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Friday 12th May 2023

# UNIVERSE

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# Catholic role in service 'an act of healing'

**Andy Drozdziak**  
 Cardinal Nichols has described the sight of Catholicism being strongly represented at King Charles' coronation as marking a "journey of reconciliation" between the Catholic Church and the Church of England.

He also praised the King's emphasis on service: "The first words that King Charles spoke when he entered the Abbey were, 'I come not to be served,

but to serve," the Cardinal said. "For some, it's easy to be cynical when we hear those words from a person of such privilege.

"But it is, I believe, his sincere intention. It's his way of echoing the priorities of his mother, and understanding the scope, responsibility and power which he has - he is there to serve."

*Continued on page 2*



## We are united in faith

King Charles III, wearing St Edward's Crown, is pictured surrounded by faith leaders during his coronation ceremony in Westminster Abbey last Saturday. Cardinal Nichols is stood with his back to camera, in red choir dress. The cardinal was the first Catholic to be involved in the coronation of a monarch since the Reformation - something he described as marking a "journey of reconciliation" between the Catholic Church and the Church of England.

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IN COMPANION







# Catholic role in service ‘an act of healing’

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The Cardinal was the first Catholic prelate to take a full part in a coronation ceremony in over 400 years.

Seventy years ago, no Catholic would have been allowed to enter a Protestant church, let alone to take part in a Coronation service. Yet in last week's coronation those invited included the Holy See's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who represented Pope Francis along with the newly-appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, as well as the Catholic Archbishop of Cardiff, Mark O'Toole, Bishop Hugh Gilbert of Aberdeen, and the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, Eamon Martin.

Cardinal Nichols offered a prayer for the King in the ceremony, and stressed the significance of the strong Catholic presence.

"It's symbolic of the whole ceremony because it respects our history, builds on our history, and complements the history, both in this way, and with the presence and greeting of the faith leaders from the other major religions now present in this country," he said.

Archbishop of Southwark John Wilson looked back to the Reformation when Catholics – priests, religious and laity – were persecuted and killed for their faith. He highlighted an "in-

credible journey of reconciliation" to enable a strong Catholic presence.

"It is testimony to the journey of reconciliation that Pope Francis should gift a relic of the True Cross to King Charles for the Coronation processional cross, and that an English Cardinal should participate in the ceremony by leading a prayer," Archbishop Wilson said.

"Here we are taught an important lesson embedded in the Gospel: reconciliation is possible. It may take time. There may be obstacles on the road. It may not be easy, but we can be reconciled. With effort, patience and prayer, we can find healing."

Cardinal Nichols underlined the importance of "destiny" in the coronation – not only for King Charles but also for all who follow Christ.

"The Coronation has been spoken of as a day of destiny for Charles. It is true, from birth he was destined for this moment. The Coronation is the start, an ongoing part of the King's destiny," he said.

"Yet, at work here is a larger sense of destiny. Faith is a clear statement, a shining truth, that our destiny is a place in our Father's House. That is our destiny. And Jesus says there is a place for each of us in that house. He assures us that our fulfilment is there, and that our lives, in his hands, will find that full and final destiny."

# JRS backs Welby over migrant bill criticism

Andy Drozdzak

Catholic justice charity JRS UK has joined the Archbishop of Canterbury in condemning the Government's controversial Illegal Migration Bill, dismissing it as a "gratuitously cruel" law.

The Illegal Migration Bill will change the law so people who arrive in the UK illegally will be detained and then promptly removed, either to their home country or a safe third country such as Rwanda. Dr. Sophie Cartwright from JRS UK believes the legislation is "profoundly troubling."

"The Illegal Migration Bill amounts to an asylum ban for the vast majority of refugees, slamming the door shut on people in need of protection," Dr. Cartwright told the *Universe*.

"Additionally, it would create sweeping new powers to detain people subject to immigration control, and risks reintroducing the routine and indefinite detention of children. It would strip modern slavery survivors of protections they badly need and further empower traffickers."

The Archbishop of Canterbury made a rare intervention in the House of Lords to criticise the Bill as it faced its first test in the upper chamber.

Urging a rethink, he said it was "morally unacceptable" to leave the poorest countries to deal with the migration crisis.

"Of course, we cannot take everyone



Archbishop Welby

and nor should we, but this Bill has no sense at all of the long-term and the global nature of the challenge that the world faces," Archbishop Welby said.

"It ignores the reality that migration must be engaged with at source as well as in the Channel. As if we as a country were unrelated to the rest of the world."

Archbishop Welby added: "It is isolationist, it is morally unacceptable and politically impractical to let the poorest countries deal with the crisis alone and cut our international aid. This Bill is an attempt at a short-term fix. It risks great damage to the UK's interests and reputation at home and abroad, let alone the interests of those in need of protection or the nations who together face this challenge."

