year of Prayer; that is, a year dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, and in the world. We will also be helped by the resources that the Dicastery for Evangelisation will make available.

“In these days, let us pray especially for Christian unity, and let us never tire of invoking the Lord for peace in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, and in many other parts of the world: it is always the weakest who suffer the lack of it. I am thinking of the little ones, of the many injured and killed children, of those deprived of affection, deprived of dreams and of a future.

Let us feel the responsibility to pray and build peace for them!”

In the previous reflection, we considered the first part of prayer, oration, as a posture of humility before the God to whom we raise our minds and hearts. In this reflection, we consider a second part of prayer according to the division of St Thomas Aquinas: thanksgiving.

Whereas oration signifies a general calling on the name of the Lord, thanksgiving gives more concreteness and specification to our cry. We explicitly acknowledge God’s greatness by recalling the many wonderful things he has done for his people throughout the ages.

Thanksgiving is thus tied to memory, and our cry to God is always accompanied by memorialising something real which God has accomplished for us.

From childhood we are taught to thank people for what they have done for us, no matter how big or small the deed; how much more should we express our thanks to the God who holds us and all creation in being at every instant?

The notion of thanksgiving is so central to Christian prayer that it



gives its name to the very sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood. Our word ‘Eucharist,’ derived from the Greek *eucharistia*, means ‘thanksgiving’. At each Mass, we are reminded that Christ ‘gave thanks’ before blessing the bread and wine; and this is again linked to the notion of memory, for Christ commanded the apostles and all future priests to “do this” in his

remembrance.

Memory and thanksgiving are thus bound up with the action of making the presence of the Lord real through the transubstantiation of the bread and wine at Mass.

In the next reflection, we will consider the third element of prayer according to St Thomas Aquinas: that of petition.

**Above, St Thomas Aquinas, as taken from an embroidered banner in St Dominic’s Church, Newcastle. In this depiction of the ‘Angelic Doctor’ he is holding up the Eucharistic species of Christ’s Body and Blood**

## How deep are our divisions?

**Greg Erlandson**

The movie, musical and now musical movie *Mean Girls* is a reminder of one of the more miserable sides of adolescence: ‘In’ groups and ‘out’ groups, the cool kids and the losers, the nerds and the jocks.

Unfortunately, in groups and out groups don’t just exist in schools. Social scientists say this kind of group identity is hard-wired in us. We seek the protection of our tribe and we view outsiders with hostility.

This is one way to understand our highly polarised and politicised world today. People increasingly identify with one political group and react with hostility or fear to those who are not in their group. Political identity has become a ‘meta-identity’, impacting not just our politics but where we live, how we pray, who we associate with. Communities are becoming more politically homogenous as

we seek out like-minded people and avoid those who do not think like us. We are all scared of the ‘other’.

That is one of the intriguing insights made by Fr Robert Aaron Wessman in *The Church’s Mission in a Polarized World*. In an effort to understand the harsh divides that are separating people in the developed global north, including Catholics, Fr Wessman explores the power of groups, looking at the sociological and psychological research that shows how important group identity is, and how easily it can pit us against each other.

Surveys show that when our political identity is more and more central to how we see ourselves as members of a group, the less likely we are to want to associate with or socialise with people who are not in our group. In ‘mean girl’ terms, we identify our

group as the ‘in group’, and the other side as the ‘out group.’ Most disturbing is that often the punishment or defeat of the out group becomes our primary driver. Rather than looking for areas of agreement, we look for annihilation. “Rage motivates,” Fr Wessman writes, and politicians are incentivised to stimulate this rage. “There exists an ‘us versus them’ competition where winner takes all, and where the common good is rarely considered,” Father Wessman adds.

For Christians, this environment is spiritually deadly. It divides us not just into warring camps, but hate-filled ones.

Nor is the Church immune to this polarisation. Catholics are tempted to pick and choose which parts of the social gospel they highlight – a kind of cafeteria polarisation. Pastors tell horror stories of how these divides can impact parish

harmony. Parishes themselves are at risk of becoming ideologically homogenous as Catholics seek out spaces where they will find others who think like them.

None of this is compatible with our baptismal bonds. “Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ,” the catechism reminds us.

“Therefore...we are members one of another.” The catechism describes this as our “sacramental bond of unity”.

Perhaps when the Church is done with the Eucharistic revival, it could mount a baptismal revival.

Its mission would be to help Catholics understand that their baptismal bonds transcending class, gender and most certainly political affiliation.

Such a revival would be good for the Church. Good for us, too.



# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



## Archbishop issues condemnation of racism on joyous Racial Justice Sunday

**Suresh Abboodas**

The flyer to the faithful for Racial Justice Sunday was clear: 'All are invited to come in traditional attires and costumes and bring a flag of your country of origin. This will add vigour and colour to the occasion.'

And all did come in their thousands, attired in their national costume and carrying their national flag of origin from far and wide of the Archdiocese of Southwark.

They were responding to a call from their shepherd, Archbishop John Wilson, to celebrate Racial Justice and Cultural Inclusion at St-George's Metropolitan Cathedral Southwark on Sunday, 28th January. This is the first such of a gathering in Southwark archdiocese.

Men, women, children, school children, and Catholic agencies and organisations carried their flags and banners, packing the large cathedral to capacity, much to the thrill of the organisers and the archbishop, who is the architect of the Mass and its Principal Celebrant.

In his homily, Archbishop John Wilson made a fervent call to abolish racism both inside the Catholic Church and outside. "Racism is wrong. It is there even in the Catholic Church, but we make it clear that there is no place for racism. No ifs and buts," he said. "The Vatican Second Council had called for equality for all people. Every face of social and cultural discrimination must be curbed and eradicated as something



Archbishop John with members of the African community.

incompatible in God's design."

"There is no place for racism and never should be," he continued. "Each of us are called to be a microphone of God, in a way to be like a prophet. As St Archbishop Oscar Romero said: 'Let us not be cowards and hide our talents'. But remember that every person is a beloved soul of God."

"Every person irrespective of language, or colour of his or her skin has a dignity, that must be respected. This divine truth must be at the heart of our faith. 'Love one another', our Lord said. So, we

are all called to love our neighbour," the archbishop stressed.

On the actions undertaken by his archdiocese towards combating racism, the archbishop said: "Our archdiocese is working with various organisations to combat racism. We are actively recognising the gifts of everyone. We are promoting saints from different cultures. We are also working with schools and other agencies to make our archdiocese a welcoming place for everyone."

The Prayer of the Faithful was read by people from various cultures in different languages. The

prayers were said in Goan by Jennifer, in Igbo by Stella, in Tagalog by Larvie, in Yoruba by Francis, in Japanese by Kyoko and in English by John.

The First Reading was read by Cecelia Brainard and the Second Reading was read by Francis Chinonso Onye.

Canon Victor Darlington, the President of the Commission, thanked the archbishop for his support and leadership in promoting its works. He also thanked the congregation for making the event a grand success



The Prayer of the Faithful read in different languages.

by their presence. He invited them to be a 'friend' of the Commission by participating in its activities.

Two choirs added colour and solemnity to the occasion. After the Mass, the faithful had a rare opportunity to greet and mingle with their archbishop outside the cathedral.

The Racial Justice Sunday was a grand success and there is already excitement about next year's event.

**Below left, members of the Asian-Tamil community at the Cathedral, while below, children from local schools also attended, some in national costume**



## Canterbury and Rome play host to ecumenical meetings

The Growing Together summit has seen pairs of Anglican and Catholic bishops, including Bishop Peter Collins, gather for a series of ecumenical discussions and visits to holy sites in Rome which have significance to both traditions.

On Friday 26th January, before the summit moved to Canterbury for the second phase of the programme, the bishops gathered to pray at the Church of San Gregorio al Celio during their last day in Rome. It was a fitting location, as San Gregorio al Celio is from where St Augustine was sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great in 597, to be the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

During the service, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop Anthony Poggio, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, along with Archbishop Donald Bolen and Bishop David Hamid (co-chairs of IARCCUM) stood at the Chair of



Photo: Neil Turner/IARCCUM.

Bishop Peter Collins (right) and Bishop Stephen Race, reading from the Letter of St Gregory the Great to St Augustine of Canterbury.

Gregory the Great. Bishop Peter Collins, East Anglia and Bishop Stephen Race, Beverley read from the Letter of St Gregory the Great to St Augustine of Canterbury.

