

We face threat
to free speech,
warns Ann – pg 9



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Axe benefit cap now to save children in poverty

**Shocking 4m children
now living in poverty
– the vast majority in
homes where at least
one adult works**

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic campaigners are urgently calling for an end to the two-child limit on welfare benefits after shocking new research shows that over four million children are living in poverty.

The number of children in the UK who are experiencing poverty rose to 4.2 million last year – an increase on the 3.6 million recorded the previous year.

Some 71 per cent of them live in households where at least one adult works – a rise of six percentage points since last year. The pandemic and cost of living crisis are believed to be the reasons for the “unacceptably high” statistics.

The research was carried out by Loughborough University for the End Child Poverty Coalition.

Responding to the figures, CEO of Caritas Shrewsbury Ben Gilchrist called for “real policy change.”

“These terrible figures remind us how much more we need to do together to tackle child poverty,” Mr Gilchrist told the *Universe*.

“Government action is a vital part of this but at present they have no plan to tackle poverty. We need to see real policy change, such as ending the two-child limit on benefits. We also urge employers to pay the Real Living Wage.”

The figures are based on the Department for Work and Pensions Children in low income families: local area statistics which estimates the poverty rate before housing costs.

They show a strong correlation between family size and the probability of child poverty after housing costs across the UK, but the problem is greatest in the North West and West Midlands. Across the North West region, it is reported that more than a third (34.3 per cent) of children are living in poverty.

Patrick O’Dowd, director of Caritas Salford, which supports people from across Greater Manchester and Lancashire, said these figures were “no surprise” given the evidence his organisation had seen, and also called for an end to the two-child limit on benefits.

He said many families in the region were struggling or unable to pay their utility bills and buy basic household items such as soap and shampoo.

“Tragically, these appalling figures don’t come as a surprise as our staff and volunteers are seeing first-hand the staggering increases in poverty across the communities we work with,” Mr O’Dowd told the *Universe*. “We are seeing a rise in the number of people coming to us for help in basic areas, such as to use our showers, as they aren’t able to afford the utility bills to wash at home, or afford to buy shampoo. There are many people who are going without a meal to enable their youngest family members to eat.”

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POPE BACKS CALLS FOR CLIMATE REPARATIONS



Pope Francis joins others in holding a banner during an audience at the Vatican with the organisers of the Green & Blue Festival. The banner calls for financing a ‘loss and damage’ fund to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change – a fund which was agreed upon at the COP27 UN climate conference in Glasgow 2022, but which global sponsors are yet to properly fund.

The conference, held to mark World Environment Day, saw the pope repeat his plea for people “to

move away from the throwaway culture, and move toward ways of living marked by a culture of respect and care; care of creation and care of our neighbours, whether they be near or far from us, either geographically or through time.”

He praised those scientists and activists who care for creation, saying “they have increased our sense of responsibility to God, who has entrusted us with the care of creation, to our neighbours and to future generations.”

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Star prepared
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accepting Christ
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Prayers for pope as he has hernia op

As the *Universe* went to press, Pope Francis was undergoing surgery at Rome's Gemelli hospital for what the Vatican described as a routine hernia operation. The operations is to be conducted under general anaesthetic, and the Holy Father is expected to stay in hospital for "several days" to recover.

The hernia is "causing recurrent, painful and worsening" symptoms, added Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni. "The stay in hospital will last several days to allow the normal post-operative course and full functional recovery."

The 86-year-old has faced a series of health issues in recent years, and uses a cane and a wheelchair due to a persistent knee ailment.

On Tuesday, the Pope was at the same Rome hospital for a scheduled check-up, months after he was hospitalised with bronchitis. He spent three days in hospital in March to treat a lung infection, in the same month that he marked the 10th an-



niversary of his pontificate.

In 2021, Pope Francis spent 10 days in hospital after having a part of his colon removed, in a bid to address a painful bowel condition.

But while his predecessor Benedict XVI quit in 2013, the Pope has dismissed the possibility of leaving office too. "You don't run the Church with a knee but with a head," he is said to have told an aide last year. "It is hard to walk at times, but I manage. You don't leave the papacy because of a bad knee."

Pope pops in for CT scan - see page 14

Axe benefit cap now to save children in poverty

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"Immediate action must be taken including changes to policy that supports real families who need help now, for example by ending the two-child limit on benefits."

In every region of the UK, children from Black or minoritised ethnic communities are more at risk of experiencing poverty than those with white ethnicity – particularly in London, due to its high ethnic diversity.

Joseph Howes, Chair of the End Child Poverty Coalition, said that abolishing the two-child limit on benefits "would immediately lift 250,000 children out of poverty, and the Government could make this change now."

The Government responded to the figures by saying that it has

helped 400,000 out of 'absolute poverty since 2010' and launched a '£94billion cost of living support package.' However, Patrick O'Dowd said the Government need to "make changes right now" to end child poverty.

"It's unacceptable, and we need as many people as possible to get behind the campaign to end child poverty," he told the *Universe*.

"Most importantly for those in local and national government and other key decision-makers, it's vital they do the right thing and make changes right now, before it's too late for many hard-working parents and their children," he said.

Ben Gilchrist called on Catholics to support the CSAN network in England and Wales, and to write to MPs to call for change.



Submitting the petition at No. 10 (from left to right): Fr Dominic Robinson, Fr Matthew Madewa, Fiona Bruce MP, Baroness Caroline Cox, Caroline Hull, John Pontifex and Mike Watts.

Petition demands answers over Christian massacre

Amy Balog

A year to the day following the Pentecost Sunday church massacre in Nigeria, a petition calling for justice has been handed in to 10 Downing Street.

Fiona Bruce MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, received the petition organised by Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) (UK).

On 5th June 2022, 41 people were killed and more than 80 injured when terrorists opened fire and detonated explosives during Mass at St Francis Xavier's Church, Owo, south-west Nigeria.

Nobody has been charged in connection with the atrocity despite it taking place in broad daylight in a church packed with witnesses.

Human rights champions and Nigeria experts Baroness Caroline Cox and Lord David Alton of Liverpool joined ACN (UK) National Director

Caroline Hull and Head of Press and Public Affairs John Pontifex to hand in the petition.

Lord Alton said: "I was shocked to hear about these cruel and barbaric attacks in the parish of St Francis Xavier in Owo. Things only get worse when the perpetrators are not brought to justice."

"It is important that we lose no opportunity to keep reminding the world about the price that people are paying for their faith."

Also present at No. 10 were Fr Matthew Madewa from Ondo Diocese, where Owo is located, ACN (UK) National Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr Dominic Robinson from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, London and Mike Watts, a teacher from St Benedict's School, Ealing, with Gabrielle, a Year 8 pupil.

Fr Madewa said: "We believe something positive will come out of the petition. It is important to raise

awareness. The more awareness we can generate, the more likely a positive outcome is.

"We are hopeful that the new president of Nigeria [Bola Tinubu, who was sworn in on 29th May] will do more to serve justice and provide security."

Survivors of the Owo attack told ACN that they will continue to feel unsafe until those responsible are brought to justice.

Fr Michael Abugan, the parish priest at St Francis Xavier's, said that his congregation remembered the victims at a candlelight procession and memorial Mass on the anniversary. He said, on behalf of the survivors: "I am hoping that the new government will be entirely different from the past administration in its response to security matters."

"We also believe that the new president will do his best to bring different ethnic groups and religions together."

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Catholic pupils wow judges with flawless BGT performances

Andy Drozdziak

Two Catholic pupils wowed judges in this year's *Britain's Got Talent* final, with judges describing one as having a voice that was "a gift from God", while the other was hailed for a dance routine that was "technically perfect and full of passion".

Solo dancer Lilliana Clifton, 13, danced to Loreen's *Tattoo*, leaving the judges speechless and securing a runners-up spot.

Her Catholic primary school, St Patrick's in Toxteth, Liverpool, tweeted its support: "So, so proud of this beautiful young lady - 2nd in Britain's Got Talent ... what an achievement!"

"Lillianna will go far and we have no doubt achieve that dream of Cirque Du Soleil," the school wrote.

Judge Alicia Keys said: "Where does all that passion come from? Technically I've not seen anything like that for a long, long time. I'm quite speechless really."

Meanwhile, 14-year-old Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School pupil Malakai Bayoh stunned judges with a flawless performance of *Caruso* in the final, prompting a standing ovation and reducing judge Bruno Tonioli to tears. Simon Cowell said it



was "beautiful from start to finish."

Malakai had already impressed notoriously tough Cowell in previous rounds. After singing *Pie Jesu*, Cowell responded by pressing the Golden Buzzer, which gives the contestant automatic entry into the semi-finals, commenting that Malakai has "one of the best voices I think I've ever heard."

Fellow judge Amanda Holden said it was a "stunning performance."

Prior to the final, Malakai received messages of support from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra

Leone, where Malakai's family is originally from. Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School was quick to praise his achievements. "The Vaughan community are all so very proud of Malakai," it said. "He has been such an inspiration to young singers across the world, a true talent. Thanks to the guidance and ambition of Vaughan's Director of Music, Mr Price," the school added.

"In the live final, Malakai's performance had the audience truly breath taken and brought judge Bruno Tonioli to tears, claiming Malakai had a 'gift from God'."

Malakai has been singing since the age of 7, after his "very bossy" mum made him join a choir.

The school highlighted the impact of Malakai's journey to the final. "Congratulations on everything you have achieved, Malakai! We are very proud of you. You have been an inspiration to young singers across the world. You are a true talent."

They added that "our school social media accounts have been inundated with messages of support for Malakai, from retired teachers, parents, and alumni."

The final was won by Norwegian comedian, Viggjo Venn.



Judge Bruno Tonioli wipes away tears after Malakai's final performance

Pictures: YouTube screengrabs

UN calls for end to faith education

Michael Winterbottom

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has called for religion to be banned as a criterion for school admissions in England, in what religious leaders and MPs have branded a "secular-inspired attack" on faith schools.

The CRC concluded that "preventing the use of religion as a selection criterion for schools admissions in England" was a priority.

It also recommended repealing legal provisions for compulsory attendance in collective worship, and called on the Government to establish statutory guidance to ensure that children have the right to withdraw from religious classes without parental consent.

The report has sparked a backlash from MPs, religious leaders and faith school providers who said it was "illiberal" to deny religious families education based on faith. Nick Fletcher, the Conservative MP for Don Valley and a member of the Education Select Committee, described it as an apparent "attack on people and institutions of faith".

"It does not seem to come from a position of tolerance but rather one of intolerance," he said. "I have confidence that here in the UK we will continue to respect Christianity and the other great faiths."

Monignor Michael Nazir-Ali, former Bishop of Rochester and a Catholic convert, added: "This sounds like a secular-inspired at-

tack against faith and its influence in society. Parents are the primary persons responsible for their children's upbringing - the state has only a supporting role."

He added: "Wouldn't this committee better spend its time working out how Afghan girls can go back to school at all?"

Paul Barber, director of the Catholic Education Service, added: "Parents have the right to raise and educate their children within their own religious framework and it would be illiberal to remove this basic right from them."

"Catholic schools are more ethnically diverse and serve more of the pupils from the most deprived backgrounds than the state sector."

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IN BRIEF**Headphones lead to 'divided offices'**

The use of headphones in the workplace is "dividing colleagues", said *The Sunday Times*. Workers are increasingly using headphones and earbuds to listen to music and podcasts after becoming used to them while working from home during lockdown.

But their use has in the office become increasingly controversial. Debrett's, the 250-year-old British guide to etiquette, said: "If you work in an open-plan office where there is frequent conversation and interchange of ideas between colleagues, do not wear AirPods or headphones."

Concern over rise in tuberculosis cases

Tuberculosis is leapfrogging Covid-19 as the world's most deadly infectious disease, with *The Mirror* warning that the "hidden pandemic" is a "ticking timebomb" for the UK.

TB cases imported into England have started to increase after a decade-long decline, said the paper, with almost a third of patients who catch this "growing mutant form" dying.

Dr Meera Chand, of the UK Health Security Agency, said: "We are working with the NHS to strengthen prevention, detection and treatment."

Heart attacks more common on Monday

Fatal heart attacks are most likely to happen on Mondays, new research has found. Scientists who studied 10,528 patients admitted to hospital in Ireland with a serious heart attack over a five-year period found that rates were 13 per cent higher on Mondays.

They concluded that the body's natural sleep-wake cycle is disrupted over the weekend as people stay up late or enjoy a lie-in and then, when they return to their usual weekday rising time, it causes higher levels of inflammation and stress hormones that can trigger heart attacks.

Man arrested for sick Hillsborough shirt

A football fan was arrested at Wembley after wearing a shirt mocking the Hillsborough tragedy. The Man United fan had customised the club's away shirt to display the number 97 and the words 'Not Enough'. After an image of the man went viral online, the Met Police said he had been "arrested on suspicion of public order offence and taken into custody." Ninety-seven Liverpool fans died in the tragedy at Hillsborough in 1989.

Down's babies being screened out of life by pre-natal test

A Scottish Down's Syndrome support group is calling for an urgent inquiry into a pre-natal test after "deeply upsetting" abortion statistics showed an 84 per cent increase in abortions of babies with Down's Syndrome. Overall, the number of abortions in Scotland rose by 19 per cent in 2022 to 16,584.

The increase in Down's Syndrome abortions is believed to be down to the roll-out of a new Non-Invasive Pre-Natal test in the NHS across the UK. Now Don't Screen Us Out is calling on the Scottish Government to undertake an urgent inquiry to review the impact of these tests on the number of abortions in Scotland.

Lynn Murray, spokesperson for Don't Screen Us Out and mother of Rachel who has Down's syndrome, said: "As a mother of a 23-year-old daughter who has Down's, I see every day the unique value she brings to our family and the positive impact she has on others around her."

"It is deeply upsetting to see an 84 per cent increase in the number of abortions where a baby has Down's syndrome in Scotland. The roll-out of new Non-Invasive Pre-Natal tests on the NHS in Scotland appears to be having an impact on the number of terminations."

"We are calling on the Govern-

ment to undertake an urgent inquiry to review the impact that Non-Invasive Pre-Natal tests on the NHS in Scotland are having on the number of babies that are screened out by termination due to Down's syndrome in Scotland each year.

"They then need to urgently introduce medical reforms to our screening programme to ensure that this deeply disturbing increase in the number of abortions for Down's syndrome is reversed."

"We are calling on the Scottish Government to urgently update Scottish abortion legislation to ensure that babies with Down's cannot be aborted right up to birth."

Lynn Murray's call comes as Heidi Crowter, who has Down's syndrome, has announced that she will take her landmark case against the current discriminatory abortion law, which allows abortion up to birth for Down's, to the European Court of Human Rights.

The latest abortion statistics, published by Public Health Scotland, follow a commitment by First Minister Humza Yousaf to decriminalise abortion in Scotland, effectively introducing abortion on-demand, for any reason up to birth.

It is widely believed that such a move will further increase the num-



Heidi Crowter will take her landmark case against the current discriminatory abortion law to the European Court of Human Rights.

ber of abortions.

Once again, and continuing a long-running trend, the number of abortions in the most deprived areas was double the number of abortions in the least deprived areas.

Commenting on the latest statistics, Anthony Horan, director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office, called on the Scottish Government to promote and defend "human dignity."

"Every abortion is a tragedy. Each

statistic presented in this report represents a unique, unrepeatably life extinguished.

"Instead of creating ways to increase the number of abortions in Scotland the Scottish Government should be promoting and defending human dignity through its laws, including the right of the child to develop in his or her mother's womb from the moment of conception," he said.

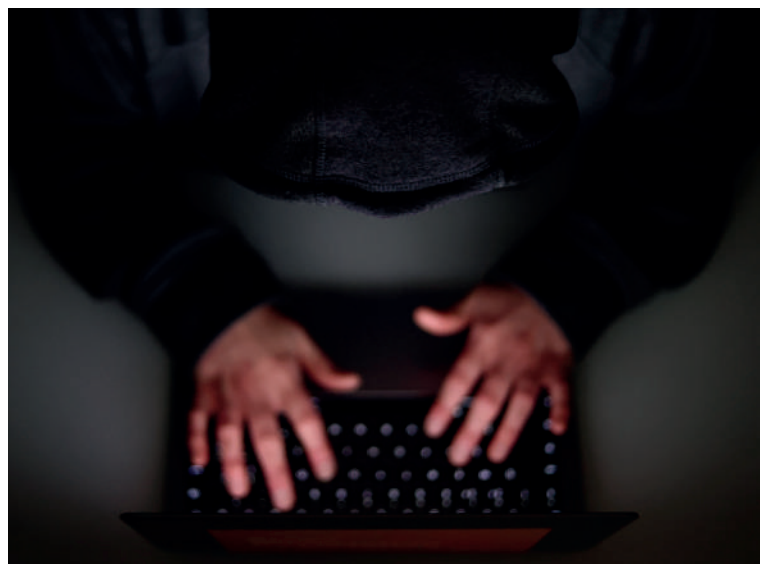
Fears summer boredom could feed online harm

Christian charity CARE is joining children's charities in expressing concern about how the cost-of-living crisis is feeding online harm to children.

Families are reporting struggles to afford out-of-school activities and other support during the school holidays, which may result in children spending more time online.

Polling from Barnardo's revealed that of the 1,000 parents questioned, 46 per cent say they will struggle to find the money for family holidays and days out, while 21 per cent will not be able to afford time off work to spend with their children.

Experts are determined that the cost-of-living crisis does not cause another surge of online abuse, as occurred during the pandemic. CARE said: "We are passionate about seeing children better safeguarded. We are working to ensure that the Online Safety Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament, pro-



tect children and vulnerable young people."

Barnardo's Chief Executive, Lynn Perry, described "a rise in new forms of exploitation - with children increasingly groomed, recruited and exploited over social media, chat

rooms and on gaming platforms."

A survey of 729 children aged 11 to 17-year-olds found that 71 per cent expect to spend more time online during the school holidays, as opposed to during term time.

Eight per cent expected to meet

up with people they have met online, while around 13 per cent have already communicated with people they have met online but do not know in person.

Barnardo's senior child safety online policy officer, Rani Govender, said a lack of "adequate protections" had led to young people being at risk. "Offenders ruthlessly exploited the conditions created by the pandemic to target young people who were spending more time online, and we cannot allow the cost-of-living crisis to fuel another surge in abuse," he said.

"Tech firms are aware of the risks and should ensure that their products are safe for children who rely on them for entertainment and communication, but too many are failing to provide their youngest and most vulnerable users with adequate protections.

"It is crucial that the long-awaited Online Safety Bill is as effective as possible in protecting children."

Br Michael celebrated in moving centenary Mass

Andy Drozdziak

Around 1,000 attended a Mass to give thanks for a 'holy man' and doctor who founded the HCPT charity and who campaigned tirelessly for disabled people.

Many from the disabled community were in Westminster Cathedral itself, while hundreds more joined a livestream to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of HCPT founder Br Michael Strode on 3rd June.

Archbishop Mark O'Toole of Cardiff was the main celebrant and he opened by thanking God for Brother Michael's "life and witness".

Brother Michael died on 27th December 2019, aged 96. In his later years, he lived as a Cistercian monk on Caldey Island, but many had known him as 'Doctor Michael', after he had worked as a doctor at a children's hospital until his retirement, and founded two charities caring for disabled children and adults.

He was well known for his humility and his saying: "It wasn't me at all, it is God working through us."

Fr Jan Rossey, superior of Caldey Abbey's Cistercian community, described Br Michael "a holy man", and that "prayer ran through his veins."

Schools with links to HCPT, including St Bernadette's Primary School in Harrow, and Coloma Convent in Croydon, sent choirs to the Mass. They sang Br Michael's favourite hymns, including *Holy Virgin by God's decree* and *Be still for the presence of the Lord*.

The Committee for Brother Michael's Cause is collecting evidence for the formal launch of the Cause at the beginning of 2025, after the fifth anniversary of his death. The group said: "Sharing in his charitable and religious activities, we have been inspired by his charisma and his spirituality. We believe that Br Mi-



The Mass for Br Michael
Photo: Elaine Furmage

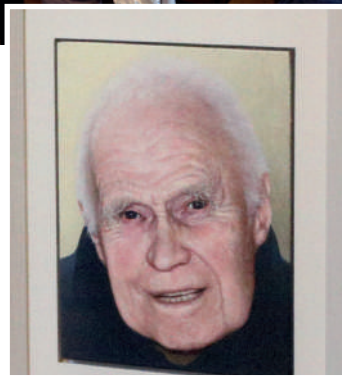
chael's extraordinary life deserves to be acknowledged, and that the Church in Great Britain would benefit from the proclamation of a new saint from this century.

"Encouraged by his bishop, and with the blessing of the Abbot of Caldey, we are dedicated to seeking his canonisation."

Committee Secretary John Flood KSG said: "To create a body of evidence that speaks of Michael's saintliness, we welcome signed, written statements that would help to build a picture of his Christian life and spirituality, showing that he might be worthy to be considered for the path to canonisation; and show how his example has encouraged people privately to seek his spiritual intercession on their behalf."

Artist Colin Bentley had created a new portrait of Brother Michael for the occasion, while a new biography, written by Br Michael's friend John Wolff, was also announced.

Entitled *Who are you looking for? An Introduction to the life and spirituality of Brother Michael Strode*, profits from the book will be given to causes which Br Michael supported.



Pact lecture hears praise for 'saints working in prisons'

Dr Chijioke Nwalozie said that "there are many saints in prison" in the 2023 Sir Harold Hood Memorial Lecture.

Speaking on the theme 'The Church's Participation in Prison Reform', and drawing on scripture, Dr Nwalozie affirmed that, "When prisoners are poorly treated, the Church must act as a critical stakeholder and vanguard of prison reform".

When addressing the vital role of prison chaplains, he added: "There are many saints in prison. Ask anyone working in chaplaincy and they will tell you."

Pact – the national Catholic charity providing support to prisoners and their families across England and Wales – held the lecture in memory of the late prison reform champion and great friend to Pact, Sir Harold Hood.

Dr Nwalozie is a senior lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice at De Montfort University. Alongside his academic qualifications and prison chaplaincy experience, he is the founding director of Prisons Support Services Nigeria.

In keeping with Pact's identity as a charity with its roots in the Church, the evening provided nour-

ishment for the head, heart and soul. Laura Manders gave a beautiful lived experience testimony in which she described her first ever uncertain attempts to pray, separated from her children and alone in her prison cell. Laura is a senior member of staff at Pact now.

The Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir communicated Pact's mission and

'There are many saints in prison. Ask anyone working in chaplaincy ...'



solidarity with those affected by imprisonment, through song.

There were recurring themes of bringing hope and of human dignity during the event as well as in the many conversations over wonderful refreshments later.

It was a lively gathering of Pact staff, parish reps and volunteers together with members of the Hood family, of partner organisations, ecumenical friends and colleagues, chaplains, Dr Nwalozie's own family and friends, and many people who care about how the values of faith can inform a better criminal justice system.



Fr Vincent Lockhart, national Director of Missio Scotland, is pictured above introducing Missy Moo, the mascot of the Missionary Children in Catholic schools in Scotland, to Pope Francis during the pontiff's general audience earlier this week.

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COMMENT

Pandemic inquiry has to ask: was lockdown worth it?

As the political controversy rumbles on over which Government documents are to be handed to the public inquiry into Covid-19, a fundamental question needs to be answered: will it consider whether or not a lockdown was required at all? It has become an article of faith that it was right for governments around the world to follow China's lead and proscribe normal social and economic activity by law.

Given the unprecedented nature of the restrictions, it is at least arguable whether this would have happened at all had Beijing not ordered the first lockdowns. There was a strong suspicion that political leaders in other countries followed China's lead to avoid being criticised for causing the deaths of their citizens by not doing so.

On the other hand without these measures, how many more people would have died?

The received wisdom is that it stands to reason that many thousands of lives were saved by lockdowns. Critics of lockdown were condemned for "putting the economy ahead of lives". Yet new analysis from researchers at Johns Hopkins University and Lund University indicates that, at the height of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, around 1,700 lives were saved by the lockdown. In March 2020, modelling predicted there could be more than 500,000 deaths in the UK without action to stop the spread of the virus.

Even with mitigations such as social distancing, and household quarantine for Covid cases, at least 250,000 deaths were predicted.

Yet this latest study shows that the lockdowns had a "negligible impact" on Covid mortality. The lives saved were "a drop in the bucket compared to the staggering collateral costs imposed", including damage to children's education, stunted economic growth and deaths caused by lack of access to the NHS.

The lockdown questions raised by this new study should be a priority for the inquiry. The British public deserves to know if all the sacrifices they made were a pointless exercise put in place by public servants who simply followed without question the response of a despotic regime.

Smile well – and it might just help you on the way to No.10

POLITICS

**Carl Senior,
Erik Bucy and
Nick Lee**

Why learning to smile like Boris Johnson should be top of Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer's to-do lists

Personality is not everything in politics, but it can go a long way. The UK's next general election, set to take place in 2024, is already shaping up to be a "battle of the dull".

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, may not have presided over quite the same level of chaos as Boris Johnson but nor does he have the personality of the man who led the Conservatives to election victory in 2019. Meanwhile, the Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, is also widely described as being boring.

British voters will likely face a choice between leaders who lack charisma or are seen as managerial – between courtroom (Starmer) and boardroom (Sunak).

Our recent research suggests that party leaders are well served by paying attention to their personal appeal as the election approaches – particularly the way they smile.

Carried out in the week leading up to the December 2019 general election, our experimental study analysed emotional responses to the three major political leaders at the time: Boris Johnson, then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson.

A total of 546 potential voters took part in the study. All could be considered partisan, meaning they had a declared political preference.

For the study, we asked participants to watch campaign footage of the three leaders then report the extent to which they felt happiness, affinity, anger or distress in response to different ways that each politician smiled. Importantly, not all smiles are equal. Some convey "affiliation", or a desire for social interaction, while others convey what is termed "reward" and indicate merely that the person smiling is feeling happiness.

Affiliative smiles engage the main muscles typically used for smiling, such as the zygomaticus major, which pulls the corners of the mouth upward. Reward smiles engage this muscle too, but also involve the orbicularis oculi, which produces wrinkles around the eyes.



Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer: The battle for votes in 2024 will be between two men seen as 'managerial' by the public: one from the courtroom, the other from the boardroom

This fosters an overall impression of softness, which is sometimes associated with empathy.

The combination of the masseter, a muscle involved in chewing, and the depressor labii inferioris, which exposes the teeth, may also result in a slight jaw drop.

Johnson's grin

Participant emotions were measured in response to all three leaders as they displayed both affiliative and reward smiles. Ultimately, we wanted to know if the facial expressions of political leaders had any impact on political attitudes and decisions.

Our results showed that only one type of smile from one leader – the affiliative smile of Boris Johnson – had any significant influence. His

smile drove the highest degree of positive affect across the partisan divides. In other words it didn't matter if you intended to vote for Johnson, Corbyn or Swinson, if you saw Johnson's affiliative smile, you felt good. The smiles of Corbyn and Swinson failed to generate a significant shift in participant emotion – as did Johnson's reward smile.

A smile alone can't win an election but Johnson's strengths are precisely Sunak and Starmer's weaknesses. Beyond party policies, the personal appeal of Johnson to enough voters saw him take the Conservatives from a minority government to a huge majority.

Smile, 2024 is coming

These findings highlight the

importance of considering the role of emotional responses in politics. Johnson's personal appeal as a politician clearly transcended his party's policies. Whatever else voters might think of him, this appeal is precisely what Starmer and Sunak are striving for.

Indeed, our study showed that Johnson appealed emotionally to people who weren't planning to vote for him, not unlike the appeal that Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama had for certain crossover voters in the US. Recognition of the affective dynamics between leaders and followers could be decisive in the context of 2024, when votes feel exceptionally up for grabs.

The upside for the likely "managerial" leaders of next year's election is that charisma is not innate but can actually be taught. Sunak and Starmer can still leverage the power of emotional responses by paying attention to their facial behaviour and ensuring they display the right type of smile in the right context. This may help them connect with voters.

We've seen that even small gestures and behaviours can have a significant impact on political attitudes – and, with a tight race ahead, every gesture counts.

Carl Senior is a Reader in Behavioural Sciences, Aston University

Erik P. Bucy is a Regents Professor of Strategic Communication, Texas Tech University

Nick Lee is Professor of Marketing, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick



Boris Johnson's smile drove the highest degree of positive affect across the partisan divides



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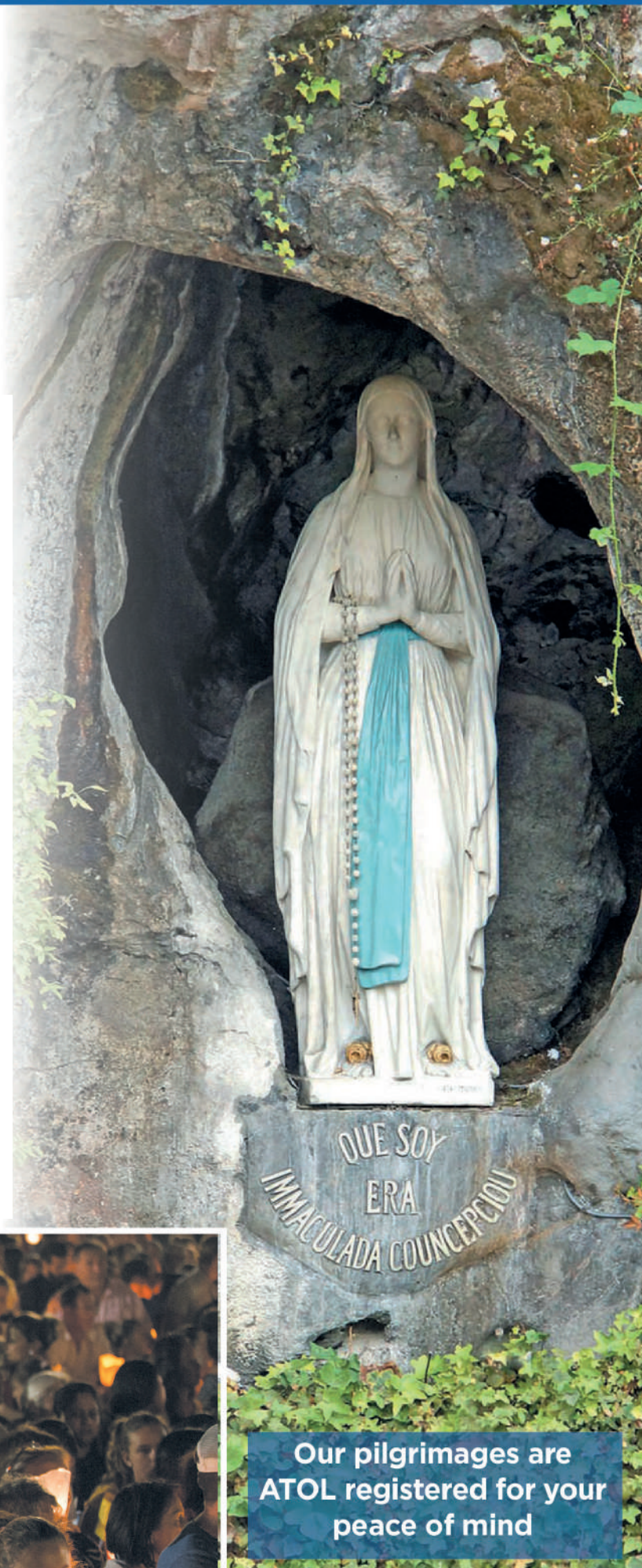
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A family income

Sir John Battle



From the mid 1980s, Church Action on Poverty campaigned for a legally binding statutory minimum wage to put a floor under the hourly wage rate for all workers. I, as a Minister, was involved in its introduction in 1998.

In 2016 it was renamed the national living wage by the Conservative George Osborne and today the basic rate is £10.42 an hour. It's good but notably, it's below the level championed by the independent Living Wage Foundation.

But the problem is, that measure fitted a now past and rather more static and stable labour market of lifetime jobs in factories, offices and service industries. Though the hourly floor rate is in place, most low earners work in temporary, part-time, irregular shift roles and jobs of the unstable 'gig economy'. Moreover, to bring up a family of two or three children requires cobbling together at least two or more jobs, especially if they are low paid. Telling striking women nurses that their wages are not necessary family incomes (as in the 'pin money' wages of old) was a grossly out-dated insult that denies the realities of how a family income of lower earners has to be pieced together.

The majority of those earning less than £20,000 a year who have to miss work because of a family emergency, such as a sick child, simply don't get paid. They lose income.

Recently the Joseph Rowntree Foundation spelt out that the promised childcare funds promised in the March budget will benefit low income families least. A low earning single parent will only gain £60 a month by increasing their working days with childcare from four to five. That would be wiped out by two weeks' current food and energy price inflation.

Sandwiched, and perhaps overlooked, in Vatican II's seminal justice and peace constitution *Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the Modern World* is a vital section on 'the dignity of marriage and the family'. It presciently states 'present day economic social psychological and civil conditions upset the institution of the family'. Moreover it adds 'the civil power should as a sacred duty... look after domestic prosperity'.

A higher basic hourly rate is a start but there is a long way to go in addressing family income insecurity. The household economy is now a key issue of basic justice in our society.

Eradicating abuses requires wholesale change in culture

POLITICS

Marianna Fotaki



Members of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) – which calls itself “the voice of business in Britain” – have voted on a revamp of the organisation following allegations of misconduct, sexual harassment and rape in recent months. The City of London police is also investigating the reported misconduct.

The business lobby group represents 190,000 companies, which fund its operations, but has seen an outflow of big name members including John Lewis, BMW, Virgin Media, O2, Aviva and Mastercard following these allegations.

Both the government and the Labour Party have also severed ties with the organisation. This leaves its future representing business interests to politicians very much in doubt.

A rival group from the British Chambers of Commerce has already stepped forward to “design and drive the future of the British economy”. It has attracted members including BP and Heathrow Airport.

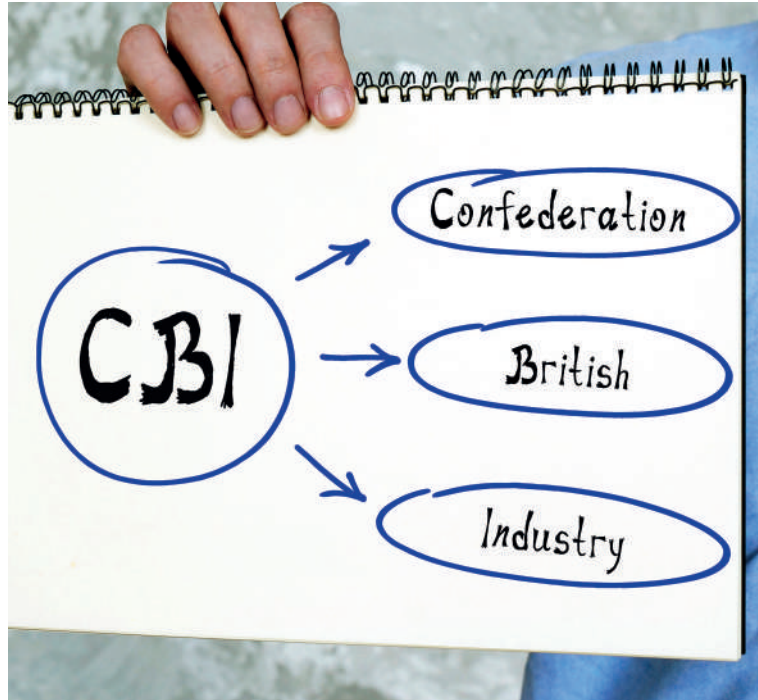
In a bid to keep its place at the top table, the CBI has put forward a plan to redeem itself in the eyes of its members and the public. This includes a review of its company culture and a refresh of its board. The new plan received 97 per cent approval at a member meeting on Tuesday. The CBI did not disclose how many organisations were eligible to vote and while it represents 190,000 firms, many of those are via trade associations.

But it comes amid accusations of brushing aside concerns and complaints, and a failure to remove alleged offenders – never mind a failure to recruit staff with appropriate attitudes and values in the first place.

It's extremely difficult to achieve a culture reboot without altering an organisation's core beliefs and assumptions, and redesigning its governance power structures. Changing these difficult-to-measure elements takes more than the right words. It requires a fundamental overhaul of an organisation's power structures.

Sexual harassment at work

Harassment happens when attitudes and belief systems uphold power differentials among people based on their gender or other



attributes. These systems also help to deny, rationalise and ultimately prevent exposure of abuse from surfacing.

Institutions that reflect certain attitudes and beliefs about gender stereotypes enable these systems, while powerful organisational actors maintain them.

In the case of the CBI, for example, rather than sack alleged offenders, its leadership tried to find a resolution before the harassment complaints became public. Other major institutions such as the World Health Organisation, Oxfam and the aid sector more generally have reacted in similar ways.

The #MeToo movement has shown that sexual harassment is systemic in many organisations. It is often deeply ingrained in company culture and characterised by pay and power inequalities. Research by the UK Government's Equalities Commission in 2020 found 72 per cent of the UK population has experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their lifetime – with 43 per cent experiencing it in the last 12 months.

Money and power are interconnected, so disparities such as the gender pay gap make sexual harassment more likely. But harassment also lowers the earning capacity of those who experience it by worsening their mental health, increasing absenteeism, and causing silent withdrawal. Employee harassment can cost companies an average of £18,136 in productivity per harassed person, according to some measures. The actual costs to society are likely to be much higher.

A recent emphasis on organisational culture reflects a

shift throughout much of the western world of work, from the management of skills to the management of values. Employees' commitment to their organisations can enhance firms' performance by fostering innovation and creativity. But the focus is often on visible rituals, marketing slogans and corporate image – the superficial elements that academic Edgar Schein called “visible artifacts”.

Values are much harder to address. They are often unconscious assumptions about the world. And so culture change programmes run the risk of leading to superficial compliance, rather than a real commitment to the profound shifts that organisations such as CBI really need.

Organisational culture is not a physical, measurable thing that can be visibly altered to enhance performance or win support. Instead, it's a collective mental state that's in flux and so must be constantly renegotiated by the organisation. In the 1980s, US academics Caren Siehl and Joanne Martin called organisational culture “the glue that holds members of an organisation together by encouraging them to share patterns of meaning” or ways of understanding values, beliefs and how to behave.

Some of the (female) leaders of former CBI member companies understood this when speaking out about the need for CBI management to shift towards promoting lived values rather than ‘bull’. Those holding the power in an organisation need to be willing and truly committed to examining their own assumptions and values to achieve this. So how can they do that?

Research on the effectiveness of

boards shows corporate governance failures (even by companies with otherwise excellent governance records) happen when there is a separation between ownership and control of an organisation.

Independent, non-executive directors can provide much-needed checks and balances to ensure that executive members represent the organisation's interests, not just their own. However, their impact will be minimal if they merely “rubber stamp” executive decisions.

A lack of diversity in terms of age, gender, expertise, experience or ethnicity on a board can lead to groupthink in such situations. This promotes unanimity and cohesion over accountability. Recruitment of certain types of men, while excluding women, and the development informal networks among board members can also reinforce poor decision making.

Finally, we often assume that board and leadership actions emerge from rational considerations, ignoring the role of unconscious bias and power dynamics that can better explain sexist and misogynistic culture.

The CBI is governed by a president and an executive committee chaired by a director general, who also sits on the non-executive board. The president, due to leave in January 2024, has said he has lost the board's confidence. Ex-director general, Tony Danker, for an unrelated reason in the wake of the rape accusations linked to other employees. In a BBC interview he apologised for making some staff feel “very uncomfortable”, but said his name had been wrongly linked with incidents that had allegedly occurred before he joined the CBI.

The new director general, Rain Newton-Smith, has returned to the CBI following a stint at Barclays. Previously the lobby group's chief economist, she has also worked for the Bank of England. Newton-Smith must now prove to members – and the wider public – that the CBI can overhaul its culture in order to survive. Ensuring these informal networks do not affect the organisation's decision-making processes and accountability will be key to this.

The leadership of the CBI – and other organisations like it – must consider neglected or silent points of view or risk failing to rebuild appropriate governance structures and a more equitable culture.

Marianna Fotaki is Professor of Business Ethics, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick

Free speech under threat, says Ann at CU's Pub Talk

Former MP and Cabinet Minister Ann Widdecombe has told an audience of Catholic Union members and supporters that "freedom of speech is under threat in the UK."

She was speaking at the Catholic Union's third 'Pub Talk' event, which was sponsored by the *Universe Catholic Weekly*.

Miss Widdecombe was asked to address the challenges facing Catholics in public life, but instead spoke about the challenges facing Catholics in the workplace and wider society.

"The challenge is not in public life", she said, highlighting that politicians and commentators are free to speak their mind, with MPs and peers having the benefit of parliamentary privilege when they speak in debates. "You don't get into Parliament by being a shrinking violet" she added.

Instead, Miss Widdecombe spoke about the "pressure" faced by Catholics away from public life in their daily lives, in the workplace and at social events.



She highlighted recent cases involving people facing police action for silently praying outside abortion clinics, saying this was creating a "huge deterrent" to freedom of speech and expression.

The former Prisons Minister and current member of Reform UK, said that new law was needed to

protect and promote free speech in general, not just in relation to religious belief.

But she also said that Christians needed to "take the initiative". "It's our responsibility to say what we think and what we believe" she added.

Catholic Union Director, Nigel Parker, added that Catholics needed

to be prudent in how they approached these challenges. He urged people who had faced disadvantage because of their faith to seek help early, including from the St Thomas More Legal Centre.



Ann Widdecombe addressing the Catholic Union's Pub Talk

The Catholic Union's next "Pub Talk" will be taking place on Tuesday, 4th July. Further details and a full list of Catholic Union events can be found on their website, at www.catholicunion.org.uk



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IN BRIEF

AI real threat to humans by 2025

Artificial intelligence will be powerful enough to “kill many humans” within just two years, according to Rishi Sunak’s adviser on the issue. “You can have really very dangerous threats to humans that could kill many humans, not all humans, simply from where we’d expect models to be in two years time,” Matt Clifford told TalkTV. Policymakers should be prepared for cyberattacks and the creation of bioweapons unless society finds a way to control the technology, he added.

Sunak ready to defy peers on boats

Rishi Sunak is willing to defy the House of Lords and force his proposed law to tackle small boat crossings through Parliament, after peers threatened to delay the Bill. The PM has said that the new measures to reduce migrant crossings were “very strongly” backed by MPs and “incredibly important”.

Meanwhile thousands of asylum seekers could be housed in vessels moored near Newcastle, Harwich, Felixstowe and the Royal London docks.

Breastfeeding boosts exam results

Breastfed children are almost twice as likely to go on to achieve top GCSE results, according to a new study. After examining data from 4,940 pupils in England born between 2000 and 2002, researchers found that performance in GCSE exams increased incrementally the longer children’s mothers had breastfed them.

After taking everything into account, “children breastfed for at least 12 months were 39 per cent more likely to achieve a high pass for GCSE maths and English, and were 25 per cent less likely to fail the English exam”.

Aldi is cheapest supermarket again

Aldi has been named Britain’s cheapest supermarket by *Which*. It had a key basket of goods costing £68.60 on average across last month, lower than fellow discounter Lidl which would have charged £70.51 – £1.91 more.

Waitrose was the most expensive, with a basket at £86.91, or 23.5 per cent more than Aldi.

“It’s no surprise to see many shoppers turning to discounters like Aldi and Lidl when our research shows they could make savings of more than £18 on a basket of everyday groceries,” said *Which?* retail editor, Ele Clark.

Kissinger at 100: his legacy might be mixed but his importance to 20th century life was enormous

WORLD AFFAIRS

**André Carvalho,
Anurag Mishra &
Zeno Leoni**

Henry Kissinger turned 100 on 27th May. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in 20th-century international relations.

The German-born American diplomat, scholar and strategist has left an indelible legacy in global politics that continues to act as a bookmark for international relations scholars, students and today’s practitioners of statecraft.

From the late 1960s, Kissinger played a momentous role in shaping US foreign policy and navigating the complex dynamics of the cold war era. His contributions to international relations have had a lasting impact, earning him recognition as a visionary strategist and diplomat.

Few would disagree that Kissinger’s influence on US foreign policy has been immense, as a thinker and academic. But his most significant impact was through his work as Secretary of State and National Security Adviser to US presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

One of his key contributions was his work towards US rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China, planning Nixon’s historic trip to China in 1972 through covert negotiations and deft diplomacy. It was a milestone event in US foreign policy that has shaped Washington’s engagement with Beijing since.

Kissinger’s participation in negotiations for the Paris peace accords from 1968 to 1973, which effectively ended the direct US involvement in the Vietnam War, was another key achievement. His relentless efforts in shuttle diplomacy between the US, North Vietnam and South Vietnam, contributed to establishing a ceasefire and evacuating US troops, ending direct US involvement.