He added: "I urge the Government to reconsider much of the Bill, which fails to live up to our history, our moral responsibility and our political and international interests."

Dr. Cartwright agreed with his statements, saying the bill was "gratuitously cruel and serves no good purpose. It should be profoundly troubling to Christians, and to anyone concerned to protect human dignity."

Home Office minister Lord Murray of Blidworth faced shouts of "shame" in the Lords as he argued the Bill was a "compassionate response" to the small boats problem.

"This Bill, in conjunction with the other steps the Government is taking, is a necessary, urgent and indeed compassionate response to the daily challenge posed to the integrity of our immigration system. We must act now," Lord Murray said.

**US changes policy on migrants: see page 19**

# Criticism of faith nothing new, says star

Andy Drozdzak

*Guardians of the Galaxy* actor Chris Pratt has compared criticism of his faith to the rejection suffered by Jesus as he quoted the Bible during a film premiere.

Referring to criticism received when making public declarations of faith, Pratt said: "If I was of this world, they would love me just like that but as it is, I've chosen out of this world. That's John 15:18 through 20."

Pratt, 43, who is married to Catholic Katherine Schwarzenegger, was speaking at a screening of his new film, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*. He said that ridicule of Christians is "noth-

ing new" and has been happening for over 2,000 years. "That's the way it is – nothing new," Pratt said. "2,000 years ago, they hated him (Jesus) too."

Pratt is known for posting about his Christian faith on social media, including worship songs and psalms.

When announcing his engagement to Katherine Schwarzenegger in 2019, he said on social media that he was "proud to live boldly in faith with you."

Despite his defence of his faith, Pratt has rejected the title of being a "religious person."

"I didn't know that I would kind of become the face of religion when really I'm not a religious person," Pratt

told *Men's Health* in a 2022 interview.

"I think there's a distinction between being religious – adhering to the customs created by man, oftentimes appropriating the awe reserved for who I believe is a very real God – and using it to control people, to take money from people, to abuse children, to steal land, to justify hatred."

**Ridicule of Christians is "nothing new" and has been happening for over 2,000 years, said Chris Pratt**



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# LOUDfence shouts out, we're here for you

**Andy Drozdziak**

As Archbishop Bernard Longley launched an initiative called LOUDfence, its organiser said she wants to “empower” the Church to support abuse victims rather than treat them as “an embarrassing problem.”

LOUDfence is a survivor-led initiative which involves tying LOUD (brightly coloured) ribbons and messages of support in public spaces. The aim is to give survivors a voice, create and raise awareness in the community and work to end abuse.

Birmingham Archbishop Bernard Longley helped to launch a LOUDfence at St Chad’s Cathedral on Sunday, 7th May, as he tied a ribbon and message of support to railings.

LOUDfence UK Project Manager Antonia Sobocki has high hopes for the project. “The Church has been so crippled with shame for too long. LOUDfence is giving people permission to express what they’re thinking. We have responded really badly in the past, but we want to be better,” she told the *Universe*.

“We can’t undo what has happened in the past, but we do have a choice about the future. This is what survivors tell me has been missing – a loving, Christian response to them. We need to stop treating them as if they are the symptom of an embarrassing problem and treat them as casualties of a terrible injury.”

As a survivor of familial abuse, Antonia read about a story of the abuse of two young girls in a Church of England setting in Cumbria and the subsequently inadequate response of the Church leadership. Having found this “devastating”, she was asked: ‘what would you want to happen?’ In response, she said: “I would want to know that the rest of the Church cares about me and that the actions of this one individual do not represent the actions of an entire Church.”

Starting in 2020, Antonia asked on social media if the abuse story resonated with anyone and received overwhelming response from Poland,

Portugal, USA, Latin America, Germany and Australia, as well as from all over England. “The response has been astonishing,” she said.

She decided to use ribbons “to empower the Church” and she said that being heard and listened to “can make all the difference in the world.”

“People wanted to say ‘I’m a Christian – this is not who I am, this is not my thing’. It’s about empowering the whole Church. When survivors see the outpouring of support, and love, that stops them feeling isolated and traumatised,” she explained.

Throughout this week, visitors to St Chad’s Cathedral have been tying ribbons and messages on the outside railings and just inside the cathedral in the Bell Chamber.

Visitors included a group from France, where last month a LOUDfence was hosted at a meeting of the Bishops’ Conference in Lourdes and at the National Conference of the Ordained Religious of France, in Paris. The events were supported by safeguarding colleagues from other Catholic dioceses.

Cathedral Dean Mgr Timothy Menezes explained that St Chad’s Cathedral was happy to host LOUDfence, stressing that its public nature is significant.

“There is something about it being public. The fact that it often takes place in a cathedral gives it maximum publicity,” he told the *Universe*.