During their time in Canterbury the bishops made pilgrimage visits to Canterbury Cathedral, held a Vigil Mass at St Thomas of Canterbury parish and a Cathedral Eucharist, where Cardinal Stephen Chow preached.

The summit also included ecumenical discussions on joint witness and mission, and work on the preparation of a Joint Statement, for how the bishops will take forward the fruits of their discussion in their home dioceses.

Speaking of their highlights from the programme in Rome, the Chairs of the Summit, Archbishop Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina, Canada and Bishop David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop in Europe said: "Visiting Rome has been a special opportunity to meet and pray at holy sites that hold significance to both our faith traditions.

"The commissioning we have received this week from Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury reminds us again that the faith we share is a sending faith that goes out into the world to serve, bring transformation and share the saving love of Christ."

## Bishop salutes role of MSP missionaries in the UK

Bishop Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth, presided at the annual foundation day Mass for the Missionaries of St Paul, which was celebrated in St George's Cathedral, Southwark, on 26th January.

The MSPs, as they are known, were founded in 1976 as part of the response of the Nigerian Catholic Church to the call of Pope Paul VI at Kampala, Uganda, that Africans should become missionaries to themselves.

The first missionaries to arrive in the UK were Frs Cosmas Ikirodah and Addison Okpoh, who served in Clifton and Southwark dioceses respectively from the year 2000.

Today, the Missionaries of St Paul

serve in many of the dioceses in England and Wales. Bishop Philip Egan has one MSP priest in Portsmouth Diocese and is soon to have another. "They bring the love of Christ with them," he said.

"They have a commitment to Christ and to prayer, but especially to mission. And that, I think, is central to the life of the Church in our country. Looking at parishes in which the missionaries work, they've retained the faithful at a time of declining Mass attendance and they've managed to work like a conductor of an orchestra with the parish to release the gifts of the laity and to involve them in parish life."



## Induction Mass welcomes Ali as she starts life as the head at St Cuthbert's

On Sunday 28th January, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton Richard Moth celebrated the induction Mass for Ali Rainbow as Head of School at St Cuthbert's, in the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady in Egham.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Richard and Canon Chris Spain, with the parish welcoming Ali and her family. Attending were past and present members of the school community, colleagues from the deanery,

Xavier Catholic Education Trust and members of the diocesan Education Service.

The choir sang the school prayer and the PTA provided wonderful refreshments in the hall afterwards.

Pictured below are James Kibble, Xavier CEO; Canon Chris Spain; Julie Oldroyd, Director; Ali Rainbow, Head of School; Kate Licence, Executive Head; and Bishop Richard



# THE BIG LENT WALK



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## Living Simply – with pride

St John Boste Catholic Primary School has been presented with the CAFOD LiveSimply award.

The award is an opportunity for Catholic communities to respond to Pope Francis' invitation in *Laudato Si'* to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to them.

There were three elements to the award; Live simply, Live sustainably with creation and Live in solidarity with people in poverty. The Washington-based school was required to create a main project and two smaller projects on each element and show how these have been embedded into the school to make a difference.

For 'Live simply', they created a biodiversity garden; for 'Live sustainably with creation', they integrated recycling into all areas of the school. Finally, for 'Live in solidarity with people in poverty', the children have been supporting the charitable efforts in Sierra Leone, as well as donating to the Washington Community Food Project.

The Executive Head Teacher, Denise Cushlow said that the school was "delighted to win the CAFOD LiveSimply award," she said. "The children worked hard to help the school become more sustainable, more caring about the less fortunate as well as giving back to the community. We shall display our wooden plaque recognising the award with pride."

# Ukraine sister shows what real 'hope' is

In preparation for the 2025 Jubilee year Pilgrims of Hope, the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) invited five Catholic women to share their reflections on the topic. Members heard from Sr. Michaela Toulmin from the Hynning Monastery in Lancashire, Jacintha Bowe, Vice President of NBCW, Patricia Stoa, Nottingham Diocese Justice & Peace Commission, Nikki Dhillon Keane, a therapist who works with survivors of domestic violence and abuse, and Amy Cameron, President of the Board, who enlightened the NBCW on their take on 'hope'.

The meeting was also joined online from Ukraine by Sr Lucia Murashko, from the Order of St

Basil the Great. She spoke movingly of the challenges of religious life close to the front line, and reminded us of the importance of

**Amy Cameron,  
President of the  
Board of the  
NBCW**



sustaining our prayers for our fellow Christians who live day by day with the reality of war.

Other reflections included perspectives from scripture, tradition, psychotherapy, and personal experience.

**For details about future events and membership of the NBCW, see [www.nbcw.co.uk](http://www.nbcw.co.uk)**

# Michael's grand efforts raise cash for Mary's Meals

The charity Mary's Meals is nearly £1,000 better off thanks to the fundraising efforts of an 11-year-old school pupil.

Michael, who attends St Thomas More Catholic Academy in Nuneaton, and is an altar server at St Anne's and St Joseph's parish, has raised almost £800 for Mary's Meals.

Mary's Meals serves nutritious school meals to children living in some of the world's poorest countries and is currently feeding more than 2.4m children every school day.

Michael was spurred into action after watching a video about Mary's Meals last summer. Linda Glover, Michael's *Abuela* (Spanish for Grandma) said: "Michael felt quite sad seeing the orphaned and poor children who would go without food for days, begging for food and eating out of bins. It really touched him and he felt he had to act.

"That evening he did some graffiti art, which I helped to colour in with him and he wrote a poem.

"Inspired by sales of his graffiti art, he worked all summer with cake sales, talks, fundraising at school and most recently Christmas craft fairs. His teachers are really supporting him at school by doing fundraising every half term with events planned by his classmates.

"To date, Michael has raised almost £800 and his goal is to reach £1,000 before his 12th birthday in June.

"Michael keeps going. He says no child should be hungry anywhere in the world. They need our help."

Michael was a guest of honour at a Mary's Meals Christmas concert in Birmingham, along with charity founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow and Archbishop Longley.

Hannah Moore, supporter engagement officer at Mary's Meals, said: "We're so thankful to Michael for his incredible fundraising. Seeing young people like Michael get behind our mission is so inspiring."



## St Anselm's College

Birkenhead, Wirral CH43 1UQ  
Part of the Edmund Rice Family

requires a new

## Headteacher

**Start Date: September 2024 Salary Range: L29-L33 (£94,348 - £102,995)**

The Board of Governors of this popular and successful boys Catholic Grammar School seeks to appoint a suitably-experienced, ambitious and exceptional Headteacher with a proven track record of success. We require an outstanding leader capable of inspiring, motivating and supporting our pupils and staff to achieve their full potential. The College is part of the Edmund Rice Schools Network, founded by the Christian Brothers, and will soon enter the Trusteeship of the Gaudete Trust, a joint Trust with five other Religious Orders. The current Headteacher retires in August 2024 after 22 years' service, during which The College and its facilities have been transformed.

**The successful applicant will be someone who:**

- Is a practising Catholic
- Is committed to and understands Catholic education
- Is an inspirational leader with an understanding of the ethos of the College and a clear vision for its future
- Is committed to improving outcomes for all of our students
- Is able to lead, motivate and inspire students and staff
- Has a proven track record of raising standards in teaching and learning
- Has excellent communication, organisational and inter-personal skills

Prospective candidates are invited to contact the College to arrange a visit.

Please contact Mrs Alison Cook by email: [acook@st-anselms.com](mailto:acook@st-anselms.com)

**Application packs and further details** are available **via the College website** at: [www.st-anselms.com](http://www.st-anselms.com)

Completed application forms should be returned by post to: Mrs Alison Cook, Clerk to the Governors  
Or via email to [acook@st-anselms.com](mailto:acook@st-anselms.com)

**Closing date for applications: Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Shortlisting will take place: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Interview dates: Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024**





# Silchester opens doors to unity faith group

**Pete Hughes**

St Michael's church in Tadley took part in an Ecumenical service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity organised by Churches Together Around Tadley. Churches Together Around Tadley ventured beyond Tadley to the 12th century church of St Mary the Virgin in Silchester, Roman

Calleva Atrebatum, for the annual Unity Service on Sunday afternoon, 21st January.

The church is rather remote and located just within the ancient walls of the Roman city, and in very poor weather it was good to welcome representatives from all local church communities.

Rev Karen West, the resident

Anglican vicar of Silchester, wrote: "On behalf of CTAT and Ministry team colleagues, I'm writing to say an enormous 'thank you' to you all for supporting us hosting the Unity service yesterday.