But despite the accolades, triumphs – and even the Nobel peace prize in 1973 for his contribution to the Paris accords – Kissinger’s record and legacy are controversial. There has long been a debate concerning Kissinger’s approach to international affairs, which according to his many detractors often overlooked ethical considerations.

Concerns about links to



Henry Kissinger: a towering presence over the last three decades of the 20th century

violations of human rights and the undermining of democratic values were sparked by his backing for authoritarian regimes such as Chile under Augusto Pinochet. Regardless, Kissinger never wavered in his conviction that his diplomacy should put US interests first while appreciating the complexity of the international scene.

Foreign policy

From his days in government, and then through his continuing influence as a renowned scholar, Kissinger’s strategic thinking and diplomatic approach have shaped US foreign policy in significant ways.

The biggest contribution Kissinger made to US foreign policy was his advocacy for ‘realpolitik’. He believed that the US should base its foreign policy decisions on a clear and systematic assessment of power dynamics and the pursuit of geopolitical stability.

It was an approach that emphasised the pragmatic pursuit of national interests instead of a strict adherence to abstract ideological principles.

The key feature of this realpolitik was the importance of maintaining a balance of power, believing the US should actively engage with other major powers to prevent any one nation from gaining hegemony or threatening US dominance.

This approach shaped his handling of major geopolitical events during the Cold War, such as the aforementioned normalisation of the relations with China as well

as the development of a détente policy towards the USSR in the early 1970s. This perspective also emerged clearly in his approach towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Kissinger also made significant contributions to arms control and nuclear non-proliferation efforts during his tenure at the state department. His thinking on nuclear deterrence emphasised strategic stability and the need to prevent proliferation.

In this sense, his emphasis on negotiations and diplomatic engagement – intensified by his shuttle diplomacy method – managed to reduce the nuclear threat.

He played a pivotal role in negotiating the strategic arms limitation talks (Salt) in the 1970s, which resulted in the landmark agreements Salt I (1972) and Salt II (1979), fostering stability in US-USSR relations.

In the Middle East, his shuttle diplomacy once again demonstrated his ability to bring adversaries to the negotiating table, notably during the Arab-Israeli conflicts of the 1970s and the negotiation of the Sinai II agreement in 1975, which – temporarily at least – stabilised relations between Israel and Egypt.

J'accuse: Kissinger’s critics

But Kissinger’s legacy has also attracted forceful criticism. Among his most vocal and persistent critics was the late British writer and journalist Christopher Hitchens. Hitchens’

book *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* presented a series of arguments about alleged war crimes committed by his American “nemesis”.

Hitchens accused Kissinger of disregarding international law and violating the sovereignty of many nations. His alleged involvement in controversial military actions such as the secret bombing campaigns of Cambodia and Laos has drawn substantial criticism and raised concerns about accountability and transparency in US foreign policy decision-making.

Moreover, America – under his guidance – also stands accused of launching covert operations to overthrow the legitimately elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, in 1973 in order to install Pinochet, and of turning a blind eye to human rights abuses that occurred during Pinochet’s regime.

Similarly the country’s ostensible support for the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia disregarded human rights and basic ethics. Of this, Kissinger had this to say in an interview with *The Spectator* in 2022: *I am, by instinct, a supporter of a belief that America – with all its failings – has been a force for good in the world and is indispensable for the stability of the world. It is in that region that I have made my conscious effort.*

Despite all the criticism, Kissinger endured and remains a respected international relations scholar and advisor to this day. After leaving government in 1977, he reentered academia, serving as a professor at Harvard University, where he had previously earned his doctorate in government.

As a scholar, Kissinger wrote several influential books, including *Diplomacy* (1994), *On China* (2011), and *World Order* (2014).

That he was invited to address the World Economic Forum at Davos this year shows that, although divisive, even today Henry Kissinger remains a highly influential figure.

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Anurag Mishra is a PhD Researcher at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Zeno Leoni is a Lecturer, Defence Studies Department and Lau China Institute, King’s College London

All welcome to summer events in praise of Edith Stein's legacy

This summer, a Catholic organisation that helps and celebrates those who experience disability is hosting a series of events on Edith Stein, the Judeo-Catholic saint whose life and teachings offer an example of how to value everyone – particularly those with disabilities.

Cristina Gangemi, a disability adviser and director of the Kairos Forum, said Edith Stein, also known as St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, provides a good model for people working with those with disabilities.

She said: "I started to read about Stein, and I found that she, in her early years, experienced what we would now call being a 'gifted child' in school. She had various experiences of being hypercognitive and metacognitive.

"She had a niece with an intellectual disability, who she loved and who she understood needed to be taught as a creative learner."

The Kairos Forum, which advises the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, is an independent consultancy which seeks to respond to the human, educational, spiritual and well-being needs of people who have been disabled, as well as provide awareness to

people who have not been disabled.

Cristina Gangemi spoke of the value of Edith Stein's message and model.

"Her anthropology is all about value. She says, 'I see another person, they gaze at me, and I know that I gaze back at another human being whom we have to respect,'" she said.

"When we fill ourselves with God in the

'We hope to get people to meet Edith Stein and love her as much as we all do'
Cristina Gangemi



Eucharist, in love, in acceptance, in evangelising, in celebrating being people of faith that have so much to give the world, when we fill ourselves with that experience of God, we become beautiful. People are beautiful."

The Kairos Forum is hosting three events in July to help people learn more about Edith Stein. The legacy of Edith Stein will be the focal point of an invitation-only gathering in

the House of Lords on 3rd July. At the invitation of Baroness Sheila Hollins and facilitated by the Kairos Forum, Steinian scholars Professor Angela Ales Bello and Professor Shahid Mobeen will give reflections to those assembled.

A day of celebration will take place on Sunday, 2nd July at Aylesford Priory in Kent. It is free of charge, open to all, and is a day of shared pilgrimage.

Finally, a three-day conference is being held, also at Aylesford Priory, from 4th-6th July, to celebrate the wisdom of Edith Stein.

It is entitled *Dignitas Personae et Amor Dei: The Value of the Human Person and Divine Love; Meeting Edith Stein*, and Cristina Gangemi wants as many people as possible to encounter this saint over the summer.

"Everything she found out when she moved from Judaism to atheism to Christianity – it's a unique perspective. We hope to be able to get people to just meet Edith Stein and love her as much as we all do," she said.

"Edith Stein was a human being who experienced living in the world, and she understood what valuing the other meant."



Claire proud to fly the flag for independent school nurses

Andy Drozdziak

A school nurse at Catholic independent school Stonyhurst has been recognised with a significant national NHS award.

Nurse manager Claire Ashworth has been awarded the Chief Nursing Officer Gold Award by NHS England for going above and beyond, demonstrating safeguarding excellence for tenacity around information sharing and Child Protection - Information Sharing (CP-IS).

The award was presented to Claire at Stonyhurst by Professor Catherine Randall, Associate Director for National Safeguarding for the NHS.

Catherine Randall praised Claire for "leading the way to optimise safeguarding in independent schools through tenacity and professional curiosity," and for her contribution to nursing practice.

Claire was appointed Nurse Manager at Stonyhurst in 2019. Her achievements include establishing much improved links with multiagency organisations, with the aim of putting in place the necessary data, sharing protocols and IT systems to enable national safeguarding and health information to be shared with the Stonyhurst Health and Wellbeing team.

Reflecting on her award, Claire spoke of being a trailblazer "for all independent school nurses."

"I am humbled to have received the NHS Safeguarding gold star award," she told the *Universe*.

"Independent schools have often been overlooked in NHS initiatives and policy, which leads to their health services working with limited information available to them.

"It was with this in mind that led to me contacting Catherine to raise this issue at a national level and trailblaze this cause for all independent school nurses."

The Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) Award has been developed 'to reward the significant and outstanding contribution made by nurses and midwives in England and their exceptional contribu-



tion to nursing practice."

Dame Ruth May, chief nursing officer for England, has expressed her intention to recognise nurses like Claire "who consistently demonstrate the NHS values in their everyday roles."

Leading Catholic boarding and day school Stonyhurst College praised Claire for receiving the award, saying that it "recognises the enormous range of skills, expertise, and enduring compassion that Claire represents within the world of modern nursing."

Claire shared her hopes for the future. "As a result of recent work, Stonyhurst is set to become the first independent school to be involved in phase 3 of the Child Protection Information sharing service.

"Once in place, this will enable us access to a number of other NHS information systems," she said.

MP suspended from House for Covid breach

Scotland could see its first by-election under new parliamentary recall rules after Scottish Catholic MP Margaret Ferrier was suspended from the House of Commons for 30 days for breaching Covid rules.

MPs overwhelmingly voted to impose the ban on the Rutherglen and Hamilton West SNP politician, paving the way for a by-election if 10 per cent of her constituents sign a recall petition.

The MP was found to have damaged the reputation of the Commons and put

people at risk after taking part in a debate and travelling by train while suffering from Covid-19 in September 2020.

Ms Ferrier was sentenced last year to 270 hours of community service following a trial at Glasgow Sheriff Court. She admitted culpably and recklessly exposing the public "to the risk of infection, illness and death" as a result of her behaviour.

Ferrier also attended Mass at St Mungo's church, Glasgow.

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Mum hails Bl Carlo's legacy as he continues to inspire world's youth

Simeon Elderfield

Over 500 people packed into Farm Street Church, London, to listen to Antonia Salzano speak for nearly an hour about her son, Blessed Carlo Acutis, and his legacy.

Blessed Carlo Acutis was just 15 when he died of leukaemia in 2006, but the millennial, an avid computer programmer, was a devout Catholic with a great affection for the Blessed Sacrament and for reciting the Rosary. He rarely missed daily Mass and to this day inspires thousands of young people worldwide.

Antonia described Carlo as "a normal person, but he opened the door of his heart to God, and his ordinary life became extraordinary."

"Carlo always wanted to improve ... he used to pray a little piece of prayer and read the Bible each day.



If you read the Bible each day, you will learn to reason like Jesus," she said.

Antonia went on to explain that

she saw this at work when her father died, as Carlo said to her: 'Mama, I saw Nonno, who told me he is in purgatory, we must pray to help him

to go out of purgatory.'

Carlo's depth of faith allowed Antonia to "discover my life."

"I thought before, that the sacraments were only symbols, I was like a Protestant. I, through Carlo, understood that the sacraments are the most supernatural things we have," she said. "Carlo made me understand and for me it was the most important discovery of my life."

Carlo Acutis was declared 'blessed' – the step before canonisation – in 2020. During the beatification ceremony, Pope Francis praised the young man for "cultivat(ing) a friendship with our Lord Jesus" and "placing the Eucharist and the witness of charity at the centre of his life."

Asked about the ways in which Antonia felt able to cope with the



A prayer card for Blessed Carlo Acutis

death of her son, which only happened over a period of five days from his hospitalisation, she said: "I started my faith path in 1994, so when Carlo died Jesus had already prepared me.

"When Carlo was in hospital, I heard inside me, I had a strong impression, like the book of Job: God has given, God has taken away, all shall bless the name of God."

After she spoke, Bishop Nicholas Hudson led all present in Adoration and Benediction. This was followed by an opportunity for those present to venerate a relic of Blessed Carlo and to ask his intercession.

Emmaus delighted as its music makes it on to digital platforms

Andy Drozdzia

A leading Irish Catholic worship band has finally seen its music published on digital streaming services, meaning more people can access its back catalogue of recordings.

Husband and wife Rónán and Joanne Johnston, from the band Emmaus, have released 14 albums since 1986, but until now, their music was only available on CD and tape. But now all 14 albums, from *Come to Me* (1989) to *Your Father in Heaven Knows* (2016), are available on digital music platforms Spotify, YouTube, iTunes and Apple music.

"These are our legacy albums. We really felt was that they belong to the body," Rónán said. "I just hope what it does is it becomes a kind of library of stuff. Hopefully the quality of what's there is good enough."

Rónán Johnston is well known in Ireland, having spent several decades writing and producing music for TV, radio, film and theatre. He is a soundtrack composer and producer, and composed music for Sky's award-winning series *Moone Boy*.

The response to the material has already been very positive, with fans commenting on social media. Sheira Fox said: 'Enjoying especially the first 2 albums which I only had on cassette back in the day and were long gone,' while Gerardine Rowley

said: 'Looking forward to listening on Spotify, the old tapes are very dusty now.'

Joanne Johnston explained the reasons for releasing the material now. "We realised that there are a wealth of gifts the Lord has given



Joanne and Rónán Johnston

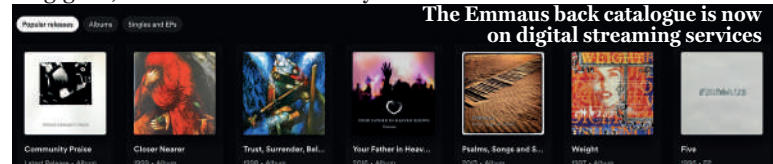
for the body and we thought, let's get it out there and let God do what He wants with it."

Music helps people at key moments, she added. "It was about what God has been doing these past 40 years with us. "The amount of times people have come to us and said 'my mum was dying and all she wanted was to listen to these songs' ... or when people are giving birth, we are their birthing tracks.

"You just go, wow, it's really beautiful to be part of the beginning and end of someone's life, and realising that the Emmaus story is about consolation to the brokenhearted."

The material is available under three artist names: Emmaus, Rónán Johnston, and Rónán Johnston & Emmaus.

The Emmaus back catalogue is now on digital streaming services



St Patrick's trafficking history makes him a saint for our times

Andy Drozdzia

A new book titled *The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick*, by the late Columban missionary Fr Aidan Larkin, offers an argument for a re-evaluation and recognition of St Patrick's profound spiritual legacy, Archbishop Eamon Martin said, adding that Patrick was "a saint for our times", to inspire those who are affected by trafficking today.

At the launch of the book in Dalgan Park, Co Meath, home of the Columban Missionaries in Ireland, Archbishop Martin highlighted the saint's personal experience of trafficking. As someone who was trafficked into slave labour in Ireland, he said that Patrick "empathises with a whole host of people forcibly moved from their country, or indeed who are forced to leave home as refugees or migrants."

Archbishop Martin went on to highlight the work carried out in Ireland against trafficking.

"A lot of the really good work that is going on in Ireland today to prevent trafficking is being done by our religious congregations who are highlighting this awful evil," he said.

"To think that Christians and people of faith may actually be turning a blind eye to trafficking which is happening in our own streets and in our own cities – that is something that I think St Patrick, if he was here today, would want to waken us up to."



Fr Raymond Husband, regional director of the Columbans in Ireland, with Fr Maurice Hogan, who was involved in the editorial preparation of the book, and Colm Larkin, brother of Fr Aidan Larkin, who was key to having the book published

Archbishop Martin also said the book showed that St Patrick is a saint for the whole Church and that the book provides a much broader vision of St Patrick than that which the Archbishop grew up with.

When he was alive, Fr Aidan Lar-

kin also served as a former SDLP councillor and assembly member, as well as a legal adviser in Brussels to the Council of Ministers.

In his book, Fr Larkin argues that St Patrick's works are of such calibre that he should be counted among those of the Church Fathers.

At the launch, the regional director of the Columbans in Ireland, Fr Raymond Husband, shared Fr Aidan Larkin's words from the book's introduction: "My purpose in writing this book is not to resolve every problem Patrick's writing poses. Instead, my aim is pastoral. I wish to evangelise. I wish to put myself at the service of God and of Patrick, who in Heaven prays continuously for his people here on earth."



Archbishop Eamon Martin with Fr Raymond Husband

'The Spiritual Journey of St Patrick' by Fr Aidan Larkin SSC (2023) can be purchased from Messengers Publications.

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Pope Francis gives a cheery greeting to members of the Vatican's Centesimus Annus Foundation during an audience in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican

Boost for Vatican coffers as bank sees profits soar

The Institute for the Works of Religion, often referred to as the Vatican Bank, made a net profit of €29.6 million euros (about £26 million) in 2022, a 63 per cent increase on the previous year.

Jean-Baptiste de Franssu, president of the bank's board of supervisors, said among the important achievements the past year was the recovery of €17.2 million "which had been stolen from the institute before 2014" and returned "after a lengthy legal process."

"Further successes are expected in the fight against past abuses," he added.

While the report did not specify what funds it had recovered, a former president of the Vatican bank and his lawyer had been found guilty by a Vatican tribunal in 2021 of money laundering and embezzling millions of euros from the sale of Vatican-owned buildings.

Angelo Caloia, who served as president of the Institute for the Works of Religion from 1999 to 2009, his lawyer, Gabriele Liuzzo, and Lamberto Liuzzo, Gabriele's son, were all sentenced and fined for skimming profits from the sale of Vatican properties. They were ordered to return to the Vatican bank around €17 million.

The bank holds assets worth €5.2 billion, which included deposits and investments from more than 12,700 clients – mostly Catholic religious orders around the world, Vatican offices and employees, and clergy.

"The growth in profit was thanks to the positive contribution of interest margin and commission margin, as well as to cost control and investments in customer services and digitalisation," the institute said. When it comes to asset management, it is "highly committed to the principles consistent with the Catholic faith" and other high standards.

The institute had also done well through its portfolio of real estate in Italy which the institute received over the years as donations or "legacies" left to it by institutions and individuals.

The IOR provided over a million euros to charitable causes during the year, ranging from direct aid to individuals to providing financial support for people with disabilities.

It also provides subsidised rent deals to Catholic associations and institutions with limited budgets in its properties, including migrants and single mothers.

Bishop resigns 'for good of Church'

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of 59-year-old Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar, India, who was acquitted last year on charges of raping a nun but may face further legal action as the nun is appealing.

The bishop said in a video message that he decided to resign "for the sake of the Diocese of Jalandhar and for the appointment of a new bishop."

Pope Francis, who had appointed him to lead the Diocese of Jalandhar in 2013, accepted the bishop's request to be relieved of his duties and appointed an administrator on 20th September, 2018, just one day before the bishop's arrest. However, no request to formally resign was made until now.

Police arrested and charged Bishop

Mulakkal for multiple assaults on the nun.

The bishop always maintained his innocence and claimed the accusations were baseless, and the court eventually cleared him of all charges.

The Kerala High Court has recently allowed for an appeal against the acquittal.

The nun, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus congregation, accused the bishop of raping her between 2014 and 2016 inside her convent in Kerala's Kottayam district. She was a former superior general of the diocesan congregation. She claimed to have made numerous complaints, including to the Vatican, but claimed she had received no help.



The imposing facade of the IOR - or the Vatican Bank

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It's all part of the routine as pope pops into hospital for quick CT scan

The Vatican has reported that Pope Francis returned to hospital for a brief medical check-up on 6th June, but was out within the hour.

In a statement to journalists, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, said Pope Francis visited Rome's Gemelli hospital "to undergo some clinical examinations, and returned to the Vatican before noon."

According to Italian news agency ANSA, the pope entered the hospital at 10.40am for an appointment in the hospital's geriatric medical centre. He left at 11.20am to return to the Vatican.

Citing Vatican sources, the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* said the visit had been scheduled, and consisted of a CT scan to provide information about internal organs and tissues.

It isn't the first time the press has speculated over the pontiff's health in recent weeks. In March, Pope Francis spent four days in the papal

suite of Rome's Gemelli hospital for treatment for a respiratory infection.

He also spent 10 days there in July 2021, after undergoing a three-hour surgery that removed part of his large intestine.

In January, Pope Francis told the Associated Press that his diverticulosis, the inflammation of bulges in the intestinal wall that led him to get the operation, had returned.

The 86-year-old has said his health is "not like at the beginning of the pontificate," and has cancelled some events due to medical reasons. He cancelled his day's audiences May 26 due to a fever but returned to his normal schedule the following day and presided over Pentecost Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

Vatican sources have suggested the summer will see a lower key pope, with fewer appointments and meetings planned, though he still intends to keep scheduled visits to Portugal and France.

Gänswein to go home after being asked to leave Vatican

A German newspaper has reported that just days after Archbishop Georg Gänswein told reporters that he was content to wait to see where his next role within the Church would be, Pope Francis has asked him to return to Germany by the end of June.

The longtime private secretary of Pope Benedict XVI has been asked to relinquish his accommodation in the Vatican and return to his home diocese of Freiburg in southwest Germany.

However, *Das Welt* revealed no specific role has been allocated to him, as yet.

At the time the *Universe* went to press, no official confirmation of this had been made by the Vatican, but *Das Welt* is said to be well connected with the German Church and its track record on breaking Church stories is very good.

The future role of the late Pope Benedict's secretary has been the subject of rumour for months. Previous speculations has included roles as a papal ambassador – Gänswein is fluent in several languages, and has received training from the

Holy See's diplomatic corps – with a vacant role in Costa Rica suggested in one briefing.

However, such a minor role would be seen as a huge snub to the German, whose steadfast loyalty to Pope Benedict was praised by many but is also said to have led to tensions within the Vatican during his boss's papacy and since his retirement. Rather, a number of archbishop positions in Germany are said to be being earmarked for Gänswein.

It must be stressed that there is nothing unusual in sending Gänswein home: Pope Francis has previously referred to the custom that "former private secretaries of deceased popes did not remain in Rome."

A longtime secretary to Benedict, Gänswein also served as prefect of the Papal Household to Benedict and remained in that post to Francis until February 2020.

Gänswein is currently back in Germany already, having been asked to preside over Mass on Sunday, 4th June, at an annual pilgrimage to the Cistercian monastery of Stiepel near Bochum.



Archbishop Gänswein with the pope. Relations between the two are said to be cordial but there is little chance of a role in Rome for the German



Pope Francis with organisers of the Blue & Green Festival in the Vatican

Pope calls for 'fast culture' to be thrown away to fix climate change

A faster change of course away from today's throwaway culture and toward greater care for the common good is necessary to ensure the planet's livability for future generations, Pope Francis said on World Environment Day.

The pope called on people "to move away from the throwaway culture toward ways of living marked by a culture of respect and care; care of creation and care of our neighbours, whether they be near or far from us either geographically or through time.

Meeting at the Vatican with the organisers of a festival supporting sustainability and bringing together activists, researchers, artists and scientific experts in Rome and Milan, Pope Francis noted how science increasingly demonstrates that actions taken today will have an effect on the environment for thousands of years.

"This has also increased our sense

of responsibility to God, who has entrusted us with the care of creation, to our neighbours and to future generations," he told the group of organisers of the 'Green & Blue Festival: Earth For All.'