“Interestingly, the fence is usually outside – many victims in church settings do not wish to come into a church. Some of the messages on the ribbons are from church leaders, acknowledging the victims. There is a fear that these stories will be forgotten, so by putting the ribbons up, it enables the accounts and stories to continue to be told.”

“It is not the Church’s initiative – it is an initiative of survivors. The Church is hosting it. In hosting it, the Church is making an open invitation for people who have been abused to come forward to be listened to. It’s a public sign of sorrow for the past, but also committing ourselves to a culture of vigilance for the future.”



**Antonia Sobocki with Archbishop Longley and St Chad’s Cathedral Dean, Mgr Timothy Menezes**



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## In brief

**Poll finds backing for political King**

King Charles should speak out on political issues, said 38 per cent of Britons in a poll. The British public is “narrowly divided” over whether the King should be more vocal on political issues that he believes in, said the *i* paper. Some 46 per cent of adults said they felt he should remain politically neutral and keep his personal views to himself, but 38 per cent would like the King to speak out publicly on the “burning issues that matter to him”, said the paper.

**Blood test warning for tired drivers**

A blood test to measure whether a driver who has caused an accident was impaired by lack of sleep could be available within two years, paving the way for prosecutions. New evidence suggests that driving on less than five hours' sleep is as dangerous as being over the drink-drive limit, with experts saying that fatigue-related crashes could account for 25 per cent of fatal and serious crashes in the UK.

“There has to be a system to check whether someone has had enough sleep, because they could be putting other people's lives at risk,” said one.

**8am GP booking scramble to end**

The Government plans to end the ‘8am scramble’ for GP appointments by allowing up to seven million patients a year suffering from conditions such as a sore throat, earache and shingles to get prescriptions directly from pharmacies without a GP appointment.

NHS England says its plan will free up 15m GP appointments over the next two years – around two per cent of the total.

However, according to the BBC, there are concerns over how pharmacies will cope with the extra demand. Data shows there are now fewer local chemists than at any time since 2015.

**Adams makes Thatcher claim**

“Very few tears” would have been shed in parts of the UK if the Brighton bombing had killed Margaret Thatcher, ex-Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has claimed in a political podcast.

On *The Rest Is Politics* podcast, presented by Alistair Campbell and Rory Stewart, Adams said: “There would be very few tears shed for Thatcher in Ireland, or in working-class Wales, Scotland and England itself,” he said. Thatcher was unhurt in the 1984 IRA bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton, though five died.

# Ukrainian churches are a hit with Historic England judges

**Andy Drozdziaik**

As the Eurovision Song Contest approaches, a Liverpool-based Ukrainian Catholic priest has welcomed the recognition of buildings and memorials with Ukrainian heritage in the north of England in the latest listed status records.

A Ukrainian community memorial in Bradford and two Ukrainian churches in Salford and Oldham have been granted Grade II listed status by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), on Historic England's advice.

A further three churches, in Manchester and Bradford, and a community centre in Huddersfield which are all already listed will have their stories updated on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) to reflect the significance of their Ukrainian history.

The Rev Dr Taras Khomych – a Ukrainian Catholic Priest and chair of the Liverpool branch of the Association of Ukrainians of Great Britain – said: “Highlighting the stories of Ukrainian communities in the north of England is a wonderful way of supporting our heritage at a time when it is under threat in Ukraine.”

The Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Dormition of the Holy Mary Mother of God, Salford was the first church owned by Ukrainian Catholics in Great Britain. It opened in the late 19th century as the Sunday school for the nearby congregational church and was bought by the Ukrainian community in 1954, when it was converted by

**The Catholic Church of St Chads in Manchester.**  
Photo: Alun Bull/Historic England



adding traditional features including an iconostasis – a brightly-coloured, highly ornate screen of icons.

At the front of the church, a black granite plaque has an inscription, in Ukrainian and English, which reads: ‘In memory of seven million victims of Moscow made famine in Ukraine 1932-1933.’

The Ukrainian Catholic Church of St Peter and St Paul and All Saints, in



Oldham, started life as an Anglican church in 1889 and was adopted in 1987.

Historic England described it as ‘a fantastic blend of English and Ukrainian religious traditions’.

Duncan Wilson, chief executive of Historic England, said: “It feels right to celebrate Ukrainian heritage in the north of England as the nation gets ready to host Eurovision, on behalf of Ukraine.

“These places were established as safe spaces, over decades, by people who wanted to keep Ukraine in their hearts and their heritage alive.”

The churches which have had their list entries amended to include their Ukrainian history are the Roman Catholic Church of St Chad, Cheetham Hill, Manchester; St Mary Protectress, Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church, Bradford; and the Ukrainian Catholic Church of The Most Holy Trinity & Our Lady of Pochaiv, Manningham, Bradford. Edgerton Hill

Ukrainian Community Centre in Huddersfield is also having its listing upgraded.