"It was so good to be able to welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ to our beautiful Church and to offer them generous hospitality."

# School offers a fond farewell ... and a joyous welcome

The staff and pupils at St Austin's Catholic Primary School in Stafford (part of The Painsley Catholic Academy) are delighted to welcome their new principal, Charlotte Rowley, to the school.

Mrs Rowley was appointed following the retirement of Michele Hoyle, who spent 14 years as the head at St Austin's.

On her retirement, Michele said: "The school has a wonderful reputation in the community. I will miss you all, particularly the happy smiling faces of the children and the laughter we shared every day.

"I am sure you will offer Mrs Rowley the same support you have shown me."

Charlotte was previously Deputy Headteacher at St Gregory's school in Longton, and prior to that was Acting Principal at St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary Academy in Stoke-on-Trent. Her first teaching role was at Painsley Catholic College in Cheadle, so she brings with her knowledge of the Painsley Catholic Academy.

Charlotte said: "I want all children to be well-rounded, happy individuals. As a Catholic school, St Austin's will continue to focus on developing the whole child - spiritually and academically, as well as ensuring that they are fulfilled



Michele Hoyle

through enrichment opportunities and experiences. I wish for all children to look back in fondness at their time with us, but also look ahead in readiness for the next steps in their educational journey and continue to thrive."

The directors of The Painsley Catholic Academy, governors, staff and children at St Austin's, wish to thank Mrs Hoyle for her dedicated service to Catholic education and, in particular, her service at St Austin's.

**Charlotte Rowley will continue to focus on developing the whole child at St Austin's**



# Cathedral honours professor with new ecumenical role

Paul Murray was installed as one of the first three Ecumenical Canons at Durham Cathedral on 14th January.

The role of Ecumenical Canon allows the Bishop of Durham and the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral to recognise significant ecumenical friends and thereby celebrate the place of all the churches in Christian witness, ministry, and mission.

The invitation from Bishop Paul Butler came in recognition of all that Paul Murray has given to the life of the Catholic Church, and to the wider life of God's church in the region and beyond as Professor of Systematic Theology and founding

Director of the Centre for the Catholic Studies.

Particular mention was made of the contribution he has made to the ecumenical life of the Church across the traditions through his pioneering work in receptive ecumenism.

Professor Paul said: "It was with very great surprise and immense joy that I received the invitation inviting me to become one of the new Ecumenical Canons for Durham Cathedral, and I was delighted to accept. The Cathedral occupies a treasured place in my life and affections, and I am deeply moved by this honour."



Professor Paul Murray. Photo: John Attle

The Catholic Independent Schools' Conference (CISC) require for 1 May 2024, or as soon as possible thereafter, a:

*General Secretary*



**Closing date for applications is Thursday 22 February 2024 at 4.00pm**

**Interviews will be held on Thursday 7 March 2024**

The Catholic Independent Schools' Conference (CISC) represents a growing community of Catholic Independent Schools in the UK and beyond, working together to promote and celebrate the global project of Catholic education.

Supporting and representing all of the UK's Independent Schools, and a number of Associate schools in Ireland and further afield, the General Secretary's role is a stimulating and multi-faceted job which has an increasingly high public profile while retaining its traditional member-focused perspective.

The successful candidate will be an accomplished and inspirational leader with a compelling vision for Catholic education and a passion for improving the lives of our future generations. We are seeking an outstanding ambassador for the charity and, as such, the successful candidate will need to be an excellent communicator, relationship builder and facilitator - someone with a strong track record in senior leadership within Catholic education.

Applicants will need to demonstrate a strategic mind-set with a clear understanding of how best to support Catholic independent school heads in their role. The post-holder will be a practising Catholic with the vision, determination and faith to move CISC forward to the next stages of its development.

For informal discussions, please email Antony Hudson, CISC Chair, at [AHudson@stgeorgesweybridge.com](mailto:AHudson@stgeorgesweybridge.com).

An application pack and further details can be found at [www.catholicindependentschools.com](http://www.catholicindependentschools.com).



CATHOLIC INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS' CONFERENCE

[www.catholicindependentschools.com](http://www.catholicindependentschools.com)

CISC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and applicants must be willing to undergo screening appropriate to the post, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.



Staying cyber safe on the move: pg 34

The Universe Catholic Weekly's guide to the more leisurely side of life

GARDENING

## How to top tomatoes: What to do when your tomato plants get too tall

One of summer's most confusing tasks is knowing when a plant has grown too well, and how to handle it.

A case in point are tomatoes: Knowing how to top tomatoes and what to do when tomato plants get too tall will give you the confidence to tame your plants while keeping them healthy and productive.

When we get to the height of summer, it might be time to prune those tomatoes.

While the idea of topping (cutting off the top growth) seems extreme and counter-intuitive I'll tell you why and when you should consider this option, and how to do it safely for optimal yield and healthier plants.

The first thing to understand is that topping plants is simply an option. If you do nothing and allow plants to grow, they will eventually flop over the edge of whatever is supporting them and continue to grow.

The main downside is that fruit laden branches can kink and potentially impact production. Another risk includes excessive growth that blocks light and air to the rest of the plant (increasing the opportunity for diseases to take hold). Otherwise, it comes down to personal preference.

As numerous branches begin to flop over the cage from your indeterminate varieties (the type that keeps on growing), take a deep breath and consider cutting some or all of the branches off near the top of their cage support.

### How to Top Tomatoes

**Identify the general area to make the cut.** Then select a section of the branch just above the last set of fruit you want to leave on the plant and make the cut just about that.

**Leave some shade.** When making your cut, it's important to leave some shade from overhead or neighbouring branches to prevent sun scald (a condition that will burn your tomato fruit due to direct exposure to the sun).

**Monitor future growth.** To maintain current height, monitor branches for new suckers that will continue to emerge from each branch. Remove as necessary to maintain height.



Take comfort in knowing it is always traumatic to remove perfectly good, tomato-laden branches from healthy plants.

But rest assured in knowing that the remaining fruit will continue to ripen, aided by the shade of overhead foliage.

There's also a bonus to topping tomatoes if you want to make more plants. You can take those cuttings (trim off the lower side branches)

and stick the stems into an adjacent bed or pot. Firm in the soil around them and keep them watered—consistently for the next week. (You could also take cuttings and place into a glass of water. Within two weeks they will root sufficiently from the stem for transplanting back into the garden.)

Cuttings removed from topping can be rooted in water or stuck directly in the ground. If you

keep them well hydrated and out of direct sun for the first few days, new roots will quickly form as a simple way to propagate exact clones of your topped plants.

If you want to tame your plants, with the added bonus of making more from what you cut, knowing how to top tomatoes when your plants get too tall will give you fresh, sizable new plants, more manageable existing plants, and a tidier garden.



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## HEALTH

# Slow and steady might not win the race, but it does give you a fitness edge

Dan Gordon, Jonathan Melville and Matthew Slater have come to a welcome conclusion for slow runners everywhere – speed isn't a factor in how fit you are getting while you run... in fact, a plodding pace has plenty of benefits...

Runners are obsessed with time. Amateur or professional, for most avid runners the aim is to get faster – constantly training in order to shave even just a couple of seconds off their marathon time or 5K pace.

But one running trend that's started to gain a foothold in recent years is that of "slow running". The idea behind the slow running movement is that anyone can run – no matter your ability or how fast you run.

Fans of this approach say it has many benefits – not just for your health but also in how enjoyable you find running. Research agrees, with evidence showing slow running may in some ways be more beneficial than training at higher intensities.

When we think of elite runners such as Eliud Kipchoge or Kelvin Kiptum, we might assume that to set world records, they primarily train at these record-setting paces. But surprisingly, elite runners spend around 80 per cent of their time training at what's termed zone 2 running – a running pace which raises your heart rate, but is still slow enough that you can hold a conversation. Only around 20 per cent of their training is done in the higher intensity zones, which are closer to their race pace.

The reason for this relates to the amount of stress that training puts on the body. As running speed increases, the more strain the body is put under. The more strain the body is put under, the greater a person's risk of illness, infection and injury. By reducing the amount of time they spend at higher intensities, athletes limit their chances of missing out on training due to illness and injury.

But there's more to this approach than just reducing the risk of injury and illness. A fundamental aspect of training is developing what's known as "base". This term describes the physiological foundations that underpin all training adaptations. For the endurance runner, this refers to their baseline cardio-respiratory fitness on to which their higher intensity adaptations can be built.