World Environment Day was established in 1972 and is celebrated on 5th June to promote awareness about protecting the environment.

Combating climate change, Pope Francis said, requires recognising one's responsibility to those "who have contributed least to its occurrence" – the world's poorest and most vulnerable – and developing a sense of "responsible co-operation" among everyone.

"Our world is now thoroughly interdependent and cannot allow itself to be divided into blocs of countries that promote their own interests in an isolated or unsustainable way," the pope said.

"The real enemy is an irresponsible behaviour that has profound

consequences for every aspect of the lives of the men and women of today and tomorrow."

The pope said that changing the current model of consumption and production is "an immense and demanding challenge" that is possible to face.

He gave the example of efforts at the Vatican where the tiny city-state is trying to eliminate the sale of single-use plastic items on its territory. "These are steps, real steps that we have to continue," the pope said.

After the meeting, Pope Francis helped the organisers hold up a banner that read 'Loss and Damage. Finance Now,' a reference to a fund that was agreed upon at the COP27 UN climate conference held in Glasgow in 2022 after decades of pressure from vulnerable developing countries.

The fund would provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by climate change.

Missionary societies 'are about more than just cash'

The pontifical mission societies are called to inspire all Catholics to share the Gospel, a work that requires funding but it can never be just about money, Pope Francis said.

"Please do not reduce the societies to money," the pope told the Vatican-based officers and national directors of the societies during their annual meeting.

The four societies, which operate under the Dicastery for Evangelisation, are the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Society of St. Peter Apostle, Holy Childhood Association and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.

The societies rely on donations to fund their work in places where the Gospel has yet to be proclaimed or where the Church is

still being established – areas traditionally called 'mission territories'.

"They certainly need money but do not reduce them to that, for they are bigger than money," Pope Francis told the officers. "Money is what we need to move forward. Yet if spirituality is missing and they become merely a business, then corruption arises."

"Indeed, even in these days, we have seen newspaper reports of alleged corruption having occurred in the name of the Church's missionary work," the pope said without providing more details.

However, earlier in the week, Associated Press ran a story claiming the Vatican was investigating transfers made between funds related to the Pontifical Mission Societies in

the United States, although the story said the transfers "appear to be fully legal."

The societies promote missionary awareness and offer direct aid to dioceses and religious orders and help fund the education of priests, religious and lay workers for the church in mission lands.

Pope Francis insisted the societies "are not merely an agency for the distribution of funds for those in need of help, but support the mission of evangelisation in the Church. They foster a missionary spirit."

The societies must be bold and creative, relying on the help of the Holy Spirit to educate all Catholics about evangelisation.

"I invite you to promote the missionary responsibility of the baptised, who perhaps

need another first evangelization," the pope said, adding that some traditionally Christian countries are experiencing "a serious crisis of faith and are in need of renewed evangelisation today."

Reminding his audience that June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the pope asked them to remember why sharing the Gospel is so important. "As we contemplate the heart of Christ, we discover the greatness of God's plan for humanity," he said. "The Father 'so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should have eternal life.'"

"In the pierced heart of the Crucified we discover the infinite measure of the Father's love: he loves us with eternal love."

IN BRIEF**Penitential rite after man's naked attack**

Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, celebrated a penitential rite at the basilica's main altar on 3rd June after a man climbed up on it naked before being apprehended.

The man, a Polish citizen, had written on his bare back "Save children of Ukraine."

The basilica's ushers said the man, who was in an altered emotional state of mind, did not resist when they forced him down and told him to put his clothes back on.

Vatican police handed him over to Italian state police who issued an expulsion order, forcing him to leave the country, Vatican News reported June 3.

Although his act was not considered an act of desecration, it did prompt officials to plan the penitential service as an act of reparation. Cardinal Gambetti and the priests from the basilica's chapter recited the prayers at midday June 3, blessing the altar with holy water and with incense.

Pope calls for end to torture

Pope Francis has called for more work to eradicate the use of torture and to guarantee support to victims and their families.

"Let us put a stop to this horror of torture. It is essential to put the dignity of the person above all else," the pope said in a video released by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.

The network posts a short video offering the pope's specific prayer intention each month. For June, the pope dedicated his prayer intention to torture's abolition.

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is 26th June, to highlight the day when the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment came into effect in 1987. While torture is prohibited by international law and is illegal in most countries, it is still practised worldwide.

US cardinal takes top court role

Pope Francis has named US Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, as president of the supreme court of the Vatican.

He will be joined on the Court of Cassation, as the Vatican state's highest civil court is known, by Cardinals Matteo Zuppi of Bologna, Paolo Lujudice of Siena and Mauro Gambetti, the papal vicar for Vatican City.

The Court is the highest court of appeals for Vatican City State and can interpret Vatican City law.

Ortega in new attack on Church as he freezes diocesan accounts

David Agren

Nicaragua has frozen the bank accounts of dioceses nationwide amid accusations of theft and money laundering as the regime of President Daniel Ortega escalates its persecution of the Catholic Church.

The country's banking regulator also requested that the Nicaraguan bishops' conference and Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes of Managua "present documents that show the movements of the dioceses' bank accounts so that the laws of the country are complied with at all times, avoiding the illegal acts that have been committed." The statement describes Cardinal Brenes as "Head of the Nicaraguan Church."

The National Police claimed it was informed of "illicit activity in the management of funds and resources in bank accounts that belonged to persons sentenced for treason." It also claimed that a subsequent investigation found foreign money entered a Church bank account "irregularly."

"The result of the investigations confirmed the illegal theft of resources from bank accounts that had been ordered frozen by law, along with illegal activities that are still being investigated as part of a money laundering network that has been discovered in the dioceses of



different departments," the police said.

The statement did not identify specific dioceses or Church organisations. Nicaraguan media cited sources saying Church bank accounts were frozen across the country, including the Archdiocese of Managua.

"The persecution is real," an exiled priest told the OSV News agency. "They've made accusations of weapons. Now money, when the Church is experiencing penury."

The independent newspaper *Confidencial* wrote that the frozen accounts were first reported in the Diocese of Estelí, where imprisoned Bishop Alvarez of Matagalpa is apostolic administrator.

The bishop was sentenced to 26 years in prison in February after a

sham trial on charges of undermining national sovereignty and spreading false information.

Two priests there, Fathers Eugenio Rodríguez Benavides and Leonardo Guevara Gutiérrez, were arrested in May and are being investigated for matters pertaining to a now-extinct Caritas chapter.

Another priest, Father Jaime Iván Montecinos, pastor at St. John Paul II Parish in Matagalpa, was also detained at the end of May for unknown reasons.

The freezing of bank accounts complicates matters for Church ministries and the maintenance of parishes. Many local people have looked to the Church for welfare payments as the Nicaraguan economy has crashed in recent years.

It also marks an escalation in the regime's antipathy toward the Church as it consolidates power and eliminates all spaces for dissent. Churches in Nicaragua provided refuge to protesters against the Ortega regime, while priests accompanied political prisoners – raising the ire of Ortega, who has branded prelates "terrorists."

Pope Francis has called for dialogue, but the Vatican closed its embassy in Managua in March 2023 after Nicaragua proposed suspending diplomatic relations.

Ex-president charged in absence with Jesuits' murder

Prosecutors in El Salvador have charged the country's former president Alfredo Cristiani with ordering the 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests and two others by soldiers.

Prosecutors presented formal charges against Cristiani on Monday, saying the plot to kill the Jesuits during the country's civil war went all the way to the top.

Cristiani left El Salvador in 2021 and his whereabouts are unknown today. He has always denied knowledge of the killings of the Jesuits – five Spaniards and an El Salvadoran.

But prosecutors say that not only did Cristiani approve the killings, he also held a phone call to reassure one of the priests before he was murdered. Rev Ignacio Ellacuría, had several phone calls with Cristiani before soldiers burst into the Central American University, the UCA, where the Jesuits lived, and shot them.

Cristiani and seven of the country's top-ranking military officers at the time face charges of homicide, conspiracy and terrorism in the case. A general amnesty passed in 1993 during Cristiani's administration had prevented pursuit of those involved in war crimes, but it was repealed in 2016.

Prosecutors had previously alleged that Cristiani knew of the military's plan to eliminate the priests and did nothing to stop it.

In 2022, a statement released via his daughter from Cristiani said: "The truth is I never knew of the plans they had to commit those killings."

"They never informed me nor asked for my authorisation because they knew that I would never have authorised that Fr Ellacuría or his brothers were harmed."

On 16th November 1989, an elite commando unit killed the six priests along with their housekeeper and the housekeeper's daughter in the priests' residence. It was a killing that shocked the world at the time.

The killers tried to make the massacre appear as though it had been carried out by leftist guerrillas. Nine members of the military were initially put on trial, but a court absolved seven of them.

Two officers served short sentences, but were released in 1993 under the amnesty.

After the Supreme Court found the amnesty unconstitutional, a judge ordered one of those officers, Colonel Guillermo Benavides, back to prison where he remains.

While the case stalled at home, a Spanish court in 2020 sentenced former Salvadoran Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano to 133 years for the priests' killings.



People take part in a Eucharistic procession through the Manhattan borough of New York City to St Patrick's Cathedral for a Pentecost Vigil. The Charismatic Renewal event in Spanish attracted thousands to the streets in a symbolic show of their Catholic faith. Photo: Jeffrey Bruno

Papal envoy meets Zelensky as Russia accused of destroying critical dam

Lilia Kovalyk-Vasiuta

Pope Francis' peace envoy to Ukraine, Cardinal Zuppi, has seen his first visit to Ukraine in his new official capacity end with a high-profile meeting with President Zelensky.

But the meeting was overshadowed by news of the destruction of the critical dam in southern Ukraine, which Zelensky blamed on "Russian terrorists" and labelled "ecocide."

Russia accused Ukrainian forces of blowing up the dam, but provided no evidence or reason why it would do so. Military analysts pointed out that by flooding a vast area of southern Ukraine, Russia would effectively deny Ukraine the chance to mount military operations to recapture parts of its land.

Floodwaters have already inundated nearby towns and villages, where thousands have been evacuated amid Russian shelling of the area.

"My heart is broken. How can they hate life so much," Olia Hercules, a Ukrainian book author from Kakhovka, said in a Twitter video, accusing Russia of first damaging the ecosystem of the region by building the dam in 1956 on Stalin's order, and now "damaging it again" without warning by "blowing it up." The Dnipro river itself has over-



A grainy CCTV film shows the moment the dam burst, sending billions of litres of water downstream. Ukraine has blamed Russia for the attack, labelling it 'ecocide.'

flowed in many parts, flooding coastal towns and cities, and start an unprecedented ecological disaster in the region.

The breaching of the dam will have "grave and far-reaching consequences", the official in charge of humanitarian aid at the UN said.

Martin Griffiths warned an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council that the magnitude of the catastrophe would only become clear in the coming days. Thousands of people in southern Ukraine are

facing "the loss of homes, food, safe water and livelihoods" on both sides of the frontline.

UN chief Antonio Guterres called the breach a "monumental" catastrophe on a humanitarian, economic and ecological level

The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, called on the world community to condemn Russia's actions. "Russia continues its genocidal aggression against Ukraine. The

destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant is another war crime, a terrible environmental and man-made disaster and a sin against God the Creator," Archbishop Shevchuk said via Facebook.

He also warned the loss of the dam's waters created a risk that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant could fail.

Cardinal Zuppi's meeting with Zelensky was cordial, media reports said, with the pair discussing "key

points to move into the direction of stable and concrete dialogue."

Zelensky said he discussed the framework of the Ukrainian Peace Formula, adding that "only united efforts, diplomatic isolation and pressure on Russia can influence the aggressor and bring a just peace to the Ukrainian land."

"I call on the Holy See to contribute to the implementation of the Ukrainian peace plan," Zelensky said. "We welcome other states and partners to find ways to peace, but since the war is on our territory, the algorithm for achieving peace can be Ukrainian only."

The Vatican said the main purpose of the visit was to listen "in depth" to the Ukrainians about ways to achieve a "just peace and to support gestures of humanity that will help ease tensions."

Cardinal Zuppi also visited Bucha and met the region's governor, Ruslan Kravchenko where he "saw for himself the "extremely high price" Ukrainians pay for freedom and peace, the governor said. 119 civilians were murdered during the 33 days Russian forces occupied the town before withdrawing. Many were tortured or shot with their hands tied behind their back.

Exeter team asks faith experts to help build war crimes case

Leading forensic scientists at the University of Exeter have teamed up with Ukrainian religious experts to collect evidence of Russian war crimes in Ukraine, in the hope that they will help future investigations at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague into war crimes.

The Exeter team are currently training Ukrainian police investigators and forensic scientists in forensic examination of war crimes and identification of war victims.

Ukrainian religious scholars were asked to review some evidence of a massacre where Ukrainian servicemen were tortured and murdered by Russian troops, followed by what appeared to be relatively formal Orthodox burials.

They also paid attention to the damage to religious and cultural sites, and the complex relationship between the Russian and other Orthodox churches in Ukraine.

Serhii Shumylo, a Ukrainian professor who is now a visiting researcher fellow at the University of Exeter, and Daria Morozova, who also is a Ukrainian scholar and visiting researcher at the University of Exeter, attended the meeting, with Brandon Gallaher and Emma Loosley, who are professors from the University of Exeter's department of

theology and religion, and Nata Bukia-Peters, who has worked as a translator for the ICC on war crimes cases.

Shumylo is a researcher at the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and provided British forensic scientists with photographs and videos of the crimes committed by the Russians in Chernihiv.

"British experts are quite serious, responsible and comprehensive in their approach to collecting, studying and documenting evidence and proof of the crimes of the Russian occupation forces in Ukraine," Shumylo said.

"They are interested in various aspects, including religious ones," he added. "They intend to bring the crimes of the Russian occupation forces to The Hague. I am convinced that this will happen."

As part of the discussion, Ukrainian religious experts answered questions about the specifics of the religious situation in different regions of Ukraine, in particular in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, the peculiarities of funeral rituals, the attitude of Ukrainian religious communities to Russia's war against Ukraine and the facts of collaboration among the Orthodox clergy.



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Taiwan tensions normal, but Father asks West to keep out of the row

A senior member of Taiwan's Church has urged for the rhetoric around the island's future to be toned down amid growing fears China plans a military overthrow of the island state.

China has escalated patrols and surveillance around Taiwan in recent weeks and expanded the number of military vessels operating in the Taiwan Strait, increasing speculation that it might try to invade Taiwan.

But many of those who live in Taiwan are "accustomed to this situation after 70 years," said Bishop Martin Su Yao-wen of Taichung, Taiwan.

"The Chinese government wants to show its military power, so they send an airplane every day to demonstrate that. The Taiwanese are – I don't want to say scared – but they are scared at times," Bishop Su said.

"But unless the Chinese officials have lost their minds, there's no reason at this time to have a war. People are a little scared, but they don't think anything will happen," he said.

Many people in Taiwan and China consider themselves one nation, although they have been governed separately since 1949, when the then mainland Chinese Government relocated to Taiwan during a civil war with the Chinese Communist Party.

Taiwan, or the Republic of China as it regards itself, is an island nation of 23 million people. China's mainland, or the People's Republic of China, has more than 1.3 billion people. Each government considers itself the legitimate rule of 'one China.'

Maryknoll Father Joy Tajonera, who has spent 22 of the last 25 years in Taiwan, told OSV News the increased rhetoric and international tensions do not really affect ordinary people in Taiwan.

"The situation for those living here, these tensions are normal; we don't lose our sleep thinking there's going to be an invasion tonight or tomorrow," Fr Tajonera said. "Those things you hear daily – that's there's an incursion of the Chinese military, are just part of ordinary life," he said in an interview from Taichung.

What does worry the Taiwanese? Fr Joy said they worry about the economy and that "there are more people dying than children being born." People think if peace and stability are upset, it will affect the economy, he said.

In addition, Taiwan's population

over age 65 is expected to reach 41 per cent by the year 2060.

"Taiwan relies on migrant workers to come and do the work," Fr Tajonera said, noting that "the migrants in Taiwan are young people; they're in their 20s and 30s and 40s."

"The Catholic Church in Taiwan is not growing, because the population is not growing," the priest said. Migrants make up about 30 per cent of Taiwan's Catholic population, but overall are just one per cent of the total population.

The Holy See is one of only 13 countries with diplomatic ties to Taiwan, and earlier this year, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen wrote to Pope Francis and said that "armed confrontation is absolutely not an option." She emphasised that bilateral dialogue was the best way to keep peaceful relations across the 100-mile-wide Taiwan



'Unless the Chinese have lost their minds, there's no reason for war,' Bishop Su

Strait. The Taiwanese government reports that in 2021, the value of cross-strait trade was \$273 billion.

Fr Tajonera said although not everyone trusts the Chinese Government, at least if there is dialogue, war can be avoided.

"I think all of us don't want any war or conflict or invasion," he said.

But he said when he reads the news, he sees that the United States and other Western countries keep "pushing the envelope."

"Western countries have a way of putting themselves in the middle," he said.

During a defence forum in Singapore at the start of June, Chinese and US officials accused each other of increasing tension in the region.

Without naming names, Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu said some countries were increasing military alliances in the Asia-Pacific region and were "meddling in other countries' internal affairs."

In response US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin warned China against bullying and against intercepting planes above the South China Sea, an important maritime area whose waters include claims by seven countries.

Li Shangfu added that any armed conflict with the United States would be an "unbearable disaster."



President Macron helps mark 1,000 years of beloved Mont-Saint-Michel

France's beloved abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel has celebrated 1,000 years since the first stone was laid with a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The Catholic abbey has been a huge draw to France's politicians for many years. President Francois Mitterrand visited in 1983, and ever since, France's leaders have flocked to this symbolically important site to send out political messages. In 2007, former President Nicolas Sarkozy even launched his presidential campaign there.

In his speech Mr Macron said the "walls and the eternity of the mount" seem to carry "the notions of resistance and resilience" of the D-Day landings that were commemorated this week in the same region.

He used his visit to the historic abbey to call on the French to "push themselves further" in global chal-

lenges such as climate change.

He drew a comparison with the abbey that has stood strong over time and embodies the "French spirit" of "resilience" and "resistance".

It was veiled rhetoric, coming one day before another national protest was held against his controversial pension reform law, which has been passed in the face of stiff opposition.

Mr Macron also visited a new exhibit tracing the abbey's history via 30 objects and pieces, including a restored statue of Saint Michael.

Legend has it that the archangel Michael appeared in 708, duly instructing the bishop of nearby Avranches to build him a church on the rocky outcrop.

The exhibit, two years in the making, opened last month. It covers the complex process of building what is considered an architectural

jewel on a rocky island linked to the mainland only by a narrow causeway at low tide.

Four crypts were constructed on the granite tip along with a church on top. The exhibit explains how the original structure, built in 966, became too small for pilgrims, spurring on the builders to create the 11th-century abbey that stands to this day.

France has spent more than 32 million euros (£27 million) over 15 years to restore the building, and the work is nearing completion. Authorities have also tried in recent years to protect the monument's surrounding environment from the impact of mass tourism.

One of the most popular French destinations outside Paris, Mont-Saint-Michel island attracted 2.8 million visitors last year, including 1.3 million for the abbey.



Seven days after a deadly three-train crash killed 275 people in India, close to a 100 bodies remain unclaimed, authorities have revealed. It is thought an accurate passenger manifest will never be completed, as some passengers had either paid cash for tickets or had boarded without one. The crash on 2nd June in the state of Odisha involved two passenger trains and a stationary goods train.

More than 1,000 were injured, many seriously. Many families say they are still looking for loved ones. The Indian Government has promised prompt action if negligence is proven to be behind the crash, which appears to have been as a result of a signals failure. It is India's worst rail accident this century. Pope Francis called for prayers for the victims as he prayed with the faithful on Sunday in St Peter's Square.

Rescue teams search the wreckage of the crash, which claimed 275 lives

HEART OF THE MATTER

ROB BESWICK

Oh, take me to the ball game, where I can mock someone's faith ...

An unholy row has broken out within America's national sport after one of its leading baseball teams, the LA Dodgers, presented the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence with a Community Hero Award.

While on the face of it, honouring a group of religious sisters might seem like a noble and faith-inspired idea, this group of religious are not quite all that they seem.

In fact, the Sisters are a group of gay men who dress in drag as Catholic religious sisters and who self-describe as 'a leading-edge order of queer and trans nuns.'

The honour was going to be handed over on June 16, the night of the Dodgers 10th annual 'LGBTQ+ Pride Night'. It was picked because it was a match up against California rivals the San Francisco Giants, that city being the original home of the USA's gay community.

It is true that away from the mockery of the Catholic faith, there are nuggets to like about the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. For instance, its members were the first to care for AIDS patients at the height of the outbreak, and they do a lot of work in the community, and were particularly active during the pandemic.

But that doesn't hide the fact that when formed in 1979 they described themselves as an anti-Catholic lobbying group.

News of the Dodgers honour shocked the Catholic community. California's Catholic bishops were appalled, asking why mocking the faith was now being honoured in such a public way. Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, a Catholic, was one of the first public figures to oppose the Dodgers' invitation. In a letter to Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred, Rubio asked: "Do you believe that the Los Angeles Dodgers are being 'inclusive and welcoming to everyone' by giving an award to a group of gay and transgender drag performers that intentionally mocks and degrades Christians, and not only Christians, but nuns, who devote their lives to serving others?"

The problem was not, the senator said, in honouring a group from the gay community. Plenty of sporting clubs around the world have done that. Rather, the problem arises from the fact that the Sisters are founded on a mockery of the Catholic faith. Even the group's motto – Go forth and sin some more – is a direct parody of Jesus's words in the Gospel (cf. Jn 8:11), words that echo what practising



The LA Dodgers stadium. Inset, Catholic pitcher Trevor Williams of the Washington Nationals

Catholics hear said in the confessional.

Other Catholics took up the fight, and amid considerable pressure, the Dodgers rescinded the invite.

'This year, as part of a full night of programming, we invited a number of groups to join us,' the Dodgers said. 'We are now aware that our inclusion of one group in particular, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, in this year's pride night has been the source of some controversy.'

'Given the strong feelings of people who have been offended by the sisters' inclusion in our evening, and in an effort not to distract from the great benefits that we have seen over the years of Pride Night, we are deciding to remove them from this year's group of honorees.'