Arts and Heritage Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay underlined the intention to recognise the contribution of ‘the people of Ukraine.’

“With excitement growing for this weekend's Eurovision Song Contest, we want to recognise and celebrate how the people of Ukraine have helped shape our nation over many generations,” Lord Parkinson said.

“These sites across the north of England are important for Ukrainians at home and in the UK. Granting them listed status means they can be cherished and protected for years to come.”

Historic England said Ukrainians began to settle in Manchester in the late 19th century and around 35,000 arrived following the Second World War as part of a scheme to address labour shortages. More Ukrainians migrated to England following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## A prayer for Ukraine as drivers deliver more goods in Eurovision tribute

**Andy Drozdziaik**

Volunteers from the archdiocese of Liverpool have marked the staging of the Eurovision Song Contest in the city by delivering essential aid as part of the *#Liverpool4Ukraine* appeal.

They have also penned a special Eurovision-themed prayer for the people of Ukraine.

Three vans, driven by six volunteers, made a six-day journey during the week of Eurovision to further strengthen the links between the city and Ukraine. Liverpool is hosting Eurovision on behalf of Ukraine.

Among the drivers are Martin Miller, chief operating officer at the archdiocese, who said that the trip was to further strengthen the links between Liverpool and Ukraine.

“Our first trip to Ukraine was over a year ago, back in March 2022. It is heartbreaking that the war is ongoing and there is still need for us to do this, but the personal approach of delivering the aid directly to Bishop Gregory is so important for them which is why we are continuing to make this journey,” Mr Miller said.

Ukrainian priest Fr Taras Khomych and Canon Aidan Prescott blessed the vans and the drivers on Friday, 5th May at 3pm at the St Margaret Clitherow Centre, Liverpool before they set off the next day. They are carrying dried food and building tools and will go directly to Bishop Gregory Komar, from the Ukrainian diocese of Sambir-Drohobych, who will take the goods for distribution in the Lviv

region of western Ukraine. Bishop Gregory is the auxiliary bishop of the diocese and has a close association with Liverpool.

Joining Martin Miller were office manager Sharne Kelso, Antony McLoughlin – whose wife Helen works for the archdiocese – along with three volunteers from Greenmount Projects, who have supported the appeal since the beginning.

The team have put together a Eurovision prayer, which they are encouraging everyone to say in order to keep the people of Ukraine, Bishop Gregory and the volunteer drivers in prayer:

*Risen Lord Jesus,  
Help us to be your light to the world of today. We know you are with us always in your word and in your Sacraments, in those we love and in the poor. Help us to see you in the poor, the suffering and the lost.*

*As we celebrate a song for Europe here in Liverpool, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, that our song would be peace for the world, peace for Ukraine and peace in our homes and hearts. May Your Vision be our vision and become Europe's vision. Amen*

• The *#Liverpool4Ukraine* appeal is still open to donations from the public: [www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/donate](http://www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/donate)



**The drivers with Fr Taras who blessed the drivers and vans before they left**



# Pact praises Sir John U-turn on prisons

**Andy Drozdziak**

Catholic prison charity Pact has backed former prime minister Sir John Major's calls for a stronger focus on rehabilitation in the prison system.

In a speech to the Prison Reform Trust at the Old Bailey, Sir John said: "Stern sentences for violent crimes are necessary, and the instinct to protect the public is laudable, but we should beware that excessive zeal to be tough on crime does not lead us into unwise policy."

In the year to June 2022, 43,000 people were sentenced to a prison term, of which fewer than 40 per cent had committed a violent offence.

"Many prisoners are sentenced to short-term imprisonment when other sentences would be preferable. In some cases, care and medical attention are called for rather than prison," he said. "To be blunt my suspicion is that many short sentences are pointless and that a non-custodial sentence would be more effective."

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs, who attended the talk, backed Sir John's words. "Sir John is absolutely right that the criminal justice system has been neglected by all political parties and that ever tougher rhetoric on crime has simply led more people being unnecessarily locked up, more re-offending and more victims," Mr Keen-



Downs told the *Universe*.

Sir John was Prime Minister when his Home Secretary, Michael Howard, told the party conference in 1993 that "prison works".

But in Tuesday's intervention – his first on prisons and sentencing since his premiership – Sir John called for a stronger focus on rehabilitation, which is a key feature of Pact's work.

"This isn't about being soft on crime; it's about common-sense reform that would benefit us all. Sending ever greater number of people to prison without providing them with the op-

portunity to be properly rehabilitated would be failing everyone in society," Mr Keen-Downs said.

The former prime minister also warned of "intolerable" conditions in some prisons, where two to three inmates are sometimes held in a Victorian cell built for one person.