## Solid and secure

Think of it like a pyramid, which has a solid base on which the rest of the structure is built. The bigger the base, the taller the pyramid can be.

The same holds true for training. The better your base, the more capable you will be when working at higher intensities.

Your base is developed during slow (zone 2) running, where physiological stress is relatively low. But even though the heart isn't under very much stress during zone 2 running, the amount



of oxygenated blood leaving the heart each beat will be close to or at its maximum amount.

This is important because while the pumping capacity of the heart adapts to training, higher intensities do not increase this gain.

Developing a strong base allows for more oxygen to be delivered to the working muscles per heartbeat, which is crucial to running success.

Not only that, but running at slow paces causes the body to use stored fat for energy – as opposed to relying on carbohydrate stores that come from the foods we eat.

Burning fat is metabolically a far more efficient process, as the amount of energy derived from a single molecule of fat far exceeds the amount from a molecule of carbohydrate. This means runners will use less energy overall – and will be less fatigued and better able to run fast on race day.

Studies have shown that gains in VO2 max (oxygen capacity) and race speed are around 1 per cent greater for athletes who spend more time slow running. Crucially, the gains in aerobic

base are around five times greater in slow runners compared to athletes who more frequently use high-intensity runs.

Even if you aren't an athlete, aiming to keep most of your runs at a low intensity may still be optimal.

## Slow and steady...

If you're keen to give slow running a try, the most important thing is your pace. How exactly do you know you're at the right speed to be classed as slow running?

Some scientists divide running pace into five or six different zones. Physiologically, zone 2 is defined as occurring below the lactate threshold – the point where lactate (an acid the body produces when it begins to burn carbohydrates for energy) first starts to appear in the blood.

In simple terms, this should be at a speed where you can still hold a conversation and your heart rate is only around 70 per cent of your maximum. If you find conversation starts to become difficult then you should slow your pace down.

If you're running on your own, you can try the talk test. If you can sing out loud to yourself without struggling to catch your breath, you're in the right zone. If you do struggle, you're at too high an intensity and lactate will start to build up in your muscles (which may make your legs feel heavy).

Slow running offers many benefits – both for your body and your mental health.

So if you're someone who's always been shy about your slow running pace, perhaps this will inspire you to put on your trainers and give running a go.

**Dan Gordon is an Associate Professor, Cardiorespiratory Exercise Physiology, Anglia Ruskin University**

**Jonathan Melville is a PhD Candidate, Sport and Exercise Science, Anglia Ruskin University**

**Matthew Slater is a PhD Candidate, Exercise Physiology, Anglia Ruskin University**

## LIFESTYLE

# Five cyber safety travel tips to keep scammer scrooges at bay

Are you planning holiday travel in 2024? As you make your packing list and check it twice, don't forget about your cybersecurity.

While fraudsters work year-round, holiday travels provide many opportunities for them to steal personal information and dampen your holiday festivities. However, with a little preparation, you can protect yourself and your devices. So, as you gear up to travel over the river, through the woods, and into the skies, use the following tips to safeguard your information.

## 1. Get smart before you leave home

Keep safe by locking mobile phones, tablets, laptops and all other devices. Create strong, unique passwords that combine at least eight numbers, letters and special characters.

Don't forget to get your devices travel-ready by updating all operating systems and apps. This helps ensure your devices are protected from any known vulnerabilities. For an added layer of security, protect your smartphones and laptops with security software like Norton 360.

## 2. BYOC: Bring Your Own Charger

Even something as innocuous as charging your device in a public area poses a security risk. For example, hackers may have tampered with a USB port at a public charging station, a tactic known as 'juice jacking', which allows them to access your personal information once you plug in. Gift yourself a portable charger and a new power cord to keep your data safe. Don't access



or enter any private information, and power off your devices when charging.

## 3. Stay clear of public Wi-Fi and opt for a VPN

Free public networks at airports, hotels, coffee shops, and even aeroplanes are incredibly convenient. However, they can also make you an easy target for hackers looking to dampen your holiday plans. Your personal data and passwords – including sent emails, banking information and credit card details – will be exposed, leaving you vulnerable to identity theft.

Protect your identity and other sensitive information by using a virtual private network (VPN). A VPN allows you to hide your online activity so cybercriminals can't see your location or activity. Also, be sure to disable automatic Wi-Fi connections to prevent your device from unknowingly connecting to unsecured networks.

## 4. Beat the Bluetooth bandits

Bluetooth-connected headphones, game consoles, or other devices are a great way to

pass the time during long flights or road trips. However, those connections are also vulnerable to hacker attacks like BlueSnarfing, BlueJacking or eavesdropping. When not in use, turn off Bluetooth and avoid keeping your device in discoverable mode, which makes it visible to others. Secure your connection by using PINS, passkeys or other secure pairing methods. Disable automatic pairing to prevent unauthorised devices from connecting to you.

## 5. Hold off on sharing

Don't share information that can compromise your safety. Broadcasting your travel plans or location on social media can be a risk to your physical safety.

Also, sharing your holiday information exposes you to threats like identity theft, phishing and other online scams.

Wait until you return from your holiday to post photos to prevent bad actors from accessing your geotag data.

If you post to social media while traveling, turn off location services and avoid 'check-ins' that reveal your location.

Never post photos of tickets, boarding passes or passports even after you've returned home from your holiday adventures. If you do post travel documents, make sure you cover up the barcodes and primary info.

Using these top five tips, you can stay cyber savvy and focus on spending time with those you love most.

## TetraPak can be your friend in the cupboard

### Is your fridge too full? Five practical, sustainable uses for shelf-stable food and beverages

Have you found your fridge so stuffed that you can hardly find what you're looking for, until some food ends up going bad? One solution can help save space in your fridge, as well as money, while also helping to reduce food waste. With shelf-stable foods, you can stock up on products that will last a lot longer in your pantry – including plant-based beverages, soups, broth and even dairy milk – without taking up space in your fridge.

If you've ever noticed Tetra Pak® cartons on the inner aisles of your grocery store, you may have wondered why these items aren't refrigerated. Through aseptic food processing and packaging, food and beverages retain their colour, texture, natural taste and nutritional value for long periods of time – without the need for any preservatives or refrigeration.

You may end up shopping a lot more from these aisles once you learn how helpful, convenient – and sustainable – this packaging can be. Here are just some of their uses:



Tetra Pak cartons keep foods lasting longer

## 1. Get ready

Minimise those frantic last-minute trips to the shop during busy times by stocking up your pantry without worrying about items expiring quickly or needing space in the refrigerator. This is especially handy when you're hosting family and guests.

## 2. Make road trips and other excursions easier

When you're on the go during a road trip, extended vacation or just running around doing errands, it's great to know you can pack up plenty of milk, plant-based beverages and more for your family without worrying they'll go bad, even if your cooler runs out of ice – or you don't

have room in the cooler.

## 3. Be ready for anything by packing an emergency kit

To ensure you're fully prepared for anything, from a temporary power outage to a severe weather event or natural disaster in your area, experts recommend having an emergency kit that's fully stocked with things like a first aid kit, flashlights, batteries, a weather radio – and enough non-perishable food and drinks for your family to last a few days.

Shelf-stable foods and beverages are the perfect addition for any household emergency kit, to give you peace of mind.

## 4. Help make lunches and snacks for busy families

Whether your children are going to school, activities, field trips or playdates (or you're heading off to work), you can stock their backpack or lunchbox (and your own bag) with shelf-stable beverages or milk without having to worry about whether they'll get to a fridge – or end up staying in the bag for days.

## 5. Feel good about the environmental impact

Did you know that food waste accounts for 8% of all greenhouse gas emissions? Beyond helping to reduce food waste, you can also feel good knowing that throughout the packaging lifecycle, a Tetra Pak carton is an environmentally-sound choice.

For example, on average, about 70% of a Tetra Pak carton by weight is Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®)-certified paperboard, a renewable material. Renewable plant-based materials are better for the environment because they can be replenished over time and enable a move away from fossil fuel-based materials.

Food and beverage cartons are also recyclable and can be turned into paper products and green building material: [RecycleCartons.com](http://RecycleCartons.com).

Learn more about Tetra Pak's safe, convenient packaging solutions to help make your life easier at [Tetrapakusa.com](http://Tetrapakusa.com).