But then pressure mounted from the other side. Publications like *Rolling Stone* magazine ran a feature headed: '*Conservatives Bully L.A. Dodgers Into Dropping Charity Drag Group from Pride Night.*' Other sponsors and activists jumped on the bandwagon and before you knew it, the Dodgers had caved in – again. Looking at this stage like one of those baseball runners who gets caught between whether to head for the next base or sticking with the one he's on, the Dodgers decided to reinvite the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, apologising for the de-invite.

The jury is out as to why. The main guess is it is a political one, a calculation that it is easier to offend Catholics and mock the Catholic Church rather than to oppose the LGBTQ lobby in California.

This group didn't have to be

honoured. But clearly leaders in the Dodgers organisation decided to make a statement by celebrating these men.

By deciding to reinvite the activist group, the Dodgers might win a peaceful moment from the LGBTQ lobby, but many others lose. The public loses, for reducing questions about human sexuality to the frivolity and shallow displays of men in drag. Christians lose, because the unseemly parody of faith impacts anyone who actually believes. Catholics lose, because once again our faith is openly mocked in the public square.

But the biggest losers are women religious, whose noble example of self-sacrifice and service is grotesquely caricatured by this group and its members.

In Los Angeles, a statement from the archdiocese made it clear it was unhappy with the Dodgers about face. 'We stand against any actions that would disparage and diminish our Christian faith and those who dedicate their lives to Christ.'

'The decision to honour a group that clearly mocks the Catholic faith and makes light of the sincere and holy vocations of our women religious who are an integral part of our Church is what has caused disappointment, concern, anger, and dismay from our Catholic community,' the statement read.

The archdiocese said that women religious should be 'honoured and celebrated through genuine acts of appreciation, reverence, and respect for their sacred vows' and pointed to the array of charitable works carried out by sisters for the sick and needy, as well as their

spiritual care for souls through prayer. That work 'won't be recognised by the Dodgers.'

Their legacy should be cherished, not thrown beneath the feet of jeering crowds at a Pride Night publicity stunt. It is offensive and divisive. And the Dodgers should be ashamed of themselves.

The message also called on Catholics to 'show our care and respect for our women religious' in a variety of ways, including by sending messages of support to sisters through phone calls, letters, or social media or donating to their orders and/or charitable causes they support.

Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, said the team had "officially endorsed anti-Catholic bigotry" by inviting back the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

"Only one side was listened to, the side that sponsors hate speech," said Donohue of the "honest conversations" that the Dodgers said led to the reversal and reinvite.

Others to criticise the Dodgers included a Catholic priest with a close association with baseball. "As an @MLB fan, this is deeply saddening to me. Celebrate whomever you please, celebrate good works; but can we refrain from mocking religion? No religion should be mocked. This plainly mocks Catholicism. This is the team of Vin Scully, of Gil Hodges. They would be so ashamed," said Fr Joshua Whitfield.

He added: "I know @MLB has done a lot of good supporting and celebrating various religions and people of faith. But it's also long

been a place where it's hard to be a Catholic. This again is deeply troubling, that to celebrate something, something else must be denigrated. This needn't be."

Fr Whitfield said he "just lost some love for what's been a great new season. Again, just terribly saddening. I just want to watch baseball. I want to feel baseball is a game for everybody, belittling nobody."

Major baseball stars have also questioned the award.

Washington Nationals starting pitcher Trevor Williams, known for his devout Catholic faith, expressed his disappointment with the Dodgers. Via social media Williams stated, "To invite and honour a group that makes a blatant and deeply offensive mockery of my religion, and the religion of over four million people in Los Angeles county alone, undermines the values of respect and inclusivity that should be upheld by any organisation."

Williams called on the Dodgers to reconsider their association with the group, emphasising the need for an inclusive environment that respects the religious beliefs of all fans and employees. Williams also encouraged his fellow Catholics to re-evaluate their support for any organisation that permits such mockery of its fans and their beliefs.

As for the Dodgers, they have scrambled to make amends by organising a 'Christian Faith and Family Day' in July. But it was dismissed as a PR stunt: "You can't have a night where you invite one group that is openly bigoted towards another, then invite that other group. Why do you have to encourage inclusivity at our expense?" asked Kathleen Domingo, executive director of the California Catholic Conference. "It's just not enough to compensate for the mockery."

VATICAN LETTER

JUSTIN MCLELLAN

A close-up picture of the Immaculate Conception depicting a crowned Mary, in the Chapel of the Choir in St. Peter's Basilica
Photo: Lola Gomez



St. Peter's Basilica opens new exhibit of Marian coronations

Justin McLellan

Of the more than 1,300 Marian images crowned around the world, one of the first to receive this honour does not have a crown today.

For over 350 years, Michelangelo's *Pietà*, instantly recognisable by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, was one of several "crowned Madonnas" in St. Peter's Basilica. Until 1924, the disproportionately large Mary bore a golden crown supported by two angels, and over the head of the limp Jesus in her lap was a halo. Coronated in 1568, the sculpture was at the beginning of a wave of Marian coronations which took off in the 17th-century.

"In the early 1600s, a Capuchin friar had the nice idea of officially coronating the Marian images that had a certain devotion, and so he went around towns and began this practice," said Pietro Zander, curator of a Vatican exhibit on

Marian coronations, during a tour of the Marian imagery in St. Peter's Basilica.

In 1636, the Vatican began supporting, and regulating, Marian coronations. The local community, typically a church or Marian shrine, was required to write to the Vatican confirming that the image was of "continuous and ancient devotion, used for religious purposes and generated an increase in Marian devotion," said Zander.

Once the image was crowned, the community was obliged to send a letter to the Vatican guaranteeing that the act of coronation followed the prescribed rules along with a painting of the coronated image.

"These images started arriving – these paintings, since there wasn't photography at the time – are beautiful since they were commissioned by artists," said Zander. The paintings acted as a type of postcard meant to share

each community's particular Marian devotion with the Vatican. Often, text at the bottom of the painting explained the community's devotion and told of the coronation event.

Hundreds are still preserved in the Vatican and, beginning on the feast of the Visitation of Mary 31st May, 15 of them from throughout Italy went on display in St. Peter's Basilica. The exhibit, titled *Crowned Madonnas*, is organised by the *Fabbrica di San Pietro*, the office responsible for maintaining St. Peter's Basilica.

Each image comes from a different region in Italy and is accompanied by the story of a community's source of devotion. One image, called *Our Lady of the Stone*, shows Mary with a wound on her right arm which is said to have begun bleeding after a

Continue reading on next page



drunken soldier threw a small rock at it. Another tells of monks finding a worn and discolored statue of Mary that miraculously returned to its original form and color during Mass and brought the withered flowers nearby back to life.

Zander said the exhibit, which runs until 7th October, adds to the rich history of Marian devotion already present in the pope's basilica. He recalled that the first image brought into today's St. Peter's Basilica was a 12th-century fresco of Our Lady of Perpetual Help taken from the wall of the old basilica that once stood in its place.

Additionally, the image of Mater Ecclesiae" (Mother of the Church) in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Column is taken from a piece of a column that stood in front of the old St. Peter's Basilica. Zander explained that that after the assassination attempt on St. John Paul II in 1981, the pope requested that an enlarged image of Mater Ecclesiae be placed above a window of the Apostolic Palace over the colonnade in St. Peter's Square to welcome visitors. The last Marian image to be crowned in the Vatican was Our Lady of Czestochowa, widely venerated in Poland and by the Polish pope, just hours before his death in 2005.

While the current exhibition shows Marian paintings from all of Italy, Zander said he hopes the basilica will rotate through its collection of "crowned Madonnas" to give a glimpse of how the mother of Jesus is venerated around the world.

Above, an icon titled Mater Ecclesiae (Mother of the Church) in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Column in St. Peter's Basilica

Right, the Immaculate Conception depicting a crowned Mary, in the Chapel of the Choir in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican May 30, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Below, Paintings of Our Lady of Piné, Our Lady of Barbana and Our Lady of the Oak are displayed as part of the Crowned Madonnas exhibit in St. Peter's Basilica. The exhibit is scheduled to run until 7th October



Record number of Catholics join pilgrimage from Paris to Chartres

Paulina Guzik

From national television newscasts to radio shows to podcasts, media across France were mesmerised this Pentecost by an unusual story steeped in Catholic faith: the annual pilgrimage from Paris to Chartres, 62 miles south-west from the French capital.

News anchors repeated with joy and a hint of surprise that in a country plagued by secularisation, where only 4.5 per cent Catholics attend Mass, a record number of participants joined a 41st annual walking pilgrimage. The theme of this year's walk was *Eucharist Salvation of Souls*, and 16,000 people participated.

"The pilgrimage is a great school of faith, teaching us that we have to approach everyone individually – that no universal patterns of ministry can be applied, and that in every human being we have to see the past but also the future," said Fr Mateusz Markiewicz, secretary-general of the Institute of the Good Shepherd in Courtalain, France, and six-time pilgrim.

"Young people that sign up for the pilgrimage in large numbers are looking for something stable, for the link with those that have been here before them," he added. An important symbol on this year's pilgrimage of that constancy of faith was that the pilgrims carried with them the skull of St. Thomas Aquinas, which is touring France this year ahead of the 700th anniversary of the saint's canonisation on 18th July.

Herve Rolland, vice president of Notre-Dame de Chrétienté, organiser of the pilgrimage, said he has walked the route more than 30 times, always remembering the words of St. John Paul II. "In 1980, Pope John Paul II urged France by his words: 'France, the eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?'" he said. France was supposed to lead the Christian world, "and we needed to do something about it."

In 1982, a group of French pilgrims joined a traditional walking pilgrimage to Czestochowa in Poland, where the famous Our Lady of Jasna Góra Sanctuary is located. There they decided "that we need to do the same thing for Western Europe. That's how it started in France in 1983," Rolland said.

Chartres has been a pilgrimage destination for French people for centuries. In 876, King Charles III, known as Charles le Chauve or Charles the Fat, donated a relic that to this day is one of the most important in France – the veil of the Virgin Mary – to the Chartres cathedral.



According to tradition, the veil – a piece of plain cream silk dating from the first century – was worn by Mary at the Annunciation and the Nativity. Before being donated to France, it was preserved in the once thriving Christian city of Constantinople.

The veil escaped the fire of 1194, which ravaged the cathedral and indirectly led to the church's reconstruction, because it was protected by monks for three days in the crypt. But it only partially escaped the revolutionary fury of

1793. Cut up, only two pieces of the veil have survived, which are visible today in two reliquaries.

"Chartres is one of the first Gothic cathedrals in France, and it really was designed to be a home for this precious relic," Fr Markiewicz said. "French queens were coming to Chartres before their babies were born to pray to Virgin Mary for a healthy delivery." Pilgrims walked to Chartres as early as in the 12th century.

Pilgrims of the contemporary Paris-Chartres pilgrimage are

organised into groups of 20-60 people that are referred to as 'chapters.' The walk starts through the streets of Paris, and then journeys into the picturesque French countryside.

"This year, for the first time, we had to close the registration early," Rolland revealed. "We could not accommodate more than the maximum 16,000. But next year we will do our best to accommodate more participants."

Taking part in the pilgrimage were 330 priests and seminarians. For the sixth time, Fr Markiewicz was one of them. "What is unusual for this walking pilgrimage is that it's not a penitential walk. It's a happy walk. And participants vary from traditional Catholics to people they invited and some of them are not even baptised," the priest said. "Priests have a special role in the

pilgrimage and mostly hear confessions for long hours. Seminarians, on the other hand, are among the people, conducting countless conversations."

During the course of the pilgrimage, participants walk for three days. In France, the Monday after Pentecost Sunday is a holiday, and the long weekend enables more and more people to participate. The number of pilgrims has grown from 3,000 10 years ago to now more than five times more.

"It's mostly people living in cities. They're not used to walking 18-20 miles a day," Rolland said, but whole families accept the challenge.

There are several chapters of the pilgrimage – including for adults, families and young people. There also is a 'Guardian Angel' group – people from all over the globe who sign up for the pilgrimage but can't physically come and instead pray at a distance for those walking and their intentions.

The Paris-Chartres pilgrimage is organised by devotees of what is commonly referred to as the traditional Latin Mass. Participants spend the nights camping in their place of daily destination. Luggage is driven from one place to another by trucks that are organised by volunteers. More than 1,000 people organise the annual pilgrimage.

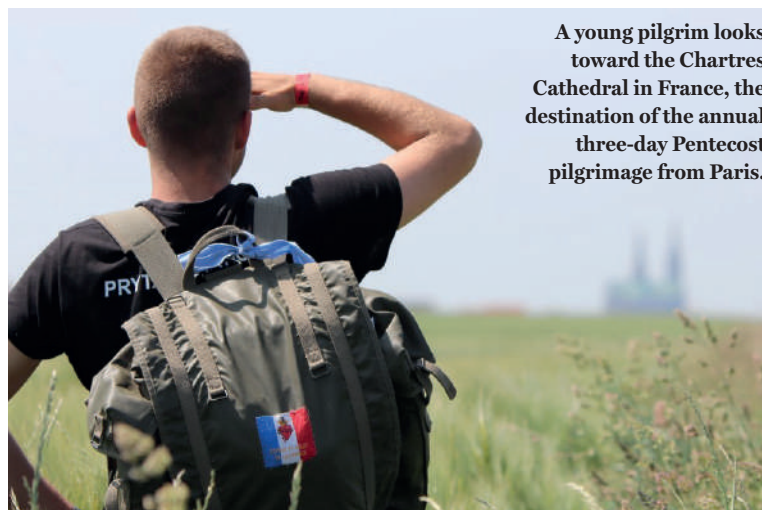
Some 1,500 participants attended this year's pilgrimage from 27 countries, including Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Portugal, among others. Pilgrims also participated from the United States, Australia and, for the first time, Canada.

Australia's late Cardinal George Pell, who died in January, was supposed to have been among their number.

Prior to the fire of April 2019, the pilgrimage traditionally began at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. It now starts in the nearby church of Saint-Sulpice.

"With the pilgrimage we ask, what is the direction of our lives," Rolland said. "Chartres points us in the direction. The walk is painful, it also is a lot of joy, with difficulties and happiness. No pain, no gain."

"If you want to attain Heaven," he said, "you need effort and some form of pain, and this is exactly what we do, heading to our destination."



A young pilgrim looks toward the Chartres Cathedral in France, the destination of the annual three-day Pentecost pilgrimage from Paris.

“

France, the eldest daughter of the Church, was supposed to lead the Christian world... we felt that we needed to do something about it

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

The extraordinary beginning of the Mass

I was watching an old cops and robbers film on TV, when a specific action reminded me of the Mass. The police had surrounded a building where the robbers had taken shelter and the chief of police shouted the old classic: "Open up in the name of the law."

He was reminding the villains that he and his men were the police and that what they were doing was within the law of the land.

It was the last six words he used that made me start to think of that religious rite which is celebrated at the beginning of every Mass Catholics attend. We call it the Introductory Rite, which contains the Penitential Act. The more I thought about it all, the more I realised the absolute wonder of it.

It's a mixture of rites and associated prayers, so wonderfully organised and written, that they themselves are truly awe-inspiring.

Watch, as the priest and servers arrive at the Sanctuary. The servers then sit, and the priest kisses the altar showing reverence to the relics of saints therein and his respect for the altar upon which The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered.

He then starts the Mass by inviting us to bless ourselves by making the Sign of the Cross, and saying a small prayer:

*"in the name of the Father,
and of the Son
and of The Holy Spirit."*

It was those first six words again that were used in the film; yet this is how the Mass is started all over the world. Have you ever stopped to think about what you've just done and said when you bless yourself, right at the very start of the Mass? You've reminded yourself that:

There are three persons in one God. Jesus died for us on the cross because of that tiny prayer, what you are about to do is all in the name of the Blessed Trinity.

How wonderfully profound is this at the very start of the Mass, yet how many of us just pay it lip service?

We then enter the Penitential Act. Being Penitent means being truly sorry for any wrongdoing we've committed.

As far as God is concerned, this means having offended him, sinning, losing his favour.

Before we do anything relating to God, we should always be penitent, endeavouring to become his friend.

The Penitential Act

The Penitential Act is a highly effective way of doing this.

Whoever conceived this must have



been cloaked in the Holy Spirit, because it's a very simple yet wonderful way of showing how penitent we are.

It starts with that special little prayer being said by us all, beginning with the words: "I confess".

Ask yourself, how many of us confess to having done anything wrong? When we do, is it to God and to lots of other people and aloud? I think the answer to this question is never.

Here in the Penitential Act, there's no hesitation in doing this; everyone at mass stands and says these two words and the rest of the prayer out loud.

To whom do we confess?

To God and to all present at Mass.

What do we confess?

We confess to having sinned in thought, word, and deed, but it doesn't stop there.

It goes on to say that the sinning is not only my fault, but my most grievous fault.

It ends by asking Our Lady and all the saints to intervene with God on our behalf.

The priest then asks God and Jesus Christ to:

Have mercy on us.

Forgive us our sins.

Bring us to everlasting life.

What a truly magnificent way of

asking God to free us of our sins.

The 'I Confess' is a simple prayer, but so powerful. Anyone going through this prayer and being earnest about what they're saying must be truly sorry.

Now we say the Act of Penitence:

'Lord have mercy'

'Christ have mercy'

'Lord have mercy.'

We all follow this by saying The Gloria, another special prayer, a way of saying:

Thank you, and glorifying God.

Many prayers used in the Mass come from the Bible. Here in the Penitential Act 'The Gloria' starts with a special event in it, the birth of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem, God wanted the world to know, but who did he select to tell the good news? It wasn't to kings, dictators, and

presidents or any high-ranking people; it was to the lowest ranked people in Israel; shepherds.

He sent an angel to them to announce the birth of Christ and they heard the hosts of heaven joyfully praising God and singing (Luke 2:9 -15):

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace
to people of good will."*

We cannot imagine how wonderful it must have been to hear about the birth of Christ while all around the heavenly hosts could be heard glorifying God, yet these words are used to start *The Gloria*, then go on to ask for God's forgiveness and to glorify God. A truly wonderful prayer.

The priest now performs the final part of this Introductory Rite. We've truly admitted to being sinners, said we're sorry, asked God to forgive us and then glorified him,

the priest opens his arms saying:

"Let us pray". then says a short prayer created for that day. It's called: *The Collect*.

The Introductory Rite is now complete. How many of us engage in it parrot fashion, without realising what a magnificent way it is for showing God how penitent we are and asking for his forgiveness before we take part in the two main parts of the Mass. How often are we reminded that we know not the day nor the hour of our deaths.

When people recognise that this simple rite, at the very start of the Mass is an incredible way of saying we're sorry for offending God and asking him to forgive us, they don't just go to Mass once a week, but as regularly as they are able.

The Mass is an incredible religious service, and right at the start of it there's the wonderful Introductory Rite with its Penitential Act.

This beginning is only a tiny part of the Mass. The Mass itself is made up of two main parts called:

*The Liturgy of the Word
The Liturgy of the Eucharist*

The Introductory Rite is a fantastic experience, making one think about the wonders the two main parts must hold.



Have you ever stopped to think about what you've just done and said when you bless yourself, right at the very start of the Mass? You've reminded yourself that: There are three persons in one God. Jesus died for us on the cross...

The bread Jesus brought satisfied those who hungered for a new life in the Lord

“I am the living bread come down from Heaven; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

The Gospel of John, chapter 6:51

Today's article goes to the heart of the Christian message: Jesus is the living bread of life who satisfies our spiritual hunger.

The people in today's Gospel who sought out Jesus were led to him not by their faith, but by their stomachs. The crowd was looking for a handout, a bellyful of bread. They did not understand that the eating of the loaves of bread Jesus gave them was a sign of a far greater partaking. They were hungry, plain and simple, and they wanted bread.

Jesus loses no time moving the crowd to recognise a deeper sort of hunger. He speaks to them of

“

Before we eat the bread that is the Body of Christ, we say “Amen.” This is more than a verbal declaration of faith. It is a pledge that says, “Yes” I will be the Body of Christ for others

lasting bread, bread that nourishes not just life, but life eternal. Thinking that they had to fast or do some “work” to get this bread, the people ask what they must do? Jesus tells them to believe in Him.

This was not the answer the folks expected, so they ask Jesus for a sign that would earn their faith such as the manna God sent their forebears. Jesus then explains that the manna was but perishable bread.

The bread he brings is imperishable, the true bread come from God. The people, still not understanding, jump at Jesus' offer. Then Jesus delivers the punch line of his message: “I am the living bread come down from Heaven; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

And the people? They still did not recognise that the Messiah for whom they had been waiting for generations to see is standing before them. We keep making the same mistake. When someone presents you with the host at Mass and says, “The Body of Christ,” remember, this is the bread you have been waiting for. This bread is the bread of life.

Before we eat the bread that is the Body of Christ, we say “Amen.” This is more than a verbal declaration of faith. It is a pledge that says, “Yes” I will be the Body of Christ for others. I will be like this living bread. I will be a person for others! When Jesus instituted the



Eucharist at the last supper as the new covenant to replace the Jewish Passover, what did He do? He washed the feet of His disciples to teach them a lesson: they must serve one another; they must love

one another the way He loved us, especially the least among us. “Whatever you do,” He says, “to the least of my people, that you do unto me.” Understand this when you receive the Eucharist. You

cannot receive the body of Christ at mass, worthily, unless you see Christ in your brothers and sisters.

Recognise that you are promising to be like Christ whom you have received.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

On the margin

Somewhere in the writings of Thomas Merton, he describes the monk as being a person on the margin, an interesting place to be when writing or commenting on the nature of our changing society.

Christians are so often caught between a rock and a hard place, living our lives in a society, yet having to be careful that we don't just accept societal values without careful thought and good judgement.

Fragmentation in the West proceeds at a pace. We see it in the break-up of political parties where smaller groups are emerging, representing a narrow platform of opinion. We see it in a society where often those who are already poor, get poorer and those who

have wealth increase their considerable fortunes. We see it when smaller parts of a nation seek independence, pursuing an ethnic or language-based identity.

And where is the Christian Church in this, often chaotic, diversity?

In seeking to be a pilgrim Church, offering Gospel values for our lives, it is no good turning our backs and caring only for ourselves.

The issues that face our communities, in whatever country or continent, are ours too. Our voice is significant, it needs to be heard. Yet you cannot be understood if the language you use is archaic and has therefore no meaning for those we address. And your lifestyle has to match the

message you give.

We will not be listened to if we duck the crucial issues of our times, if such matters go unaddressed by the Christian people.

That may well involve asking ourselves some difficult questions first, before we attempt an exchange of views with others, being honest about where we are and the historic journey that has brought us to this point. That path has not been without mistakes among many successes, it is peopled by both saints and sinners.