The ex-Tory leader urged the new Justice Secretary to abandon Dominic Raab's proposals to give ministers more power to block Parole Board decisions, warning the system should not be unduly pressured by public campaigns.

Sir John defended the Parole Board's ability to make sound decisions, pointing to the low reoffending rate – one in 200 prisoners – in the three years following release.

"This would suggest that the Parole Board is not a bunch of gullible softies," he said.

Mr Keen-Downs urged politicians from all parties to take heed of Sir John's words.

"He challenged politicians and policy makers to consider where this has got us – an ever-expanding prison population, high rates of re-offending, and ever more victims. It was an excellent speech.

"There was nothing vaguely 'woke', liberal or soft about it," he said, "it was excellent."

# Porn link to children who abuse shows need for safeguards

Links between pornography and child sexual abuse cases have increasingly become apparent after a series of reports have been released by England's Children's Commissioner, Rachel de Souza.

This further evidence of the harms of pornography, Dame Rachel says, is more proof that stronger provisions need to be introduced to the Online Safety Bill in order to better protect children from online harms.

The reports showed that the average age at which young people had viewed pornography was 13, and one in 10 16-21 year olds had watched pornography by the age of nine.

The Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO) analysed police interview transcripts from child sexual abuse cases and found in 50% of cases, pornography and specific acts of sexual violence were cited, with the most common category being physical aggression seen in pornographic content, such as strangulation, choking or slapping.

Interviews with children suggested that their consumption of pornography was linked to the acts of harm they caused to other children.

Some victims stated their abuser made references to "things he'd seen on porn", or that they were made to feel like "porn-stars".

Describing the latest research as "perhaps the work that I have found hardest to publish since becoming Children's Commissioner", Dame Rachel said the case for bringing in the most robust protections for children online is stronger than ever.

She said: "Each of the 502 case files analysed for this report represents

**Dame Rachel de Souza. Reviewing the cases had been challenging work, she said**  
Photo Yui Moke



terrible trauma wrought on a child by another child."

She said the report "contributes to the literature on pornography's role in shaping and fuelling violence against women and girls" and that while the risk factors behind harmful sexual behaviour and children abusing other children are complex, "much of the abuse is taking forms which are depicted in pornography".

The results showed that getting the Online Safety Bill through Parliament "was now an urgent priority".

Christian charity CARE has called for robust checks on all porn sites to stop children accessing them, including age verification checks.

# Priest's take on politics and faith at CU event

The Catholic Union will be hosting a webinar with Fr Mark Vickers on his book, *God in No 10: The Personal Faith of the Prime Ministers, from Balfour to Blair*.

The online event will feature a discussion between the book's author, Fr Mark Vickers, and Catholic Union Deputy Director, James Somerville-Meikle. People taking part will have the opportunity to ask questions.

The webinar will take place on Tuesday, 20th June, from 6.30-8.00pm. It is free to attend and open to everyone, but people will need to register in advance in order to receive the link to join the talk.

*God in No 10* is an account of the personal faith of the 20th-century British Prime Ministers. The book was launched by Charles (Lord) Moore at an event in Parliament last year. It has received excellent reviews since its publication, including in the *Telegraph* and by former leader of the Liberal Democrats, Tim Farron.

Mark Vickers read History at Durham University and practised with one of the City law firms. Having studied for the priesthood at the English College in Rome, he was ordained for the Diocese of Westminster in 2003. He is currently a parish priest in West London.

The webinar builds on the Catholic Union's proud history of leading public

discussion on Catholic matters, including the annual Craigmyle Lecture and its new Pub Talk series, which started this year.

Fr Mark Vickers said: "I once thought my future lay in politics. God, however, had other plans, and I have no regrets.

"Researching and writing the book allowed me to combine two passions: faith and politics. Surprisingly, no one had ever covered the Prime Ministers' personal faith. There are many surprises challenging received wisdom: sceptics and seances in the early twentieth century; increasingly devout Christians in the later period. I look forward to sharing my findings on this Catholic Union webinar."



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## COMMENT

**'Police actions were proportionate and appropriate'**

Last Saturday saw the greatest state occasion for 70 years. The Coronation was watched by hundreds of millions of people all over the world, and attended by 300 plus leaders and dignitaries. As was expected it was conducted with all the brilliance associated with British pomp and circumstance and that it went off without a hitch was testament to the officials' expertise and the hard work that underpinned it.

Security was a great concern, especially for the King's procession to Westminster Abbey and back to Buckingham Palace, where he was accompanied by the massed ranks from the Armed Forces of the UK and the Commonwealth. On the fringes, republicans protested against the monarchy, as they are entitled to do in a free country. What they are not allowed to do is disrupt proceedings because they do not like them. Democratic freedoms do not extend to causing harm or preventing lawful events going ahead.