## FILMS

# A lack of gravity ultimately downs this interesting idea of conflict in space

**John Mulderig**

The psychological thriller *I.S.S.* (Bleecker Street) highlights positive values and teaches a civilising lesson. But, as penned by screenwriter Nick Shafir, director Gabriela Cowperthwaite's drama of shifting allegiance and unpredictable behaviour never gains traction and ultimately registers as a slack, by-the-numbers exercise.

In large part, that's due to the poorly sketched character of its protagonist, astronaut Kira Foster (Ariana DeBose). Aside from a brief exchange in the dialogue revealing that Kira is attracted to women rather than men – de rigueur these days – she remains more the representative of a particular outlook on life than a fully rounded person. So, too, do those around her.

The action begins as Kira arrives on the International Space Station – that's the I.S.S in the title. The crew she joins there is made up of two other Americans, Gordon Barrett (Chris Messina) and Christian Campbell (John Gallagher Jr.), and a trio of Russians: Weronika Vetrov (Masha Mashkova) and brothers Nicholai (Costa Ronin) and Alexey (Pilou Asbaek) Pulov.

Before she can settle into the routine of life on board, though, Kira finds herself in a potentially



Ariana DeBose stars in a scene from the film "I.S.S." Photo: Bleecker Street

deadly conflict. A nuclear war between the US and Russia has broken out on Earth and she, Gordon and Christian soon receive secret orders to wrest control of the I.S.S. "by any means necessary."

Have the cosmonauts been given similar

instructions? If so, what methods might they resort to in order to fulfill them? Are they enemies or still scientific comrades?

The quandary is a potentially interesting one with twists and turns resulting from uncertain loyalties and restricted communications. (A large

chess board on one of the walls of the vessel serves as the visual symbol of the life-or-death contest into which Kira and the others have been plunged.)

But Kira remains mostly a cipher. So viewers are unlikely to feel entirely caught up in her dilemma or fully invested in her fate.

Arian DeBose recently told movieweb.com how she took on the role of Kira Foster because she 'had never been given the opportunity to do anything like this before.'

She said: "At the time, I was so hungry to see if I could just stand on my own two feet as an actor and do something drastically different. The script was so compelling. It asked big questions of us as a society, how we relate to each other and other cultures. Do we take things at face value, or are we going the extra mile to find the common ground?"

There is a respectable message about trust and human solidarity underlying the proceedings. And the people on board who behave in the most humane manner are eventually rewarded for it.

Yet the story comes and goes without making much of an impact or impression. Call it a lack of gravitational pull.

## Smart dramedy offers a new take on old idea

**John Mulderig**

In his feature debut, *American Fiction* (Amazon MGM), writer-director Cord Jefferson pulls off an impressive balancing act. In adapting Percival Everett's 2001 novel *Erasure*, Jefferson successfully blends wry social satire with the serious tale of an emotionally isolated central character.

The result, overall, is a cinematic treat. However, distasteful ingredients, including off-base values and often salty dialogue, are included in the recipe as well. Their presence may spoil the potential fun to be derived from the film even among the adults for whom it's acceptable.

Jeffrey Wright plays novelist Thelonious 'Monk' Ellison. As the story begins, Monk faces a number of challenges, both personal and professional.

His affluent Boston-based family has a troubled history epitomised by his philandering dad's gunshot suicide. Monk's response has been to withdraw from the situation. He long ago moved to Los Angeles and continues to keep his two siblings, OB-GYN Lisa (Tracee Ellis Ross) and plastic surgeon Cliff (Sterling K. Brown), at a distance.

However, with his mother, Agnes (Leslie Uggams), facing an Alzheimer's diagnosis, the clan will need to unite to provide for her care. So Monk tentatively attempts to improve relations with Lisa and Cliff.

At the same time, Monk's career has stalled. His weighty books, which frequently draw on classical mythology, have been met with low

sales and, as his agent Arthur (John Ortiz) informs him, his latest work is facing rejection on the grounds that it isn't 'Black' enough.

Competitor Sintara Golden (Issa Rae), by contrast, is revelling in the bestseller status of her exaggeratedly gritty portrayal of African American life, *We's Lives in Da Ghetto*. Predictably, Monk is disgusted with this style of writing, which he sees as both caricaturing its subjects and pandering to the would-be woke brigade.

As a practical joke, under the pseudonym Stagg R. Leigh (a play on the 1911 folk song *Stagger Lee*), Monk produces an outrageous parody of the genre, initially entitled *My Pafology*. But the joke turns out to be on him since publishers are all too anxious to snap the text up for a generous price and Hollywood shows avid interest in the film rights.

The resulting windfall helps Monk finance his mother's move to a comfortable nursing home. But the escalating charade in which he's caught threatens, among other things, to derail his newfound romance with Coraline (Erika Alexander), a neighbour he met by chance while staying at his family's beach house.

Uproariously funny moments alternate with realistic and sometimes insightful ones in this deft 'dramedy.' Yet viewers committed to scriptural morality will encounter some uncomfortable interludes as well as an entire subplot demanding careful discernment.

Lisa, we're shown, works at a Planned Parenthood-style 'clinic' and her dialogue with Monk includes a passing affirmation of legal



Erika Alexander and Jeffrey Wright American Fiction. Photo: Claire Folger, Orion Pictures

abortion. On a more sustained level, Jefferson's script comes loaded with off-colour talk. In part that's because, in an effort to sabotage his own success, Monk insists on changing his book's title from *My Pafology* to, quite simply, the F-word.

Divorced dad Cliff, moreover, has decided that he's gay. His casual encounters with other men, like his fondness for cocaine, are treated as a symptom of his reckless, out-of-control lifestyle.

Most grown viewers will have the necessary judgment to sort the gems from the ashes in this mix. But many may wish to spare themselves the effort, the clear aesthetic

assets of "*American Fiction*" notwithstanding.

Reflecting on his role as Monk, Jeffrey Wright recently told npr.org about the role of race in the film's dialogue and as a major theme. He said: "What I appreciate about the film and about the book that it's based on is that the writers are fluent in race, and race language particularly, and context. And so they can create dialogues that are smart. I don't think we do that enough in our country. I don't think we have the capacity to do that. We see it bubbling up and, like, just boiling over now."

"We are informed from the beginnings of our country and every day by race dynamics, all of us, whether we want to admit it or not."

# Psychedelic stares and lurid colouring... the fascinating secrets of the Book of Kells

HISTORY

**Rachel Moss**

## Uncovering the mysteries of The Book of Kells – from myopic monks on magic mushrooms to superhuman detail

The Book of Kells is a late-eighth century illustrated copy of the four gospels of the New Testament, traditionally associated with the affiliated monasteries of Iona in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland and Kells in County Meath, Ireland.