There is a need to be honest with ourselves. It is no good hiding difficult issues under a cloak of secrecy when they should be addressed openly for the good of

the Church and the mission entrusted to it by the Lord.

Merton's comment applies in some respect to every Christian. We are on the edge looking in, our value system is Gospel-inspired. Yet just as Jesus did we need to be involved with others to share with them the Gospel of the Lord.

A beach, littered with broken wood from shore-side trees, is eventually cleared by a succession of tides.

As Eliot wrote in the *Four Quartets*:

“...The sea is the land's edge also, the granite into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses its hints of earlier and other creation.”

– *The Dry Salvages.*

I wrote this piece in 1997, one of a number of reflections on Thomas Merton's life in the Hermitage at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

Words at the margin
It is not much fun to live the spiritual life with the spiritual equipment of an artist. Entering The Silence Blue denimed Poet White-clothed Monk Priest-man Writer whose words once woven from the debris of our experience speak still beyond the shores of an adopted land. Poet-priest man, at the margin of our existence.

CHRIS MCDONNELL



SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



How Christ gave us all ‘the food we did not know’ – the living bread of Heaven

11th June 2023 – Sunday –
Corpus Christi, Year A

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 8:2-3,
14-16

**He gave you food which you and
your ancestors did not know**

Moses said to the people: ‘Remember how the Lord your God led you for forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart – whether you would keep his commandments or not. He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna which neither you nor your fathers had known, to make you understand that man does not live on bread alone but that man lives on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

‘Do not then forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: who guided you through this vast and dreadful wilderness, a land of fiery serpents, scorpions, thirst; who in this waterless place brought you water from the hardest rock; who in this wilderness fed you with manna that your fathers had not known.’

**Responsorial: Psalm 147:12-15,
19-20**

*R./: Praise the Lord, Jerusalem
O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!*

*Zion, praise your God!
He has strengthened the bars of
your gates,
he has blessed the children
within you. (R./)*

*He established peace on your
borders,
he feeds you with finest wheat.
He sends out his word to the
earth
and swiftly runs his command.
(R./)*

*He makes his word known to
Jacob,
to Israel his laws and decrees.
He has not dealt thus with other
nations;
he has not taught them his
decrees. (R./)*

**2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians
10:16-17**

**A reading from the first letter of
St Paul to the Corinthians**

Though we are many, we form a single body because we share this one loaf. The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the



body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.

Gospel: John 6:51-58
**My flesh is real food and my
blood is real drink**

‘I am the living bread which has come down from Heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.’

Then the Jews started arguing with one another: ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ they said.

Jesus replied: ‘I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.

‘Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.

As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from Heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.’

The table of fellowship

Sitting together for a meal can generate a special feeling of togetherness. Each of us will have our own memories of table companionship or fellowship. Many of these will be happy experiences of celebration and laughter, of love received and shared.

Some memories of table fellowship may be sad, times when we were more aware of one who was absent than of those who were present.

Jesus shared table many times with his disciples. It is likely that, when sharing food with his disciples, he also shared with them his vision of God’s kingdom. At table, the disciples imbibed

something of Jesus’ mind and heart and spirit. Of all the meals he shared with them, the meal that stayed in their memory more than any other was their last meal together, what came to be known as the Last Supper. Today’s gospel gives us Mark’s account, his word-picture, of that last supper.

This last meal Jesus shared with his disciples stood out in their memory, capturing the imagination of generations of disciples right up to ourselves. He did more than share his vision with the disciples; he gave them himself in a way he had never done before, and in a way that anticipated the death he would die for them and for all, on the following day.

In giving himself in the form of the bread and wine of the meal, he was declaring himself to be their food and drink. In calling on them to take and eat, to take and drink, he was asking them to take their stand with him, to give themselves to him as he was giving himself to them.

It was because of that supper and

“

*‘I am the living bread
which has come down
from heaven.*

*Anyone who eats this
bread will live for ever;
and the bread that I
shall give is my flesh,
for the life of the world.’*

of what went on there that we are here in this church today. Jesus intended his last supper to be a beginning rather than an end. It was the first Eucharist. Ever since that meal, the church has gathered regularly in his name, to do and say what he did and said at that last supper – taking bread and wine, blessing both, breaking the bread and giving both for disciples to eat and drink.

Jesus continues to give himself as food and drink to his followers. He also continues to put it up to his followers to take their stand with him, to take in all he stands for, living by his values, walking in his way, even if that means the cross.

Whenever we come to Mass and receive the Eucharist, we are making a number of important statements. We are acknowledging Jesus as our bread of life, as the one who alone can satisfy our deepest hungers. We are also declaring that we will throw in our lot with him, as it were, that we will follow in his way and be faithful to him all our lives, in response to his faithfulness to us.

In that sense, celebrating the Eucharist is not something we do lightly. Our familiarity with the Mass and the frequency with which we celebrate it can dull our senses are doing. Every time we gather for the Eucharist, we find ourselves once more in that upper room with the first disciples, and the last supper with all it signified is present again to us.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

Good works can wipe away minor sins but we still need a priest for confession

Q. Must confession be done in collaboration with a priest? I see very small lines these days for the confessional, but it seems that 90 per cent of those attending Mass receive Communion. Are we allowed to “self-confess” without the assistance of a priest and thus be eligible to receive Communion?

A. The sacrament of reconciliation requires the presence of a priest. Only God, of course, can forgive sins, but Jesus has shared the power of absolution with his apostles and their successors - thankfully, because it is always more comforting to hear another human being proclaim that we are forgiven.

Some sins - doubtless the great majority - can be forgiven without the sacrament, by appealing directly to the mercy of the Lord. Technically, the only sins that require confession to a priest are mortal sins - ie, grave violations of God's law done with full knowledge and complete consent.

Lesser sins, traditionally called 'venial' and described by the Catechism of the Catholic Church in No. 1458 as 'everyday faults' - can be forgiven by such practices as prayers of repentance or works of charity.

Participation in the Eucharist, since it strengthens us in living Christ's way of love, has the effect of wiping away venial sins, says No. 1394 in the Catechism, and the penitential rite at the beginning of Mass, reminds us of our need for forgiveness and invites us to ask for God's mercy.

Q. How does one confess a mortal sin so foul to himself, his spouse and his family, knowing that this will destroy all he loves? Having committed fornication outside of marriage, I live daily with intense remorse and guilt, suicide and despair. I have prayed on a constant basis for forgiveness to give me one more chance with my family. I have also prayed that my wife and children never find out, as she is all - good and has shown me and our children nothing but love. Is there a way to reclaim my soul, live my faith and stay with my family? I am at an end; I admit that I failed terribly and sinned against Our Lord's love. Please help me. I do not know what to do.

A. Here is what you need to know: God can forgive us for absolutely anything - and wants to. Some of the greatest saints had sex



'The first written reference to the term 'Catholic' can be found in the early days of the second century.' St. Peter's Square. Photo: Remo Casilli, Reuters

outside of marriage, repented and were absolved (St Augustine, most notably). Divine forgiveness is as close as the nearest confessional and a priest can never disclose what you tell him during confession.

What you should do, right away, before you carry this heavy burden any further, is to stop at a nearby Catholic church - anytime, day or night. Ask the priest to hear your confession and also get his recommendation for counselling or a follow-up. The question of whether your spouse needs to know - and, if so, when - depends on a lot of factors, and a counsellor can help you sort them out.

If thoughts of suicide persist, one solid resource is the Samaritans crisis hotline. Your local phone directory, or an online search, will give you their number.

Q. I've been wondering when and why the followers of Jesus first started calling themselves 'Catholic.' Can you help?

A. The first written reference to the term 'Catholic' can be found in the early days of the second century. A bishop from Antioch in Syria, Ignatius, was arrested and brought to Rome by armed guards. Shortly before his martyrdom, he wrote a letter to his fellow Christians in Smyrna (the city of Izmir in modern-day Turkey) in which he said: 'Where the bishop is

present, there is the Catholic Church.' The word 'Catholic' comes from the Greek root meaning "universal." The Catechism of the Catholic Church in No. 868 says that the church is catholic because "She proclaims the fullness of the faith. ... She is sent out to all peoples. ... She encompasses all times."

Q. Somewhere in the scriptures, it quotes Jesus as saying that "my



house has many rooms." I'm wondering what he meant. Does it mean that not all of us in heaven will see God?

A. The passage to which you refer comes in John's Gospel (14:2), during Christ's discourse to the apostles at the Last Supper. In one version (New American Bible), it is translated like this: 'In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.'

The quote is subject to various interpretations, but no scriptural commentator, to my knowledge, takes it to mean that some of those in heaven will not see God.

Most commonly, it is seen as offering reassurance to the apostles that they will eventually be reunited with Christ even after death.

Quite likely, they were worried that Jesus was abandoning them, and he endeavoured to comfort them with the knowledge that there was ample room for them in his Father's house, to which he would soon return.

Notice that, in the very next verse, Jesus says that he is going to prepare a place for them and that he will come back to take them there.

And, by extension, that same promise is offered to us, his disciples today. We truly have a hope in Jesus, the One who truly loves us, both in life and in death.

Q. One thing in the Gospels about which I've always been curious is why, after casting out a demon or performing some other miracle, Jesus would often command that witnesses "tell no one."

Wouldn't a wider knowledge of these miracles have helped his ministry?

A. You are correct in observing that often Jesus would ask observers to keep his miracles secret. Examples abound. In Matthew's Gospel we are told that many people followed Christ and he "cured them all" but "warned them not to make him known" (12:15).

In Mark, we learn that "he had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him" but that "he warned them sternly not to make him known" (3:10, 12); and in Luke, we read that, after he had raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, "her parents were astounded, and he instructed them to tell no one what had happened" (8:56).

The fundamental reason for Jesus' reluctance to spread news of his miracles, I believe, was this: Jesus did not want people to be distracted from what he really came to do - namely, the ministry of the word.

In Mark, Jesus had told his disciples, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come" (1:38). His concern was that the crowds would be dazzled by the miracles rather than give their attention to the lessons he had come to teach.

Of course, after the resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Mt.28:19) and to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth. By this point, they were ready to share the Gospel - and Christ's call extends to us today, as Pope Francis underlines thus: "The apostolic Church is completely missionary and in the mission it finds its unity. So: going forth, meek and good as lambs, without worldliness, and going together. Here is the key to the proclamation, this is the key to success in evangelisation.

"Let us accept these invitations from Jesus: may His words be our point of reference."

Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Repent - and find the true love of Jesus

Giving back words their original meaning

The local Parish Prayer Group were celebrating 40 years since its foundation and was preparing a special Mass for that purpose. The readings, the psalms and the prayers had all been chosen to echo the overall theme of asking God to give his love to all those present and to the whole world that would be lost without it. The visiting preacher came straight to the point.

“Why waste your time praying for God to pour out his love. Whether you pray for it or not, his love has been sent, is being sent and will continue to be sent whether you pray for it or not. Why not save your breath to cool your porridge, or save your breath to pray that we will be given the knowledge and the strength to take whatever steps are necessary in our lives to receive that love, no matter what the cost. Our spiritual lives and our ultimate well-being and destiny depends upon it.”

From the very beginning the great spiritual writers have all been at one in insisting that we cannot love God as he would wish, until we have learnt how to receive Christ's ever-present free-flowing love into our hearts. This enables our frail and feeble love to be suffused and surcharged with Christ's love; to be taken up by him firstly into his own mystical body, and thence into his mystical loving of our common Father.

The outpouring of Christ's love

In order to understand how this mystical process begins and how we can continue to maintain it, come hell or high water, let us go to the very first time that the outpouring of Christ's love was announced by St Peter on the first Pentecost day. The crowd were predominantly Jews who knew that the spiritual tsunami that Peter was announcing had in fact been promised by their own prophets with the coming of the Messiah. Once Peter convinced them that their Messiah had indeed come, and his mystical love was being poured out there and then, the question was how to receive this love that would change their lives?

The answer is as important for us now as it was for them, for the love they received is being poured

out now at every moment and to the end of time. Peter told them that only one thing is necessary, but this response must be continual until it becomes commensurate with our whole lives and every moment of our lives. This, and its consequences, would be explained in far greater detail by the great mystical writers in subsequent centuries.

Repentance

An ancient Chinese sage was asked, if he could do but one thing to change the world, what would it be? He answered that he would give back to words their original meaning. That is what I want to do for the word that St Peter used to teach his listeners how to receive the continuous outpouring of God's love on that first Pentecost day. He simply told them to ‘repent.’

The word has become so weather-worn with overuse that our eyes glaze over at the mere mention of it. I must therefore try to give back to this word its original meaning, so that, if put into practice, it can do for us what it did for the first Christians.

It meant they had to turn away continually from the world in which were living, where self-seeking, self-indulgence and self-absorption was the norm, to be filled with the love of Jesus. But its precise meaning was even more telling, for in Hebrew and Aramaic the language that Jesus spoke and preached in, there was no word for someone who had repented, but only for someone who was continually repenting, every day and every moment of their lives.

An ancient Jewish Rabbi used to tell his students that they must repent at the moment of death. When he was asked how they were to know when that moment had arrived, he told them that he could not – that is why they must repent at every moment. In other words, the day offered to God at the start of every morning has to be offered again and again throughout the day, not so much in words, but in and through all that is said and done, at home, work, recreation, through good times and bad.

She received to the measure of her giving

I was first inspired to take part in



‘In order to understand how this mystical process begins and how we can continue to maintain it, come hell or high water, let us go to the very first time that the outpouring of Christ's love was announced by St Peter on the first Pentecost day.’

Pentecost mosaic in The Cathedral Basilica of St Louis, St Louis, Missouri.

the mystical spirituality that Jesus lived and handed on to the first Christians by my mother. It was not so much by what she said, but by what she did. When our family went to Mass each Sunday, I saw her totally absorbed in what I took all too easily for granted. My selfishness during the previous week meant that I had little to offer. Frankly, I had done little if anything to say, no to self, and yes to God. What sacrifices had I made to turn to God and away from self? Even if I had known the meaning of the word repentance, the very idea of continually turning to God would have been meaningless to me. Ironically, while I was lost in self, my mother was offering a thousand and one acts of self-sacrifice for others, most particularly for her family, as she repented continually in all she said and did during the previous week. This meant that she received to the measure of her giving.

Without any formal theological education, she discovered for herself that the Mass is not only a sacrifice, the place where we offer ourselves, in, with and through Christ to the Father, but something more. It is also a sacred sacrificial meal where we receive the love that is endlessly pouring out, onto and into all who are open to receive it, through daily sacrificial giving. It was here that she received the help she needed to go on repenting, go on carrying her daily cross by selflessly giving in the forthcoming week for the family that she loved so much. Each day she reminded herself of this, her sacred priestly calling, by making the morning offering that she taught to me, as her Recusant ancestors had done for hundreds of years before her.

The spirituality of Jesus

If anyone is tempted to think that this is a recipe for an austere joyless spirituality then they have never tried it. It was firstly the spirituality of Jesus himself, who despite all he had gone through and was about to go through, called himself a man of joy who wanted to share the joy that he received with those who would follow his ‘way’. You can read this for yourself in the famous discourse at the Last Supper in St John's Gospel.

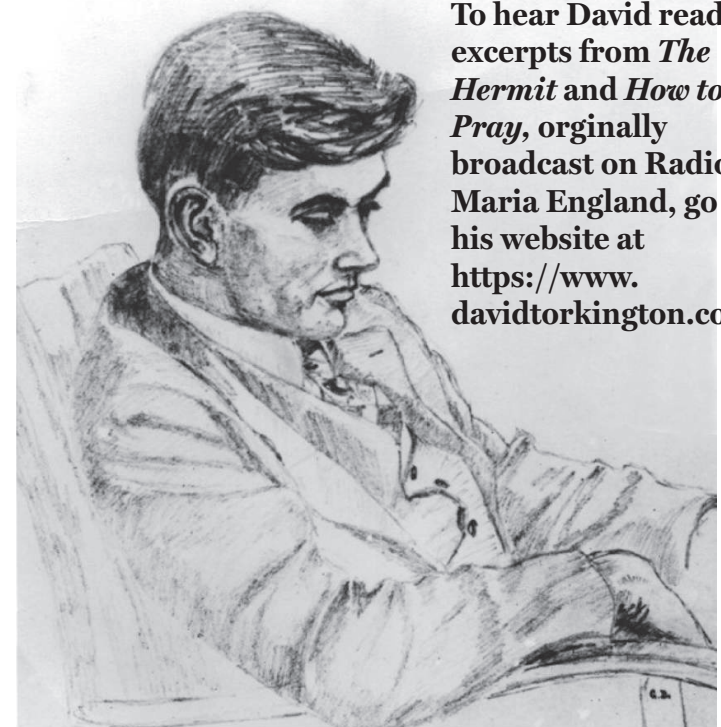
For the ‘way’ of selfless giving is also the way of joyful receiving. Whenever you meet someone who

genuinely embodies the faith in their daily lives, you will always meet a man or a woman of deep joy whose very presence brings joy to all who meet them. Joy is one of the first signs that the love of God has finally found a home where joylessness reigned before.

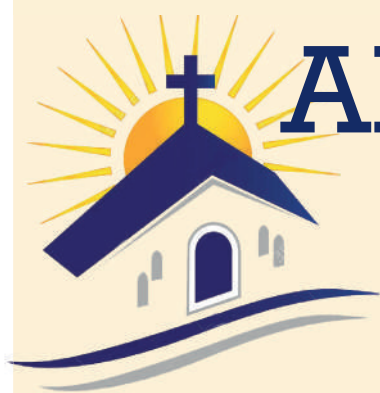
So don't waste any further time asking God to send his love; save your breathe to cool your porridge, or better still to devoting your life to trying to receive it.

David Torkington's blogs, books, lectures and podcasts can be found at <https://www.davidtorkington.com>

David Torkington reads from *The Hermit*



To hear David reading excerpts from *The Hermit* and *How to Pray*, originally broadcast on Radio Maria England, go to his website at <https://www.davidtorkington.com>



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Celebration of marriage at St Mary's

Newest meets oldest as couple married for few months meets couple wed in 1955

Couples from across the archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh gathered at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh for a celebration of marriage.

Archbishop Cushley was the principal celebrant at Mass on 31st May and gave a blessing to married couples and to engaged couples.

He said: "It is always a lovely, happy occasion when we thank God for the many blessings received through the great gift of marriage.

"It warms my heart to see so many people here to celebrate that and to pray for God's blessing upon their lives."

After the Mass, a reception was held in Coffee Saints café.

The longest married couple at the event were Margaret and Bill Mawdsley. They are parishioners at St John the Baptist Church in Corstorphine and have been married for 68 years. They were wed at St Mary's, Star of the Sea, Leith, in 1955, and have three daughters and five grandchildren.

They cut the celebration cake alongside the most recent married couple, Eilish and Callum Lloyd, who have been married for just a few months.

The annual event was organised by Fr Jeremy Milne and the Archdiocesan commission for Marriage and Family Life.



Above, Margaret and Bill Mawdsley were the longest married couple present. Top, the Mawdsleys cut the cake with the newest married couple, Eilish and Callum Lloyd, and Archbishop Cushley



Members of the Archdiocesan Commission for Marriage & Family Life. From left: Louise and Deacon John, Andrew Milligan, Paul Atkin, Anna and Janusz Niececki.

Tell your story to the Universe Catholic Weekly!

Let's see your parish and school news in the Universe Catholic Weekly

Submit your stories to Andy Drozdziak

andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

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

Cardinal Vincent Nichols presided at Mass with confirmations at St Gregory the Great parish, South Ruislip, confirming 20 candidates. Parish priest Fr Paulo Bagini expressed his joy, saying it was "an honour and privilege" to have the cardinal visit the parish and confirm the candidates.

Along with Fr Paulo, concelebrating priests included retired parish priest Mgr Canon Paul McGinn and the Cardinal's private secretary Fr Alexander Master (all pictured at the Mass with altar servers).



Living simply gets us closer to God, doing His work on Earth

Pupils and staff from St Joseph's Catholic primary school, Dudley, have received the LiveSimply Award after taking action to demonstrate they are living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the world's poorest communities.

Championed by overseas development charity CAFOD, the award was presented to pupils and staff on 24th May.

St Joseph's implemented a number of exceptional projects that highlighted the importance of caring for people and the planet.

Their actions had a positive impact on their school community, and also reached out to embrace the local community and the global community.

The whole school has been part of achieving the award, from growing food in the Bible Garden and cooking the produce and sharing recipes, to work with charities and taking donations to the local foodbank.

One Year 6 student explained why they took on the challenge to LiveSimply: "We felt it was important to take action as Pope Francis called us to do so in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*."

Another Year 4 student added: "We would encourage anyone

thinking about taking part in the award to just do it. It's helped lots of us to become even closer to God – doing his work on earth"

Mrs Chapman, principal at St Joseph's, who led the LiveSimply journey, said: "I am so very proud of the children in achieving this award. The whole school family have a firm understanding of how our faith drives our actions to live simply, in solidarity with the poor and how we have a responsibility to look after the wonderful earth that God gave us.