It was feared that extremists would draw attention to their cause by endangering horses or locking themselves to objects. The job of stopping them fell to the Metropolitan Police, which arrested about 50 people on suspicion of seeking to cause trouble. Few have so far been charged and some have been exonerated, but that does not make the police action wrong and nor has it turned this country into a neo-fascist state, as some of the more absurd reactions have suggested.

Sadly Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, jumped aboard the bandwagon to denigrate the police for ensuring that this great event was not ruined by a tiny minority of zealots. The Met deserves the nation's gratitude. Now its officers must show the same resolve dealing with Just Stop Oil protesters blocking the highways.

# Local elections: Labour gains might not be enough

## POLITICS

**Ben Williams**

Last week's local council elections were potentially the last major test of public opinion before the next general election, which is most likely to occur some time next year.

These votes are, of course, shaped by local issues but national influences are never far away. The main parties have been engaging with nationwide campaign themes during the campaign, possibly as a trial run before the main event, and it's impossible not to draw conclusions about the potential link between how the public is voting now at a local level and the verdict it will deliver at the national poll.

### Is Labour really on course for Downing Street?

Labour did well, as would be expected of an opposition party competing against a governing party that is facing significant problems after 13 years in power. But its performance does not necessarily indicate that it is doing well enough to win outright at the next general election.

On a positive note, Labour gained control of councils in Medway, Plymouth, Stoke-on-Trent and Swindon. These areas contain multiple marginal parliamentary seats that the party must gain in 2024 if it hopes to form a majority government in its own right. Signs of a shift towards Labour in these local elections is therefore heartening for Keir Starmer – although turnout at local elections is always lower than general elections and this should be factored in to any conclusions drawn from the results.

On the downside for Labour, it failed to take control of other target councils, namely Peterborough, Bolton, Worcester and Hartlepool. These also represent marginal parliamentary seats that it must win

if it hopes to gain an outright majority in a general election. It has also failed to oust the Liberal Democrats from their control of urban councils such as Hull, while the Greens have been picking up seats and left-leaning votes from Labour in some of their urban strongholds.



**It don't mean a thing if you don't get that swing**

Results from the locals suggest the swing from the Conservative would not be sufficient for an outright Labour general election win.

The swing has been seen as one of the most important indicators of success in this election. This is the average change in voter support for political parties between elections.

The initial 2023 swing marks a lower level of Labour performance than recent opinion polls have suggested – a similar level of support to last year's local elections. It would ultimately not amount to the 'knockout blow' that some think is needed to show that Labour is on course for a General Election win.

For context, Labour requires a 7-8

per cent swing on its 2019 result just to become the biggest party in parliament at the next general election. It needs a swing of approximately 10 per cent to win an outright majority that would allow it to govern alone. Such is the scale of its electoral task.

So on the basis of these local results, Labour's swing of an estimated 4-5 per cent in these elections evidently suggests progress, but not at the peak levels enjoyed by Tony Blair in the build up to the party's historic 1997 general election triumph. However, Starmer's team would say they are recovering from a major electoral setback in 2019, when it took just 32 per cent of the national vote. On that basis, a predicted 35 per cent of the national vote, close to a double digit poll lead, and potentially 1,000 council seat gains, represent movement very much in the right direction.

### Conservative fortunes

Ahead of these elections, Conservative Party chairman Greg Hands pessimistically (or

strategically, depending on your view) declared that his party could lose 1,000 council seats of the more than 3,000 the party was defending. This would be on top of the terrible losses incurred under Theresa May the last time these particular seats were fought.

Even with such expectation management in play, this year's results confirm what a difficult position Rishi Sunak's party finds itself in. Gains made by the Liberal Democrats might not equate to Labour success but they do indicate the potential for Conservative failure. If support for the Lib Dems is back on the rise after its years in the post-coalition doldrums, that has the potential to eat into the governing party's vote at the national level at a time when it needs all the support it can get.

Sunak's challenge going forward will be whether he has both the time and the capacity to turn this electoral decline around before the general election.

**Ben Williams is a Lecturer in Politics and Political Theory, University of Salford**

## CONTACTS

The Universe Catholic Weekly is published by the Universe Catholic Weekly Ltd.

Universe Catholic Weekly, PO Box 585, Sale M33 0JH  
[www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk](http://www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

**General enquiries:** t: 0791 849 9993  
e: [Info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:Info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
**Editorial enquiries:** t: 0743 661 7604  
e: [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

**Managing Editorial Director:** Michael Winterbottom  
e: [michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 07753 987124

**News:** Andy Drozdziaik  
e: [andy.drozdziaik@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andy.drozdziaik@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 07527 237293

**Director of Sales & Marketing:** Andrea Black  
e: [andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0791 856 0608

**Circulation Sales Manager:** Michelle Jones  
e: [michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [sales@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:sales@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 661 7650

**Finance & Operations Director:** Mary Concannon  
e: [mary.concannon@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:mary.concannon@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [accounts@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:accounts@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 661 7605

**Administrative Support:** Theresa Bowling  
e: [Theresa.bowling@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:Theresa.bowling@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 661 7611

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# Thousands protest after Ireland backs extreme law

Thousands attended a March for Life in Dublin last weekend following a review recommending that doctors be immune from prosecution for performing abortions at any point up to birth.