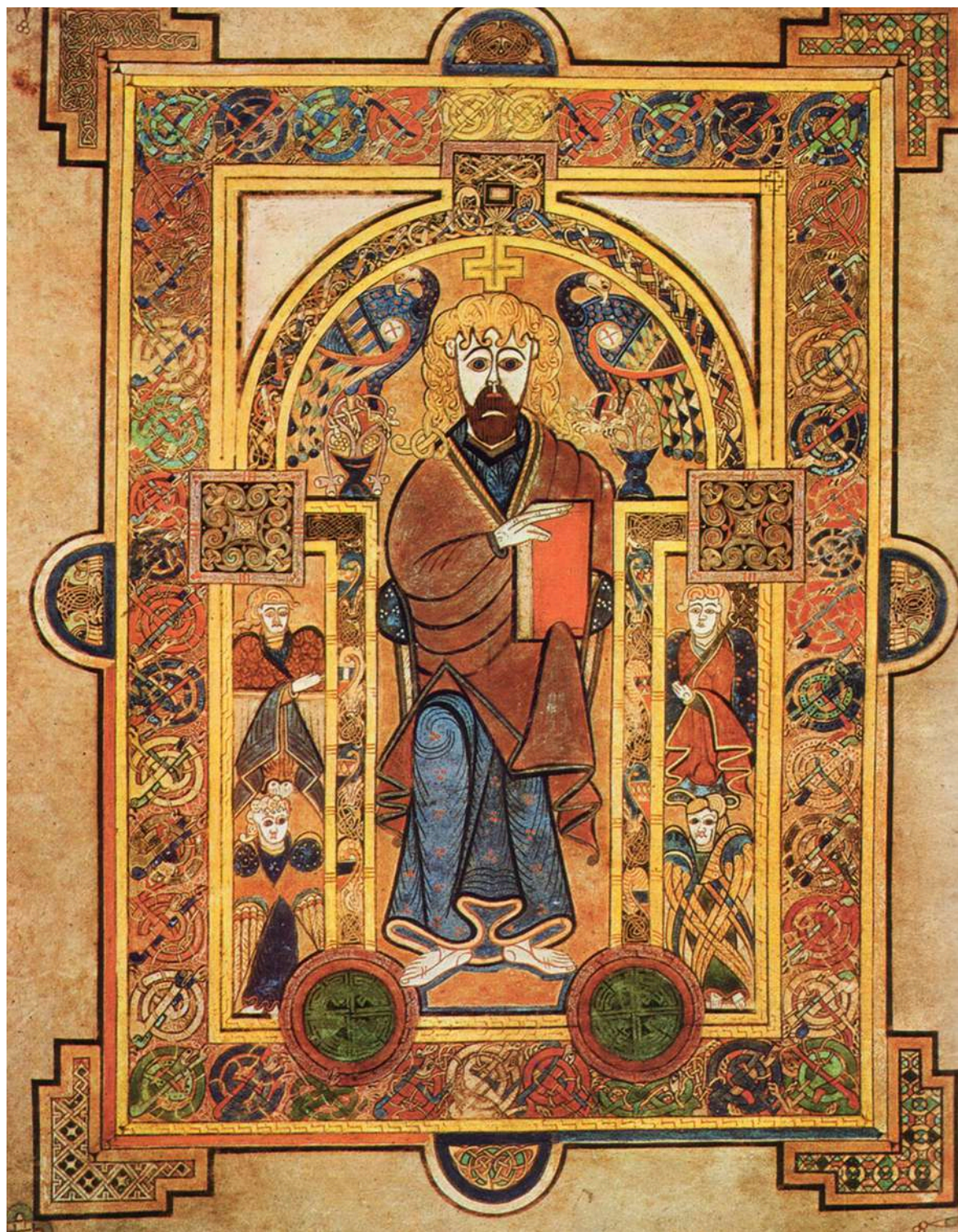
Seeing the book at Trinity College Dublin is on the bucket list for most visitors to the city, although many are perhaps unaware of what, exactly, makes it so important. One easy way to explain its importance is to compare the so-called Chi-Rho page in Kells, which celebrates the first mention of Christ's name in the gospels, by enlarging the first two letters of his name in the Greek alphabet, (Chi) and (Rho) with a similar page in any other contemporary manuscript from the milieu of the Irish Church.

Not infrequently, the response to the Book of Kells page will be: 'Monks on mushrooms!' This was also the reaction of Guardian art critic Jonathan Jones recently, when he visited the newly opened Book of Kells Experience, an immersive exhibition at Trinity College Dublin that showcases some of the extraordinary creative highlights of the manuscript.

There is a long history of substance-enhanced art, particularly in association with some of the 20th century western greats – Picasso, Salvador Dali and Jean-Michel Basquiat – and of course, an entire counterculture movement in the late 1960s connected with LSD. But this is not typically something we would associate with eighth-century monks!

The pages of The Book of Kells certainly contain some of the elements that have been used to identify drug use in modern and contemporary art.

The figures of Matthew and John introducing their respective gospels have creepily vacant stares. Letters are formed from distorted men, birds and beasts, their bodies and limbs extended and entangled to create decidedly surrealist openings



to important gospel texts. One panel on the page that opens the Gospel of Luke appears to depict an all-male bacchanalian gathering.

### Kells under the microscope

Although now faded by 1,200 years of use, the colours in the manuscript still retain some of their original psychedelic intensity. The yellows and purples practically vibrate on the page. The variety and layering of colours is not found in any surviving contemporary northwest-European manuscript.

Scientific research into the origins of the pigments conducted by Trinity College Dublin's library conservation department have revealed some of the alchemy involved in their creation.

The intense yellows were created using the poison arsenic sulphide, the reds are toxic red lead and the purples are made from lichen, the purple colour extracted using ammonia, traditionally obtained from urine.

We know that contemporary metalworkers used mercury gilding – a technique that would have led to neurological issues from the inhalation of mercury vapour. Might scribes too have been

*“The Book of Kells certainly contains some of the elements that have been used to identify drug use in modern and contemporary art ... letters are formed from distorted men, birds and beasts, entangled to create decidedly surrealist openings”*

Kells appears exuberant and uncontrolled, at a micro level it is an object lesson in pure symmetry, often at a minute scale.

For example, a panel measuring just 80mm x 45mm (right) near the centre of the Chi-Rho page incorporates three lions, four humans, four snakes and 13 birds. Although all are extenuated and locked into a tight mesh of limbs, bodies, wings and heads, the anatomy of each is complete and a symmetry of the bodies is maintained throughout. The precision of planning and control of design does not suggest a scribe under the influence of psychedelic drugs.

### Unsolved mysteries

It is only since the digitisation of the manuscript in 2014 that most of us have been able to properly appreciate this aspect of The Book of Kells' mastery, as much of this detail is nearly invisible to the naked eye.

Artificial lenses are an invention of the late 13th century, so aside from the possible use of the magnifying properties of rock crystal (for which there is no direct evidence) the question does arise as to whether the scribes' ability to see and work at such a minute scale was enhanced by other means.

Although more than 400 medical texts survive from the later medieval period in Ireland, relatively few date back to the period when the Book of Kells was made. However, we do know that many monasteries had physicians.

Indeed, a *Life of St Columba*, written at Iona about 100 years before the Book of Kells was made there, describes a man coming to seek medicines at the monastery. Unfortunately, though, specific references to “cures” for eye ailments, or for enhancing near sightedness are not forthcoming. That is except for St Manchan ‘the wise’ of Lemanaghan, County Offaly, whose hagiography (books written on the lives of saints) describes how his protruding eyes were cured by contact with the corpse of St Molua.

Assuming that this particular cure is an apocryphal one, the mystery of the enhanced myopia and the steady hands of the Book of Kells scribes remains unsolved, unless of course, one sides with one 12th-century commentator who declared that such intricacy could only be the result of “the work of angels”.

**Rachel Moss is an Associate Professor of History of Art and Architecture, Trinity College Dublin**

# Thanks for all the memories, Jurgen – now have a good rest

SPORT

## Colm Hickey

There is only one football story this week. Jurgen Klopp, the Liverpool manager, has announced that he is leaving the club at the end of the season. Under Klopp, Liverpool won their sixth European Cup in 2019, beating Tottenham in the Champions League final in Madrid. He also won the Premier League in 2020 for the first time in 30 years, a domestic cup double in 2021-22 and narrowly missed out on a quadruple as they were pipped by Manchester City to the Premier League title and lost the Champions League final to Real Madrid.

Of Klopp's announcement, the Liverpool chief executive Billy Hogan said: "It's hard to put into words how significant it is. When he joined us, he talked about leaving the club in a better place than where he found it. And if you look at that, then there's no doubt, he's done that."

The question, of course, is why has Klopp made his decision? Klopp, 56, said he realised his resources are not endless as the club compete for four trophies this season. He said: "With all the responsibility you have in this job, you have to be top of your game. I always invested everything I had. My resources are not endless and I prefer to pack everything into this season and then have a break or stop or whatever. We're not young rabbits anymore and we don't jump as high as we did. I still think it's the right thing to do."

Klopp is not alone in walking away from the game. Two other Liverpool legends, Bill Shankly and Kenny Dalglish, also quit the club when at the seeming height of their powers.

In 1974, Liverpool beat Newcastle United 3-0 to win the FA Cup. Shankly was 60 and said in his autobiography that, on returning to the dressing room at the end of the match, he felt tired from all the years. His mind was made up and he knew he was going to retire. The Liverpool secretary Peter Robinson was initially blasé, but when he realised Shankly was serious, he tried but failed to make him change his mind.

Almost immediately after resigning, Shankly regretted his decision. By the time August came round, and the new season kicked

into gear, he went back to the training ground at Melwood, to be with the players, enjoying the camaraderie and even coaching them. This put the players in an awkward position as they referred to him as 'boss', automatically undermining the new manager, Bob Paisley, who they called 'Bob.'

Liverpool, now cornered into an unenviable position, took the decision to ban Shankly from Melwood. It was a no-win situation for all concerned. "I went to the training ground at Melwood for a while", Shankly said. "It is only down the road from where I live. But then I got the impression that it would perhaps be better if I stopped going. I felt there was some resentment – 'What the hell is he doing here?' I packed up going to Melwood and I also stopped going into the directors' box at Anfield. I still go to the matches but I sit in the stand. I would have loved to have been invited to away matches, but I waited and waited until I became tired of waiting." Don Revie, a good friend of Shankly, said: "His retirement was a great loss, but I am glad he got out at the top. The pressures of managing a team like Liverpool and keeping them at the top are tremendous."