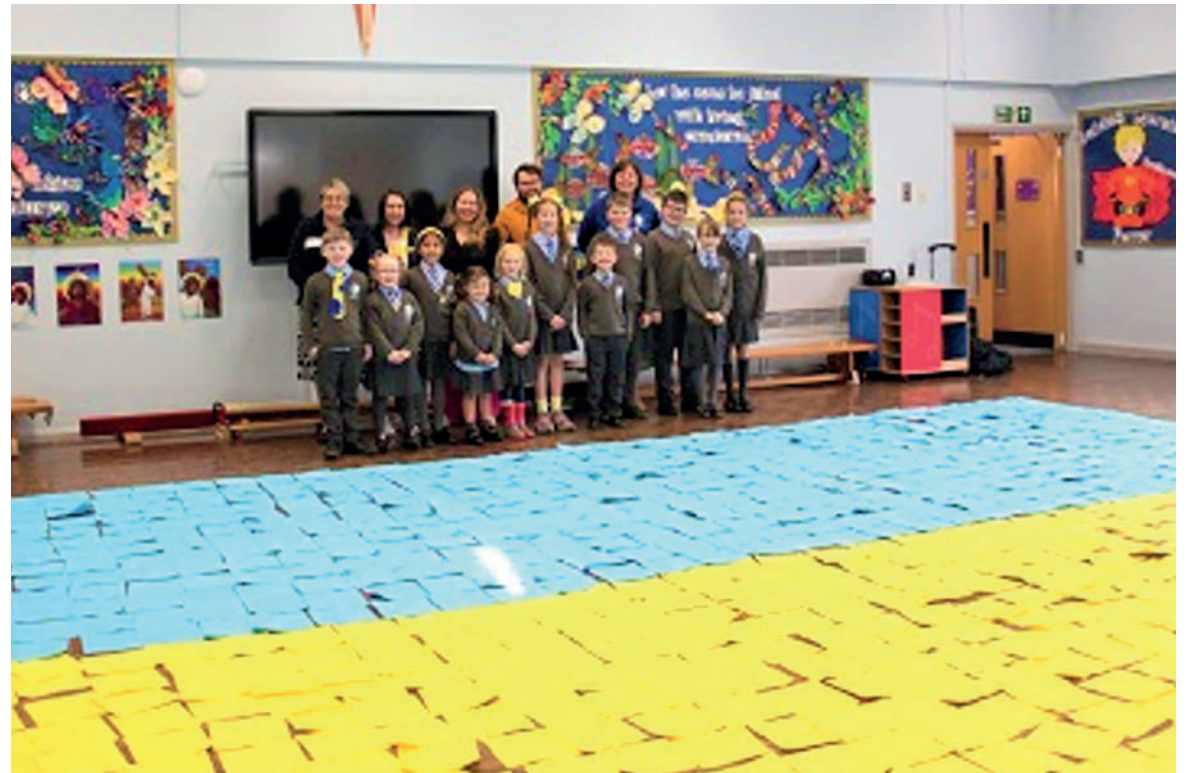
"But this is not the end for us and we still have big plans to continue the good work."

Siobhan Farnell and Dympna Edwards, CAFOD LiveSimply Award Assessors, were delighted to confirm St Joseph's achieved the LiveSimply Award. "This school is a wonderful example of a living faith community. Their actions have truly embraced living simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the world's poorest communities," they said.

"Their inspired actions have, and will continue to, make a real difference to the lives of others in their school, local community, and our global neighbours. We wish the pupils and staff all the very best."



School hike helps St Basil's pupils become 'United with Ukraine'



Students from St Basil's Catholic Primary School in Widnes raised over £589 for the Ukrainian Family Hub in Warrington after enjoying an afternoon of hiking around the school grounds.

The afternoon started with a presentation from Kate McCarthy-Booth, who is the founder of the hub and also a host for a Ukrainian family.

Kate told students about her experience of hosting a family and shared details about the hub which provides support to Ukrainian families living in the north west, as well as their hosts.

Children got into the spirit of things and wore small items of yellow and/or blue clothing such as socks, hair accessories and hats along with their usual school uniform.

During the hike, children from every year group completed laps of

the course set out around the school grounds. Along the way they collected facts about the country to show the school is 'United with Ukraine'.

Kate Dooley from St Basil's said: "We were so impressed with the response of our families who were more than generous in donating to the Hub in order to support their amazing work. More than this though, was the genuine desire of our children to make a difference to the lives of others who are experiencing such a difficult time. The event was a true example of living out our school mission and following Jesus."

Kate McCarthy-Booth said: "What a wonderful opportunity to come and speak to the children. The children were wonderful and the whole experience was fantastic. The money raised will be so welcomed and enable us to create

memories for so many children, we cannot thank the children and parents of St Basil's enough for their support. I thought the whole initiative was well thought through and the teaching staff had gone to a huge effort."

Joan McCarthy, director of education at the Archdiocese of Liverpool, who attended the hike, said: "It was absolutely wonderful to see the children from all year groups come together and work so hard to raise funds for the hub. Everyone at St Basil's should be incredibly proud of themselves."

The Archdiocese of Liverpool has been supporting the Ukrainian Family Hub Warrington as part of its #Liverpool4Ukraine appeal. It has donated money to the hub, which has been used to pay for trips, children's birthday parties and towards funding to purchase a minibus.

It's been a blessing, says Elliott after year with Ignite

Elliott Cannon from Birmingham says a year with the Ignite Youth Mission Team in the Diocese of East Anglia has given him opportunities that he never imagined. Here's his story...

"Going into the year, I was unsure what to expect really. I knew the basics – I had read the job description – but as far as the dynamic, the community life, the charisma; I was clueless," he said.

"I think I only truly grasped what the year would entail after the first month, as I learned and practised the basics of youth ministry and slowly integrated into community life.

"Sprinkled throughout were a wealth of different opportunities: visiting London, venerating relics and spending the first few days with religious brothers and sisters.

"Prayer is also a pillar in our life on the Ignite Team. The regular prayer schedule consecrates our daily life to God and is the salt that provides our evangelisation with the flavour of personal devotion rooted in a living relationship with Jesus.

"I also never expected to grow so much in self-knowledge.

"Community life is a real blessing, as it allows you to see clearly the areas of virtue which

you never knew you needed to grow in – allowing you to identify where you need to improve. Community life is so beautiful as you grow close to those you live with in a very unique way.

"It's a very intense setting as you live, work and pray together; uniting you and them in God and expressing the fullness of true Christian friendship.

"The formation the Ignite Team will give you cannot be found anywhere else and the distinctly Catholic nature is irreplaceable – the whole year has given me opportunities that I never imagined."



Interested? There is now the chance to apply for the team for the next academic year

The Ignite Youth Mission Team is accepting applications to join full-time in September 2023 or January 2024.

Exciting year for Elliott Cannon

Young adults are invited to spend an academic year, or part-year, inspiring others with the Gospel in parishes, schools and at events with young people around the Diocese of East Anglia while nurturing their own faith and living alongside their fellow team members.

More information and the application form can be found at www.rcdea.org.uk/youth. Those interested are encouraged to contact Ciaran at igniteteam@rcdea.org.uk for more information.



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Coventry's Catholics come together as one at anniversary multicultural Mass

St Patrick's church in Coventry has celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a very special Mass.

The multicultural Mass represented the parish family, and the English parish choir was also joined by choirs from Cardinal Wiseman School, the Indian community, Congolese community, Nigerian community and Philippine community. Readings and bidding prayers were in different languages.

David Sammin, chair of the Jubilee Committee said: "This church endeavours to support everyone in a life together in Christ. But it is the members of this church who come and celebrate Mass together that makes it what it is.

"That's why this Multicultural Mass has been the focal point of these celebrations as it highlights the wonderful place that you make this church, and this is what makes it such a special place."

Archbishop Bernard celebrated the Mass and introduced the special occasion with a few words.

"This building, dedicated to St Patrick, has been the place where the Catholic community in this area of Coventry has gathered over the past 50 years to meet and worship



God; to listen to His Word and to receive Him sacramentally through the body and blood of his Son, Jesus Christ," he said.

"We believe that, when we gather to celebrate Mass, we are united in the Lord and with one another in a unique and special way.

"This building stands as an image of the Church, not solely made up of bricks and mortar but of 'living stones' of faith, priests

and people who have gathered faithfully to serve the Lord and witness to the Gospel for each succeeding generation.

"During this anniversary for your parish, inspired by the faith and witness of your own patron saint, I particularly wish to give thanks to God for those whose faithful presence has encouraged and enriched the Catholic community of St Patrick's.

"Recalling and celebrating what has gone before us helps us to appreciate the present and to prepare for the challenges ahead.

"I assure you of my prayers and kindest wishes and I do encourage you in your continued witness of faith, especially in the wider community, which we are all called to serve after the example of Christ himself.

"May the prayers of Our Lady and St Patrick bring many blessings upon you, on your homes and on your parish mission in the years ahead."

Fr George Bennett, parish priest of St Patrick's, said: "Today we celebrate 70 years as a community of faith, of prayer, of mutual support in Wood End; with 50 of those years being in this building.

"Here we have participated in so many different moments of celebration; we have supported those who grieve; encouraged the young as they have been initiated into our community; welcomed new members and said farewell to those who have moved on and who have left their mark on our hearts and on our community.

"We have been encouraged and nourished to be sent into the wider community to bring the hope and



the spirit of the Gospel to all we encounter. We give thanks for the great gift of our diversity and the way God's Spirit unites us in Christ as God's family in this part of the world.

"Today we re-commit ourselves to sharing our faith, gifts, wisdom and experience with one another and our world."

Charismatic ministry day offers boost for evangelism

Camilla White

Over 100 Catholics came together in Suffolk for a dynamic day of spiritual refreshment at one of the oldest religious houses in England.

Along with the East Anglian diocese's CHARIS team for Charismatic Renewal, the event was organised and hosted by the community of Augustinian friars at Clare Priory, Suffolk, and featured two talks by the renowned speaker and evangelist Ros Powell. Sung worship flowed throughout the day and there was Mass in the church, a picnic amid the Spring buds and blossom of the priory garden as well as time included for confession and a healing prayer service.

After a welcome by the Prior Fr Stefan Park OSA, whose uplifting guitar-playing also formed part of the music ministry, Fr Gladson Dabre OSA gave an address in which he recalled Christ's exhortation to us to put aside

trepidation and anxiety in our lives, and 'Fear not'. "We can always turn to Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, to help us to stand firmly with Jesus, just as she did whilst He was dying on the Cross: 'Our Lady knew it would not finish in the tomb.'"

Ros Powell is increasingly known for the compelling and uncompromising witness she brings to her charismatic ministry. In her two talks, she picked out texts from both the Old and New Testaments to show that we are all called to enlist in the ongoing spiritual battle that is raging all around us. "We are recruited, but we are assisted – the Holy Spirit is ever active and available to protect and invigorate us for the fight. It's not about your capacity....God's strength is perfected in weakness!"

She quoted St Mark's gospel and the letters of St Paul to show that the mission which God has given to us is irrevocable. "The cloud of



witnesses are looking for your eternal YES,' she said. She reminded listeners of the wide variety of the Holy Spirit's gifts, which have been freely distributed to all at Baptism and Confirmation,

and of the need to stir these into action, through prayer. She gave powerful testimony of her experiences over the years as a Catholic speaker at conferences, and of her online prayer ministry

during lockdown, as well as her work inside prisons as an evangelist.

Underpinning all of it is her bold reliance on God. "He will give you the guts. You don't need a rod. The fish will jump into your boat," she said.

Philip Walters, who leads the CHARIS team in the diocese, reinforced this message and its challenge. "I would urge people to just give it a go," he said.

The essence of a Day of Renewal is hard to define. Philip emphasised that all of us have received the Holy Spirit at our Baptism, but that days like this can deepen our understanding and our personal response to this. "When we all get caught up together in praise, we're all joined together with the Holy Spirit and aware of His presence. It's about allowing the Holy Spirit to pray within us to glorify the Father," he said.

New garden fitting place to reflect and remember much-loved Joan

Green-fingered youngsters at a Bedlington Catholic primary have helped to create a new garden space in the school grounds.

The Reflection Garden at St Bede's was developed by the father of two of the school's pupils, with areas allocated to each year group to plant and maintain. It's also a permanent memorial to a much-loved member of the school family.

"The children wanted a place where children and adults could reflect upon past, present, and the future," said headteacher Therese Worrall. "It can be a prayer space for children, and it can also be a place of growth."

As well as the children taking part in the project, St Bede's is keen for parents and carers to get involved.

"We would love the children to work with their grown-ups from home to maintain what is there and plant new flowers and shrubs," Mrs Worrall added.

"Each class will have the bed year after year, with the Year 6 children passing to the new Reception each September.

"Gardening can be done at the beginning or end of the school day, and, if anyone has any spare time

during the day, they are also very welcome to come and help."

Designed to promote calm and foster a love of nature, the space also features a memorial plaque to Joan Riley, a former governor and teacher at the school, which is a member of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

Beside her longstanding role as school governor, Mrs Riley saw her children and four grandchildren attend the school and was a parishioner at St Bede's Church.

"There are some very important people who helped St Bede's

become the wonderful school that it is, and one particular person was Mrs Joan Riley," Mrs Worrall said.

"She was key to the school developing at the beginnings to a new chapter as it converted from a first school to a primary school in 2010. Joan continued to provide strong, strategic leadership as Chair of Governors for many years – she was also the voice of reason for me as a headteacher.

"Sadly, Joan passed away in September 2020, and she is a huge miss to all who loved her, including the St Bede's community."



Day of joy for Carmelites

On Saturday, 27th May, Carmelite friars and friends of St Jude gathered for the first Summer Celebration since the outbreak of Covid-19. It was good to be in the company of those who had come on pilgrimage for prayer and fellowship in honour of this great saint.

Mass was celebrated by Fr Brendan Grady, O.Carm and he was joined by, the Shrine Chaplain, Br. Paul de Groot, O.Carm; the Prior of Faversham, Fr. Kevin Melody, O.Carm; and Province historian, Fr. Richard Copsey, O. Carm.

Br. Matthew Janvier, O.Carm and Br. Anthony O'Donnell, O.Carm

were also present from the Reading community.

Pilgrims were anointed and commissioned to become ambassadors of hope, friends of Christ and companions of each other in the mission of making God's love known and experienced in our world.

Those gathered prayed for all devotees of Saint Jude, especially remembering those who receive the Shrine newsletter and contribute to the life-giving projects supported by the Carmelites at home and abroad.

It was a wonderful sunny day, filled with hope and joy.

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GARDENING

Add colour and fragrance with beautiful lilies



Easter is now a memory, you've eaten all the eggs and chocolate bunnies you can handle and the only thing left is that Easter Lily you received as a gift.

You begin to wonder, "Now what do I do?" After blooming, Easter Lilies (otherwise known as *Lilium longiflorum*) can be planted directly in your garden in full sun or partial shade and will bloom again in late summer of the following year.

It's a lovely flower that never fails to please. If these lilies inspire you, there are a number of other lily types you might like to try, and while the best time to plant lilies is in the autumn, they can also be planted in the late spring.

Asiatic and Oriental

Easy to grow Asiatic and Oriental lilies are two options that should be hardy enough to withstand the vagaries of the British climate. Asiatic lilies bloom in spring and early

summer while the sweetly fragranced Orientals bloom in the summer.

The single most important factor for success with lilies is proper drainage. Lilies prefer a pH of 6.5 to 7.0 and soil rich in organic matter. Apply a balanced fertiliser (10-10-10) in the spring just as the spears show and avoid over-fertilisation as it creates tender growth and susceptibility to diseases passed from plant to plant by aphids.

If planting your lilies from a pot, make sure the soil level of the pot is at the same depth as your garden soil. Tease the fragile roots gently outward if they appear to be pot bound, water thoroughly and apply a 2-3" layer of mulch. Don't let the mulch contact the stems directly.

Another option is to plant lilies among lower growing plants or shrubs. Lilies prefer their feet in the shade and their head in the sun.

Planting bulbs is easy too. Select firm bulbs in packages from a garden centre or company you trust. Avoid purchasing loose bulbs from a bin as lily bulbs do not have protective skins and tend to dry out and bruise easily in this environment.

Planting rules

As a rule of thumb, plant lilies at a depth equal to 3-4 times their height as this allows for the formation of stem roots, in addition to bulb roots, which will feed the plant during the growing season.

After flowering, cut no more than 1/3 of the stalk. The

remaining leaves will feed the bulb for following year. After the stem has died completely, remove it and discard. It is best not to add it to your compost bin.

Supplemental watering may be required if rainfall is not adequate during the growing season. Remember to apply water directly to the root zone rather than watering overhead.

You have to be careful here: lilies are a capricious bunch when it comes to water. They should not be waterlogged nor should they be allowed to dry out.

Late blooming lilies such as the Orientals and Easter lilies and the earlier blooming

Asiatic have different watering requirements because of their bloom times – check the packaging for specific watering instructions.

Your lily bulbs will naturally increase in size and stem production. If, after a few years, the clump becomes a little overcrowded or flower production slows markedly, it is time to lift, divide and share the bulbs. This is not difficult and should be done in early autumn. Simply dig deeply around the clump because bulbs can situate themselves as deep as 10 inches into the soil. Lift the entire clump. Gently remove the soil and simply pull the smaller bulbs apart replanting them in a well-prepared site.

So now you know a great way to add colour and fragrance to your garden and share these beauties with friends and family.

I'll take that over a chocolate bunny any day!

"Supplemental watering may be required if rainfall is not adequate during the growing season. Remember to apply water directly to the root zone rather than watering overhead."

HEALTH

How AI could help unlock early diagnosis of crippling back pain

Ankylosing spondylitis: how machine learning could pave the way for early diagnosis of inflammatory arthritis

Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is the second most common type of inflammatory arthritis, often affecting teenagers and young adults. Symptoms of AS can include back pain, stiffness, joint inflammation (arthritis), inflammation where tendons attach to bones (enthesitis), and fatigue.

Over time, these symptoms can lead to spinal fusion, which significantly affects quality of life, particularly in young people.

Unfortunately, diagnosing AS can be a lengthy process, taking up to ten years from the onset of symptoms and usually requiring a series of X-rays. The slow progression of the condition, coupled with the lack of a definitive test, contributes to these delays.

However, early detection of the condition can make a tremendous difference, halting the degenerative process and preserving a good quality of life for those affected.

Our study explored the potential of using routinely collected healthcare data from GPs and hospitals, combined with advanced machine learning techniques, to identify AS at an earlier stage. Machine learning involves using algorithms to analyse sample data, enabling predictions and decisions without explicit programming.

We analysed data separately for men and women, and our findings could transform the way in which GPs detect and diagnose AS.

A valuable tool

To conduct our study, we used anonymous data from a national data repository at

Swansea University Medical School. Patients with AS were identified and matched with people with no record of a diagnosis.

Our analysis of this data found that factors such as lower back pain, uveitis (inflammation of the middle layer of the eye), and use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs before the age of 20 were factors associated with an increased risk of developing AS in men.

In contrast, our model revealed that women tend to experience AS symptoms at a later age, and often rely on multiple pain relief medications compared with men. This possibly indicates a higher likelihood of misdiagnosis of the condition in women.

Machine learning is a valuable tool for profiling and understanding the characteristics of people who are likely to develop AS. It performs well in test data sets with artificially high prevalence rates.

Acknowledge the challenges

However, when applied to the general population in GPs and hospitals, where AS is rare, even the best model can only achieve a low positive predictive value of 1.4 per cent. (That's the probability that following a positive test result, the individual will truly have AS.)

So, using multiple models over time may be necessary to narrow down the population and improve this predictive value, which would result in a faster AS diagnosis.

Machine learning techniques have tremendous potential to



improve patient care. But it is also crucial to acknowledge the challenges associated with using these techniques effectively.

These models depend on high-quality data that is diverse and comprehensive to produce reliable, accurate results. But healthcare data can be limited due to privacy concerns, data sensitivity and lack of standardisation.

These limitations may therefore compromise the

accuracy and reliability of the models.

It's important to acknowledge that machine learning in relation to this topic is still in its infancy. To develop this further, we will need to gather more detailed data to improve prediction rates and clinical usefulness.

But our study demonstrates the enormous potential that machine learning has to help identify people with AS and better understand their

diagnostic journeys through the health system.

We know that the early detection and diagnosis of AS is crucial to secure the best outcomes for patients. We believe machine learning could help with this. It could also empower GPs, helping them to detect and refer patients more effectively and efficiently.

Jonathan Kennedy is Data Lab Manager, Swansea University



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FILMS

Hang in there, Spidey's coming to rescue you

Can there ever be too many iterations of everybody's favorite amalgam of arachnid and human? Not according to the sequel *Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse* (Sony) which eventually boasts a superabundance of variations on the character.

The parade of Spideys is something of an inside joke and may prove confusing to the uninitiated. But the film overall – which is safest for grown-ups but also possibly acceptable for mature adolescents – is a lively crowd pleaser and will likely be catnip for hardcore fans.

Surprisingly, the Marvel Comics-derived proceedings get off to a downbeat start as we're reintroduced to Gwen Stacey aka Spider-Woman (voice of Hailee Steinfeld). Full of teen angst, Gwen is at odds with her police officer dad George (voice of Shea Whigham) who considers her alter ego a criminal.

This latest instalment sees the bond between Spiderman/Miles Morales and Gwen

getting even stronger. Hailee Steinfeld recently told *Looper.com* that the filmmakers explored the character of Gwen in deeper ways.

"I feel like the filmmakers weren't about to let this bold voice not be heard, and we start and end this story with Gwen looking for that sense of belonging and understanding where she's at in her life," she said. "She is in a similar place of trying to figure it out and get it right and feel good about who she is and make her father proud. I believe her sole purpose is to help people, and that's why she is wherever she is in this film. It's for that reason."

The mood brightens once the focus shifts to the Brooklyn-based titular hero (voice of Shameik Moore) whose continuing adventures are enlivened by witty dialogue. This time out, Miles Morales – as he's called when not web slinging – tangles with mutant mad scientist Dr. Jonathan Ohnn, alias the Spot (voice of

Jason Schwartzman).

Spotty blames Spidey for the unfortunate transformation that riddled his body with interdimensional portals, and he's out for revenge. Since the Spot's increasing powers threaten cosmic destruction, however, he also becomes a target for the Spider Society, an elite, colourful crew of crime fighters Gwen is asked to join but Miles, initially at least, is not.

Co-directed by Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers and Justin K. Thompson, this follow-up to 2018's *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* features artistic visuals and rapid-fire action.

Thematically, plot developments eventually create a dilemma for Miles by pitting his personal happiness against the greater good. A dichotomy is also established between destiny and individual freedom.

But don't expect all this to be resolved in a neat wrap-up. Instead, the conclusion leaves viewers hanging by a silken thread.



FOOD

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Smoked salmon, spinach and feta parcels

This delightful and versatile combination of fish, cheese and spinach makes a light and tasty snack served hot or cold – or as the basis of a leisurely light lunch, basking in the sun.

INGREDIENTS

- 225g smoked salmon, chopped
- 350g crumbled feta cheese
- 100g frozen, chopped spinach
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 (500g) packet puff pastry

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180 C / Gas
2. Line two baking trays with parchment.
3. Combine smoked salmon, feta cheese, spinach, black pepper and garlic.
4. Roll out puff pastry on lightly floured surface to form a 30x30cm sheet. Cut sheet into 16 squares.
5. Place a spoonful of the filling in the centre of each square. Pull together corners of each square to form 16 triangular parcels.
6. Brush parcels with egg whites and place on prepared baking trays.
7. Bake in preheated oven until packets are golden, about 20 minutes.

Enjoy with a light green salad, dressed with a simple olive oil, lemon and garlic dressing



FILMS

LaBeouf's intensity captures Pio but sloppy writing and direction hits film

Padre Pio

Viewers may be misled by the title of director and co-writer Abel Ferrara's historical drama *Padre Pio* (Gravitas). The film is less a profile of the titular saint, played passionately by Shia LaBeouf, than a portrait of San Giovanni Rotondo, the Apulian town of his Capuchin monastery, in the period immediately after World War I.