The review also recommended the removal of the three-day wait before an abortion.

Following the publication of the “extreme” recommendations from a review of the Irish abortion law, abortion is set to be a major election issue, according to pro-lifers in Ireland.

Pro Life Campaign spokesperson Eilís Mulroy told the gathering that “abortion is now guaranteed to be an election issue.”

“The recommendation to scrap the life-saving three-day reflection period before an abortion happens is reckless and the proposal to decriminalise abortion entirely, would, if given effect, clear the way abortion on request up to birth,” she said.

Ms Mulroy said that Taoiseach Leo Varadkar’s comments about the recommendations made clear that he recognised how extreme they were, but she expressed concern “that the Government will seek to give effect to them for no other reason than to placate the very vocal and never satisfied pro-abortion lobby.”

Aontú leader and TD for Meath West, Peadar Tóibín, told the crowd:

“The number of abortions jumped a devastating 25 per cent, just in the last year. In the four years that the law has been in place nearly 28,500 babies have been aborted. It’s the equivalent of 1,228 classrooms-full.”

The crowd also heard from Amrita Kaur, from England, who had begun a medical abortion but changed her mind after taking the first abortion pill of two. She sought medical help and ended up giving birth to her daughter in November 2021. “It is shocking the lack of information that is available to women on what options they have before and after taking the abortion pill, the effects of abortion pills on women’s bodies and the support that is out there if they decide to keep their child”, she said.

Ms Kaur asked the abortion provider when her baby would have a heartbeat and “the nurse responded with something along the lines of ‘it is either a yes or no-do you want the abortion pill or not?’”

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said: “Well done to the thousands who took to the streets of Dublin to make it clear that Ireland doesn’t need an even more extreme abortion law.”

The Pro Life Campaign urged pro-lifers across Ireland to elect pro-life TDs so that they are properly represented in the Dáil.

# Stunning St Francis exhibition has cardinal’s seal of approval

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has joined others in praising the first major UK art exhibition to explore Saint Francis of Assisi’s life and legacy.

Exhibiting at London’s National Gallery, *The art and imagery of Saint Francis (1182–1226) from the 13th century to today*, brings together paintings from the gallery’s collection by Sassetta, Botticelli, and Zurbarán with international loans including works by Caravaggio, Josefa de Óbidos, Stanley Spencer, Antony Gormley, Giuseppe Penone, Andrea Büttner, and an exciting new commission from Richard Long.

“Francis of Assisi enjoys astonishing and continuing popularity,” Cardinal Nichols said. “His love of and care for creation is often what opens for many the pathway of a deeper appreciation of this remarkable saint.”

From some of the earliest medieval panels, relics and manuscripts to modern-day films and a Marvel comic, the exhibition shines a light on how Saint Francis has captured the imagination of artists through the centuries, and how his appeal has transcended generations, continents and different religious traditions.

The cardinal pointed out that St Francis’s love of the natural world was never romantic.

“Francis chose to leave his inherited



comforts and identify with those at the mercy of the elements, those closest to the realities of nature: the lepers, the poor, the outcast. He suffered with them, often soaked to the skin and frozen to the marrow,” he said.

“Yet he sang to the glory of God seen and experienced in the features of the created world. The way of radical poverty and vulnerability that he chose is made clear by one look at his tunic, a precious relic kindly brought here from Florence.”

National Gallery Director Gabriele Finaldi describes St Francis as having a universal appeal, attractive “for Christians and non-Christians alike, for utopians and revolutionaries, for animal lovers and for those who work

for causes of human solidarity”.

The exhibition has already proved immensely popular. Writing in *The Guardian*, Laura Cumming noted the variety of exhibits on show.

“Nothing brings you quite so close to Francis as this show,” she wrote. “It has his beautifully simple letters, his songs, hymns and prayers in manuscript copies, even his own drawing. I can think of no other show that has been blessed by the pope.”

“And this one deserves it, from first to last.”

Melanie McDonagh also gave the exhibition a five-star review in the *Evening Standard* saying it was a “remarkable” exhibition, filled with “striking pieces.”



Why do we take Holy Communion?