Shankly's granddaughter, Karen Gill, said in 2009: "I think that perhaps it was tiredness, that football had taken its toll on him." One of his players, Brian Hall, agreed. He said: "He put enormous pressure on himself because every time he stood up in front of people, he had to produce a performance that was Shankly-like. It had to be dramatic, poignant, it had to hit nails on heads. I just have a sneaky feeling that the pressures of football management and the pressures of who he was and how he had to perform in front of people became too much in the end."

A third Liverpool great, Kenny Dalglish, also resigned as Manager on 22nd February 1991, with Liverpool, the reigning champions, three points clear at the top of the table. He explained his decision in his autobiography, *Dalglish*. "Although I didn't realise it at the time, [the disaster of] Hillsborough was the most important factor in my decision to leave Liverpool in 1991. I thought to myself: 'Why should I feel any pressure.' The people under pressure were those who had lost their loved ones. In truth, I had wanted to leave Anfield in 1990, a year before I eventually resigned. I started having doubts

about myself and my ability to make decisions. In the past, I would just make the decision, usually more right than wrong and move on without thinking... Liverpool needed somebody who was going to be authoritative, somebody who could make a decision. I couldn't do that anymore."

Three great managers. Three great men. Three genuine football legends. Three honorary 'Scousers.' Any football fan would be delighted if they had managed their team. Yet despite their successes, perhaps even because of their successes, the strain of giving their all, all of the time was too much.

Shankly managed in the almost innocent age of the 1960s and 1970s when there was no Premier League, no foreign ownership, no Champions League, and no Sky TV, but he said he felt tired from all of the years of management.

Dalglish, who was manager at the time of the Hillsborough tragedy, said: "In the 22 months between Hillsborough and my resignation, the strain kept growing until I finally snapped. By Christmas, my body was covered in big blotches. A few even appeared on my face. I saw a doctor nearly every day for injections. He used to come to the ground, bend me over, give me injection in one cheek and send me home like a pin-cushion. I would go to bed, wake up the next morning, go back to the ground and try to start again. I don't know whether the rash resulted from the general strain."

"My lack of tolerance towards the children probably upset me even more than it did them. I hated to see the surprise and hurt on the faces of my children when I bawled at them. As a player, I was pretty much teetotal because I was dedicated to my profession but in the period before I resigned, I used to drink wine so I could be more sociable with my family. After Hillsborough, Marina learnt about counselling and tried to counsel me. But my family could see how desperately I needed a break, I was unwell and under strain."

The pressure on Klopp is arguably greater. Football is a global game. Managers and elite players are millionaires. Attendances are booming, but football is a beast that can never be satisfied. It has an inexorable hunger. There is constant of new breakaway leagues, new competitions, more pre-season and post season tours, more media appearances, more global scouting,



more foreign investment as outside investors seek to buy clubs to jump on football's money gravy train. Owners are American or Chinese or Asian or Saudi Arabian. It all adds to levels of stress, as the demands for success grow ever more insistent.

Klopp is rich. He does not need to manage. He is intelligent. He is shrewd. He is recognising that he cannot keep up the intensity and commitment needed to be successful.

He loves Liverpool too much to short-change the club by not giving it 100% of his time, effort, and commitment. So, in a moment of objective honesty, he is walking away from the club and the game he loves.

In this he is right. We all know that family comes first. Putting your job before your family can be a recipe for divorce and break up. "I don't take these things lightly,"

Klopp said. "I'm convinced it's right. I have no regrets but a lot of special memories." Klopp had signed a four-year contract in April 2022 and, at the time, said he was '100% convinced' he would continue until then, but it was not to be. Comparing himself to a car, he said: "I can't do it on three wheels, I don't want to be a passenger. My manager skills are based on energy and relationships, I am who I am and where I am because of how I am. I cannot be that anymore."

And what did the great Bill Shankly famously say? "Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I assure you, it's much more serious than that." Does that not brilliantly sum everything up? All football fans will wish Klopp every happiness as he steps away from the game we all love at the end of the season.

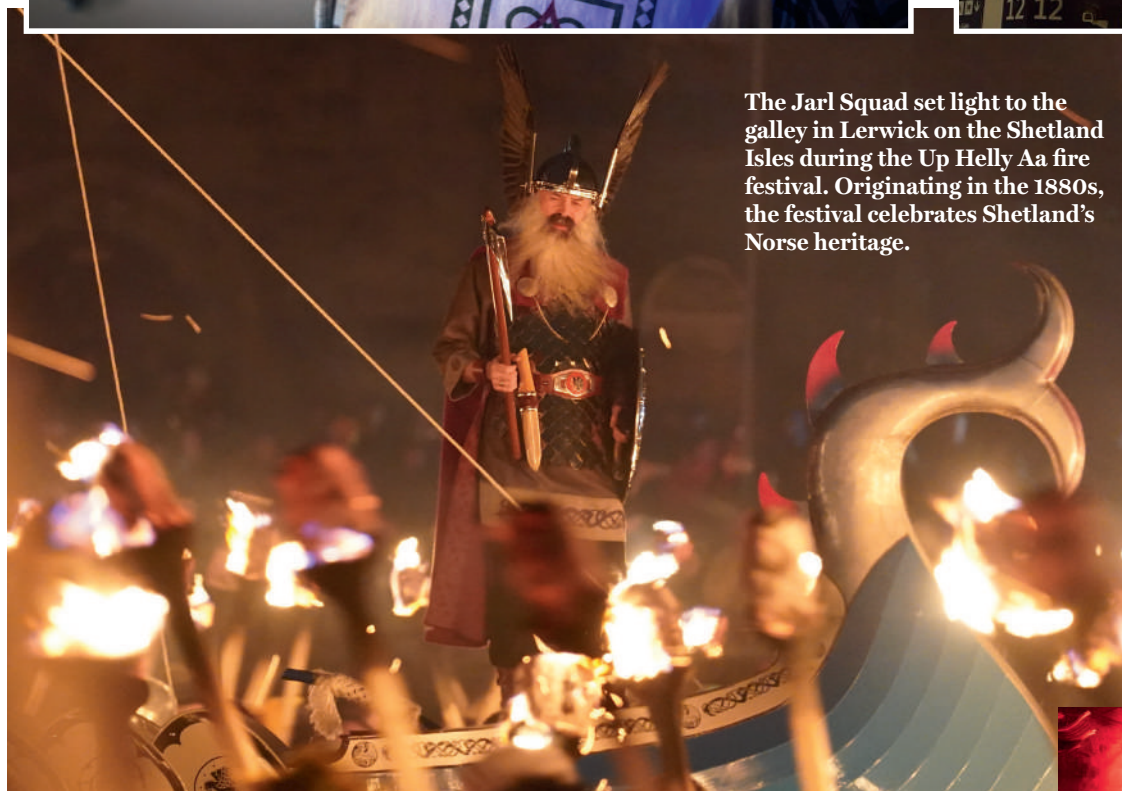
# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



Edinburgh mask maker Lorraine Pritchard alongside some of her Venetian masks which will be worn and displayed at the Venice Carnival, which starts on Saturday February 3. Lorraine studied model making at Glasgow College of Building and Printing and Venetian mask making in Florence, Italy.



Waterloo Station's commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day



The Jarl Squad set light to the galley in Lerwick on the Shetland Isles during the Up Helly Aa fire festival. Originating in the 1880s, the festival celebrates Shetland's Norse heritage.



A Royal Mail illustration of a stamp featuring Barbara Edwards who became the first British female TV weather presenter in 1974. It is one of eight new stamps to mark the 170th anniversary of the Met Office and depict the story of weather forecasting.