Moviegoers in search of an uplifting hagiography, accordingly, should look elsewhere. All the more so since Ferrara's script, penned with Maurizio Braucci, includes graphic material that precludes endorsement for a wide range of age groups as well as themes suitable only for the fully catechised.

As Fr Pio grapples with tormenting Satanic visions, the Italian social tensions that would eventually set the scene for the rise of Fascism mount. These are personified in wealthy, corrupt local landowner Renato (Brando Pacitto) on the one side and a group of virtuous socialists, including young would-be revolutionary Luigi (Vincenzo Crea), on the other.

The screenplay suggests points of coherence between Marxism and Christianity. But if that sounds like an uneasy mix, the attempted blending of the events unfolding inside the walls of the Franciscan refuge



Shia LaBeouf, who portrays St. Pio of Pietrelcina, and Brother Alexander Rodriguez, who is a Capuchin Franciscan, appear in the new drama *Padre Pio*.

and those transpiring beyond it is equally unstable. Thus the picture manages to be at once respectful of Christian spirituality and anti-clerical at the same time.

The former stance leads to the moving scene in which Padre Pio receives the stigmata. The latter gives us the sight of the local parish priest, Don Anselmo (Piergiuseppe Francione), a dedicated ally of the oppressors, blessing their

guns with holy water before a showdown with the good guys.

Such a caricature is, unfortunately, in keeping with the movie's ham-handed approach to history and ideology. It's a shame that LaBeouf's all-in performance – as is well-known, his participation in this project has resulted in his conversion to Catholicism – should come wrapped in such a burdensome husk.

Speaking of playing the role of Padre Pio, and its impact on him, LaBeouf said he now draws on his faith for strength, wisdom and courage, with Padre Pio as a role model.

"He suffered in patience, silence and solitude. He didn't complain about it," said LaBeouf.

"The deeper I got into Pio, the more I realised the right way to suffer. His life was instructive."

He added that "(learning)

how to pray the rosary" brought a "tangible relief" that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol and life in the fast lane.

Somewhere inside Ferrara's flawed political and social retrospective is an intriguing biopic struggling to get out of confinement.

A narrower focus would have yielded much stronger results.

Padre Pio is out now

I fell in love with Christ for role, admits star Shia

Actor Shia LaBeouf has admitted that the role of Padre Pio has saved him from a life of excess – and that he "fell in love with Christ" while preparing for the role.

The acclaimed 36-year-old actor said he was "totally lost" after his inner demons led to partying, work conflicts and run-ins with the law.

"I was wandering around, living in my truck," he said. "I wasn't interested in acting anymore."

As LaBeouf began confronting his personal issues, director Abel Ferrara asked him to take the role of Padre Pio.

The project "seemed like a neon sign" beckoning LaBeouf, who said he "was looking for salvation (and) ... a relationship with God."

While researching the film, LaBeouf met Brother Alexander Rodriguez, a Capuchin Franciscan who is assistant vocation director at the order's Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California.

Soon LaBeouf was asking about more than one of the congregation's most beloved saints. "Shia was looking to know about Padre Pio, and then delved into the faith," Brother Rodriguez told OSV News. "He got into RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). The friars and I were helping to

catechise him."

LaBeouf said "(learning) how to pray the rosary" brought a "tangible relief" that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol and life in the fast lane.

The lessons continued as Br Rodriguez accompanied LaBeouf to Italy for filming, with the Capuchin providing technical assistance for the project while appearing in the movie as Padre Pio's fellow Capuchin and spiritual adviser.

Drawing on the saint's writings at the time, the movie

presents a "pretty accurate" image of "a very human Padre Pio, one (who) did not become a saint in an easy way," said Brother Rodriguez.

The film links the saint's reception of the stigmata – and its attendant suffering – with postwar Italy's tumultuous 'two red years' (biennio rosso) of economic and social upheaval, which saw riots, strikes and peasant land seizures across the country. San Giovanni Rotondo itself was the scene of a little-known October 1920 massacre in which 14 peasants were killed by police after socialists attempted to install their mayor.

Ferrara said he sees the tragedy – which he called "the first battle of World War II" – as a window into "Padre Pio's

position of compassion and sacrifice beyond petty politics," amid the reality of evil and human suffering.

"I have Polaroid pictures of evil in my life," said LaBeouf, stressing that evil typically manifests itself in mundane forms such as "selfishness, self-centeredness ... dishonesty (and) a complete lack of empathy for others."

In the face of evil, LaBeouf said he now draws on his faith for strength, wisdom and courage, with Padre Pio as a role model.

"He suffered in patience, silence and solitude. He didn't complain about it," said LaBeouf. "The deeper I got into Pio, the more I realised the right way to suffer. His life was instructive."

"The project 'seemed like a neon sign' beckoning LaBeouf, who said he 'was looking for salvation (and) ... a relationship with God' "

Defending Henry VIII: Thomas More did it 500 years ago, against Martin Luther

HISTORY

Kenneth Craycraft

June 2023 marks the 500th anniversary of one of the most cruelly ironic publications in the history of the Catholic Church, St. Thomas More's *Response to Luther*. It was his first major expressly theological work and his entrance into the complex religious politics of the early Protestant schism. More's book is a vigorous defence of an earlier book, *A Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, attributed to none other than King Henry VIII, the monarch who would have St. Thomas beheaded for treason some 12 years later.

In 1520, Martin Luther published his treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, accusing the pope of holding the Church captive through the theology of the sacraments, which are, of course, administered by and through the Church. In doing so, Luther essentially severed all ties with the Roman Catholic Church and invited his excommunication in 1521.

Luther unambiguously rejected all the sacraments of the Church except for baptism and Communion. But he substantially changed the meaning even of those. Thus, in effect, Luther rejected all seven sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Published in 1521 (and translated into German as early as 1522), King Henry's *A Defence of the Seven Sacraments* expressly responded to Luther's attacks. Pope Leo X, to whom the king dedicated the book, was so impressed by it that he conferred upon Henry the quasi-official title *Defender of the Faith*. While scholars generally agree that St. Thomas read and corrected drafts of Henry's book, it is widely accepted as his own work. It is still considered an accurate and sophisticated defence of the Church's sacraments.

In 1522, Luther published a vitriolic and vulgar attack on the king (whom he called a "pig, dolt and liar"), entitled *Against Henry, King of the English*. Rather than to respond himself, Henry asked both More and Bishop St. John Fisher to write answers to Luther. Being the king's good servant, More quickly agreed, finishing the response in May 1523 and publishing it the next month. (Fisher's *Confutation of Luther's Assertions*, published in Latin in 1523, is not as well known or regarded as More's response.)

By modern standards, some of



The three men at the centre of the storm: King Henry VIII, his loyal servant St Thomas More, and his lawyer in chief, Thomas Cromwell. 'As King Henry himself would eventually disavow the substance of some of More's defence of the king's book, the theological irony of the row between the three men is rich.'

the language in the *Response to Luther* may appear scandalous. At Henry's instruction, More uses the same tone as *Against Henry*, using rhetorical and linguistic devices that may sound shocking to our ears. This is, at least in part, why More wrote anonymously in the voice of a character who was himself scandalised and insulted by the tone and heretical content of Luther's treatise. But the tenor of St. Thomas' work should not distract us from its theological importance and, especially, its historical irony.

Though a theological work, More turns his skill as a lawyer against

Luther, cross-examining him for internal inconsistencies and theological errors in *Against Henry*. In defending the king's book, St. Thomas defends the authority of the Church, the legitimacy and efficacy of the seven sacraments, the importance (and even priority) of tradition in reading the Bible, and the indispensable responsibility of the magisterium.

As King Henry himself would eventually disavow the substance of some of More's defence of the king's book, the theological irony is rich.

The historical irony is that the man who dedicated so much care to defending Henry would be

executed by that very monarch on an accusation of treason. This occurred because More would not take an oath affirming either the Act of Succession (repudiating Henry's marriage to Catherine and affirming the legitimacy of his marriage to Anne Boleyn) or the Act of Supremacy (declaring Henry to be the head of the Church in England).

In his play about St. Thomas, *A Man for All Seasons*, Robert Bolt creates the following dialogue between More (who had been arrested and confined to the Tower of London) and Thomas Cromwell, who had been charged by Henry with trying to bully More to take the two oaths:

CROMWELL: The king published a book. A theological work. It was called *A Defence of the Seven Sacraments*.

MORE: Yes. For which he was named Defender of the Faith" by His Holiness the pope.

CROMWELL: By the Bishop of Rome. Or do you insist on 'pope'?
MORE: No, 'Bishop of Rome' if you like. It doesn't alter his authority.

CROMWELL: Thank you, you

come to the point very readily. What is that authority? Approaching, for example, the Church in England. What exactly is the Bishop of Rome's authority?

MORE: You will find it very ably set out and defended, Master Secretary, in the king's book.

Whether the actual dialogue (or something similar) ever took place is open to speculation, of course. But it is consistent with More's loyalty to crown and cross.

To the end, St. Thomas both defended the king and the pope. He was, as he told the audience who had come to watch him executed on 6th July, 1535, "the king's good servant. And God's first."

In 1523, More's service to God won him favour with Henry VIII. In 1535, it cost him his life.

Now, 500 years after More's vigorous defence of the authority of the church, his life and death remain examples to us all.

Kenneth Craycraft is an associate professor of moral theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati, USA

“

Though a theological work, More turns his skill as a lawyer against Luther, cross-examining him for internal inconsistencies and theological errors in Against Henry. In defending the king's book, St. Thomas defends the authority of the Church, the legitimacy and efficacy of the seven sacraments

Sport chaplains link the games with faith

In this final chapter on Christianity and Sport over the next weeks, Fr Vlad Felzmann concentrates on three key topics: sports chaplaincies, the past 100 years at The Vatican, and women in sports.

Chaplains to sports communities have existed since the middle of the 20th century and have significantly grown in the past 20 years. The United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia have well established Christian sports chaplaincies. Since 2015, further sports chaplaincy ministries have developed in other nations, including Argentina, France, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Netherlands and South Africa.

In 1982, a congress held in Hong Kong saw sports chaplains come together from Africa, North and South America, Asia, Australasia, Europe and the sub-continent, as well as those interested in mission to people engaged in sports.

As a result, in 1990, the 'Major Sports Events Chaplaincy' committee was formed to serve the IOC and International Paralympic Committee with the provision of sports chaplains, which peaked at the London 2012 Olympics where 193 chaplains were appointed. I was one.

Realising that if George Best had had a chaplain to go and see while playing for Manchester United, he might not have travelled down the slippery, alcoholic road he took, Alex Ferguson brought Rev John Boyers as chaplain onto his management team in 1992. Well past his retiring age of 65, Boyers stayed on at Manchester Utd until December 2018.

Building on the pioneering work in sports chaplaincy of John Boyers and under the guidance and direction of leaders of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, SCORE was established in 1991. Over the next 20 years the charity grew from its initial base in professional football to involve chaplaincies in horse racing, rugby league, rugby union, cricket and athletics. In 2011 the charity changed its name to 'Sports Chaplaincy UK'.

From the start, the charity has been an interdenominational organisation equipping and resourcing individuals – predominantly clergy – from a wide variety of Christian backgrounds to serve the world of sport through chaplaincy.

The model used has been that of building personal relationships with everyone in the club, from which pastoral and spiritual support can be offered when required.

Over the years the charity has

Megan Rapinoe and Rose Lavelle of the US celebrate being awarded the golden ball and bronze ball after winning the Women's World Cup in 2019. The issue of what sports women could play has long taxed the Catholic Church, until St John Paul II said that for both sexes, "sports are a form on gymnastics of body and spirit".



also been involved with the provision of chaplaincy to major sporting events, from Olympic and Commonwealth Games to World Championships in rugby league, rugby union, amateur boxing, and athletics. Working with local and national organising bodies of sport which appreciate its contribution, it is supported by Racing Welfare, Premier League, Football League Trust, the PFA (The Professional Footballers' Association) and the Scottish Football Association, to name but a few.

The charity is governed by Trustees elected at the AGM, and the staff are supported by an administrator in its Manchester office.

A sports chaplain provides pastoral care for sports communities, including athletes, coaches, administrators and their families. In 2017, a Global Summit of Sports Chaplaincy ministries defined sports chaplaincy as "ongoing pastoral and spiritual care, by permission, to those of faith or no faith, for the holistic well-being of all involved in the community of sport."

In different sports and countries, sports chaplains come under different names, such as sports mentors, life coaches or character coaches. Consequently, the way chaplains work and prioritise their time varies around the world.

Sports chaplains come from various walks of life. Typically, they are ministers or full-time Christian workers. Sometimes they work as chaplains to a particular sport because they are former participants in it, and so are able to provide not only spiritual support but also guidance on how to tackle the challenges they had in their

own earlier playing days.

In 2014, a summit of sports chaplains met in Hong Kong to formalise sports chaplaincy. Subsequent summits were held in Charlotte, North Carolina, 2017-2018. Leaders from 'Athletes in Action' and 'Fellowship of Christian Athletes' formed the 'Global Sports Chaplaincy Association', alongside a worldwide sports chaplain registry. The registry estimates that, as of 2020, there are over 10,000 sports chaplains in over 50 countries. This year, 43 leaders completed a chaplaincy training programme for football players across Latin America.

Women in sport

Since 2010, there has been a growth in the provision of chaplaincy to women's sport and Paralympic sport.

At the first modern Olympic Games in Athens 1896, no women competed, as Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of modern Olympics, felt that their inclusion would be "impractical, uninteresting, anaesthetic, and incorrect." Just before his death in 1937, he uttered his last words on women sports: "Let women do all the sport they wish – but not in public." He was staunch Catholic, with values of his time.

At about the time the Olympics Games started in Athens, it was announced that St John Paul II had set up a Vatican department to encourage sports among the youth. A number of traditionalist Catholics were quite disappointed to see in the item an unreserved encouragement of all sports – without a word of warning about

modesty and the general Catholic decorum the Church has always taught, especially for women.

Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic Church was not enthusiastic about competitive sports for women. It had understood that the demands for immodest sports dresses – swimsuits, acrobatic outfits, gym suits, and the rest – imposed on girls under the pretext of practicality, destroyed their natural spirit of modesty.

For the traditionalists, it is not only the dress that was objectionable. The positions and stances that women assume are, they claimed, frequently prosaic and often clearly indecent.

They stated: "One need only consider the acrobatic routines of the 16-year-old American who won the all-around gymnast gold medal in Athens. The lithe young figure in leotards that reveal every line of her body had become a role model for a multitude of young girls, who will enrol in gymnastic classes and imitate her hairstyle, scanty outfits and poses without a thought about the immodest dress and indecent postures the sport dictates."

After all, in 1928 Pius XI had issued a letter to the Cardinal Vicar of Rome expressing his disapproval of the impending national gymnastic and athletic competitions for women. The means employed to give health to the body, "the noble instrument of the soul," he stated, "should take into account suitability of time and place. They should not excite vanity or promote immodesty. And they must not lessen a young woman's reserve and self-possession which are both and ornament and

guarantee of virtue".

Pope Pius XII, who watched the modern advance of immodest styles for women with concern, often reminded young girls to be vigilant against dangers threatening purity.

He offered the exquisite delicacy of conscience of the martyr St. Perpetua as an example: "When she was thrown into the air by a savage bull in the amphitheatre at Carthage, her first thought and action when she fell to the ground was to rearrange her dress to cover her thigh, because she was more concerned for modesty than pain." (*Allocution to the girls of Catholic Action, October 6, 1940*).

"Mode and modesty should go hand in hand like two sisters," he continued. "Both words derive from the Latin *modus*, meaning a right measure. Many women have forgotten Christian modesty because of vanity and ambition: they rush wretchedly into dangers that can spell death to their purity. They give in to the tyranny of fashion, be it even immodest, in such a way as to appear not even to suspect that it is unbecoming ... They have lost the instinct of modesty."

He was quite specific on the things young women should shun at all costs: "Dresses which hardly suffice to cover the person ... and others that seem designed to emphasise what they should rather conceal." They should also avoid "the kind of exhibitionism that is irreconcilable with even the least demanding standard of modesty."

Pope Pius XII addressed the objection that was already being raised about the convenience of the new sports fashions. Some young women, he noted, offer practical objections, saying that "a certain form of dress is more convenient or even more hygienic." This kind of protest is commonly heard today: "How can I do acrobatics in a dress? You can't play soccer in a skirt," and so on. Pope Pius XII was clear. He stated, "If a form of dress becomes a grave and proximate danger for the soul, it is certainly not hygienic for the spirit, and you must reject it."

Again, he turned to the example of martyrs to make his point. He challenged young girls to follow the example of girls like St. Agnes and St. Cecilia, who suffered tortures of body to preserve their virginal innocence and save their souls: "Will you, then, for the love of Christ, not find at the bottom of your hearts the courage to sacrifice a little well-being – a physical advantage, if you will – to conserve safe and pure the life of your souls?"

Continued next week, with a look at popes and sport.

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



D-Day veterans Tom Schaffer, 13th Battalion Parachute Regiment 6th AB (far left), and Bill Gladden (left), 6th Airborne Army Recce Regiment RAC, meet local French schoolchildren at the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer in France ahead of this week's 79th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Below, a conservator prepares one of the 'Armada Maps' as they are mounted ahead of being shown to the public from the 24th June until 8th August, as part of The Armada Maps National Treasures exhibition at the National Museum of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.



Left, Zero Hour campaigners ahead of handing in a 'United For Nature' petition to 10 Downing Street, London, on World Environment Day. The petition called for the UK Government's help to reverse nature loss by 2030. The trio are holding origami designs by artist Tina Luo of species that are at risk of extinction: the Nightingale, the Northern Pool Frog and the Red Helleborine orchid. Photo: Doug Peters



Gardener Nicola Bentham tends to the larch arch in the grounds of the National Trust's Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland.



Koko the chimpanzee has celebrated reaching the milestone age of 50 at Whipsnade Zoo, Dunstable. She is the zoo's oldest mammal and marked her incredible half-century by tucking into a smorgasbord of her favourite foods – including gem lettuces and cherry tomatoes – before playing in the spring sunshine with younger chimps Phil, Grant and Elvis. Photo: Whipsnade Zoo



Left, the oldest decoratively carved wood in Britain, with markings made by Late Mesolithic people more than 6,000 years ago. It was discovered during the construction of an outbuilding at a property in Boxford, Berks. The large timber was carved 2,000 years before Stonehenge was built (2,500 BC)



Runners, all wearing white, compete in the annual Chariots of Fire race along the West Sands Beach in St Andrews, Fife. The 5km race takes part in the same location that the famous running scene from the 1981 movie Chariots of Fire was filmed.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I
Sunday, June 11: Corpus Christi
 Deut. 8:2-3, 14-16; Ps.147:12-15,19-20,
 r. 12; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; Jn. 6:51-58

Monday, June 12: 2 Cor.1:1-7; Ps.
 34:2-9; Mt.5:1-12

Tuesday, June 13: St. Anthony of
 Padua, Priest, Doctor of the
 Church 2 Cor.1:18-22; Ps. 119:129-
 133,135; Mt.5:13-16

Wednesday, June 14: 2 Cor.3:4-11;
 Ps.99:5-9; Mt.5:17-19

Thursday, June 15: 2 Cor.3:15-4:1,3-
 6; Ps. 85:9-14; Mt.5:20-26

Friday, June 16: The Most Sacred
 Heart of Jesus Deut.7:6-11; Ps. 103:1-
 4,6-8,10; 1 Jn.4:7-16; Mt. 11:25-30

Saturday, June 17: Immaculate
 Heart of Mary 2 Cor.5:14-21;
 Ps.103:1-4,9-12; Lk.2: 41-51

Extraordinary Form

According to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

Sunday, June 11: Second Sunday
 after Pentecost 1 Jn. 3:13-18; Lk.
 14:16-24

Monday, June 12: St John of San
 Facondo, confessor Ecclus. 31:8-11;
 Lk. 12:35-40

Tuesday, June 13: St Anthony of
 Padua, confessor and doctor
 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Mt. 5:13-19

Wednesday, June 14: St Basil the

Great 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Lk. 14: 26-35

Thursday, June 15: Feria
 Readings of Sunday repeated

Friday, June 16: The Sacred Heart
 of Jesus Eph. 3:8-12, 14-19; Jn.
 19:31-37

Saturday, June 17: St Gregory
 Barbarigo, bishop and confessor
 Ecclus. 44:16-27,45:3-20; Mt.
 25:14-23

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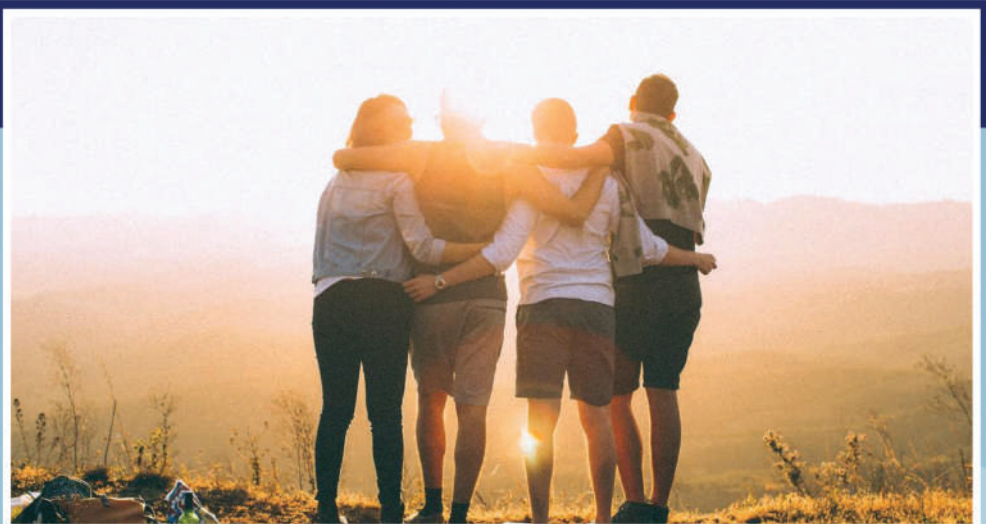
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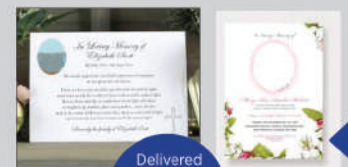
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