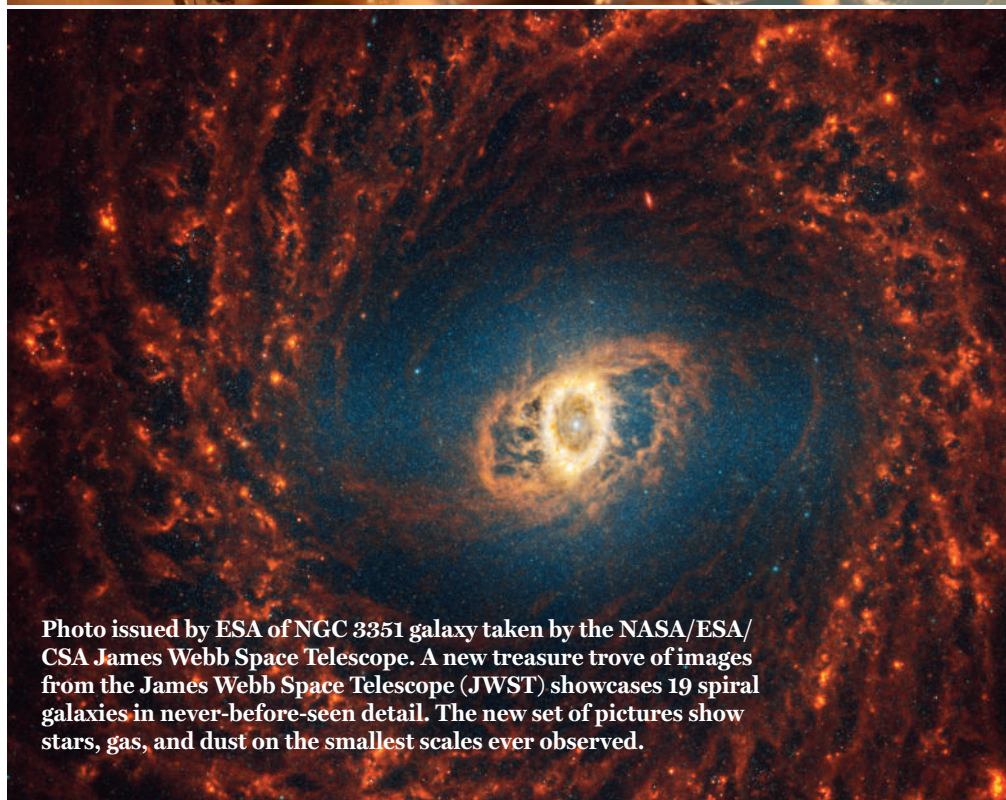


Photo issued by ESA of NGC 3351 galaxy taken by the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope. A new treasure trove of images from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) showcases 19 spiral galaxies in never-before-seen detail. The new set of pictures show stars, gas, and dust on the smallest scales ever observed.



Artist Michael Pendry alongside his three-dimensional sculpture Heart at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, as part of the Burns and Beyond Festival and 900th anniversary of the founding of the Cathedral.

## LITURGICAL CALENDARS

### Ordinary Form

**Sunday Year B, Weekday Cycle II**  
**Sunday, February 4: 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time** Job 7:1-4, 6-7; Ps. 147:1-6 r. 3; 1 Cor. 9:16-19, 22-23; Mk. 1:29-39

**Monday, February 5:** St. Agatha, Virgin, Martyr 1 Kgs.8:1-7,9-13; Ps.132:6-10; Mk. 6:53-56

**Tuesday, February 6:** St. Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs 1 Kgs.8:22-23,27-30; Ps.84:3-5,10-11; Mk.7:1-13

**Wednesday, February 7:** 1 Kgs.10:1-10; Ps.37:5-6,30-31,39-40; Mk.7:14-23

**Thursday, February 8:** St. Jerome Emiliani or St. Josephine Bakhita, Virgin 1 Kgs.11:4-13; Ps.106:3-4,35-37,40; Mk.7:24-30

**Friday, February 9:** 1 Kgs.11:29-32,12:19; Ps. 81:10-15; Mk. 7:31-37

**Saturday, February 10:** St. Scholastica, Virgin 1 Kgs.12:26-32,13:33-34; Ps.106:6-7,19-22; Mk.8:1-10



St. Josephine Bakhita

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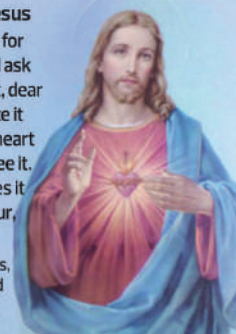
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Say prayer for three days, promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail



### PRAYERS /THANKSGIVING

**Grateful thanks to St Jude for favours granted**

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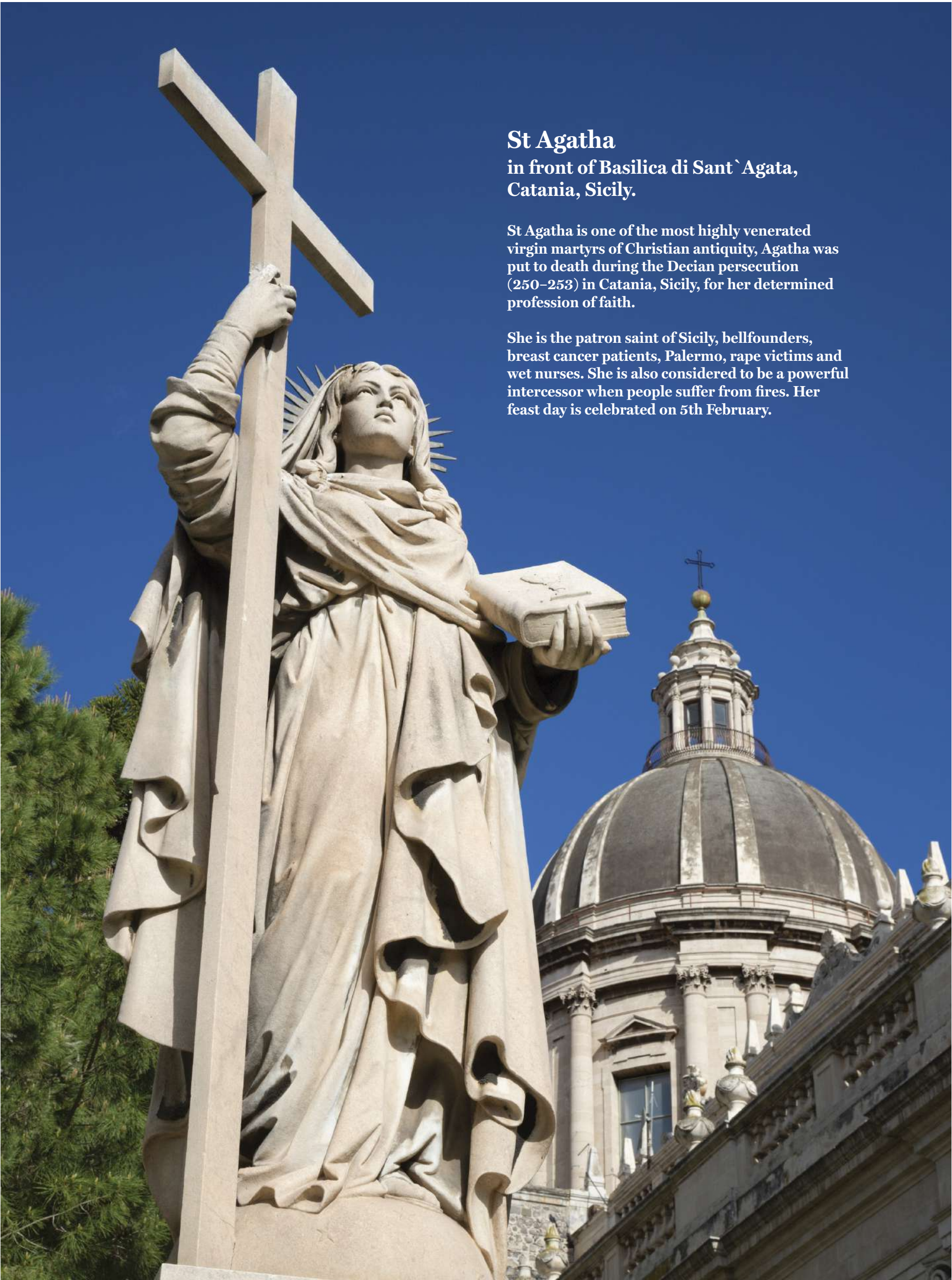


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**St Agatha**  
in front of Basilica di Sant`Agata,  
Catania, Sicily.

St Agatha is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of Christian antiquity, Agatha was put to death during the Decian persecution (250–253) in Catania, Sicily, for her determined profession of faith.

She is the patron saint of Sicily, bellfounders, breast cancer patients, Palermo, rape victims and wet nurses. She is also considered to be a powerful intercessor when people suffer from fires. Her feast day is celebrated on 5th February.