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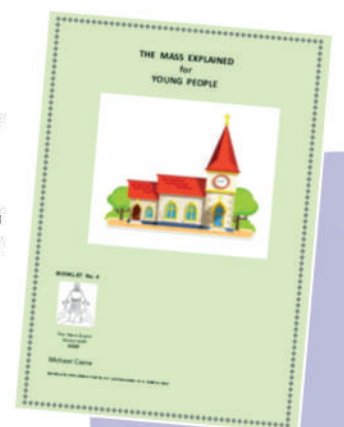
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**Try it; it costs you nothing except a bit of your time.**





## The service challenge

Sir John Battle



Perhaps the most significant moment of the Coronation events of the weekend was right at the start of the service in the Abbey when a young choirboy went and stood before King Charles and effectively asked him why he had turned up. The about to be crowned King Charles III replied “I come not to be served but to serve”. This declaration brought back to me the anniversary of the Labour politician and former leader John Smith, who ended his last speech at a dinner on the night before his death of a heart attack on 12th May 1994 with the words “The opportunity to serve our country, that is all we ask.”

John Smith insisted on politics as a duty of public service and practised that in his life. He is buried on the Isle of Iona near the ancient Celtic monastery. On his gravestone are the words from Alexander Pope’s poem an *Essay on Man*: ‘An Honest Man’s the Noblest work of God’.

There is an ancient tradition of ‘servant leadership, not least the Biblical one, given the ‘suffering servant of Yahweh’ in the writings of the prophet Isaiah which echo through to the brutal Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The coronation followed a familiar Christian pattern. Penitence followed by listening to the readings, breaking open the Word of God, followed by the formal service of personal consecration, then the consecration of the bread and wine followed by Communion and a parting blessing such as ‘Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life’. Having received the Body and Blood of Christ, we are commissioned to go out and serve the Lord in practice.

Coronation events across the weekend re-enacted on a national scale that drama of service. Certainly the years of Covid-19 lockdowns and isolation damaged the practice and potential for community action and volunteering, and many groups have struggled to survive. Volunteers are much needed.

But nor for Christians can service of others be a kind of added on, soft temporary option of personal benefit. As the Dominican friar Fr Herbert McCabe put it when asked what being a Christian was about, he replied starkly: “Love and get killed”. Service of others is far from a soft occasional option. As one weary Catholic suggested in response to Pope Francis’s challenge that we need to become a “Church of the poor”, “The Pope making it too hard for us to be a Catholic now.” In Christian theology ‘service is a deeply radical (ie, rooted) practice of a lifetime and the route to salvation.

# Three-parent baby puts us on a dangerous path to widespread eugenics

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



A Freedom of Information inquiry by *The Guardian* has revealed that the first child created with DNA from three parents has been born in the UK, using groundbreaking technology after Parliament greenlighted the procedure in 2015.

The technique involves taking the nucleus of a fertilised egg, the mitochondria of another fertilised egg and placing both of these inside a donor egg, in order to produce a baby who is free from harmful mitochondrial mutations which the mother may pass on to her unborn child.

Mitochondrial disease is devastating and therefore the desire to rid future generations of pain and suffering and to ensure healthy babies is entirely understandable, but as ever we have to bear in mind the key principle of Catholic moral theology, namely that the ends can never justify the means. It is never acceptable to do an inherently wrong or evil act in order to bring about a good outcome.

The problems with mitochondrial disease are many-fold. First, it involves the use of IVF technology which the Church teaches against. Like many other aspects of Catholic teaching, wider society struggles to come to terms with this because it is seen as outdated and lacking in all compassion. It is, after all, extremely difficult to tell parents and grandparents that they should not have resorted to measures which have brought their beautiful children into creation. It feels extremely hurtful and arrogant, especially when such a difficult teaching is articulated by someone like me, who has been blessed with natural fecundity and brought five children into the world.

The problems with IVF are very basic; it is a huge offence against life, leading to the commoditisation and quality control of babies and involves the destruction of embryos on an industrial scale. Three-parent babies further embeds a eugenic mindset that only healthy babies are worthy of human life, into society’s psyche. While it is natural to want to avoid unnecessary suffering, pain and illness are part and parcel of life.

While I may not have personal experience of infertility, I do have



the first-hand experience of having children with special needs, which can be incredibly challenging. That said, even though my children’s needs do put an additional burden on the family, I would absolutely not change them for the world. Without their condition, they wouldn’t be who they are, but completely different individuals. When I read about attempts to screen embryos for autism, it sends shivers down my spine, as it is sending out a message that my children’s lives are undesirable and it would be better if they did not exist. Like so many individuals with autism or other more obvious disabilities, with the right support to overcome their challenges, my children have so much to offer the world and have the same right to exist as everyone else.

It is not as though the technique is even guaranteed to work, as recent research has shown that the tiny

amount of abnormal mitochondria which are inevitably carried from the mother’s egg to the donor egg can multiply while the child is in the womb, which can lead to disease in the child. It is not understood why this happens in some children and not in others.

Furthermore, the effect of the change to the mitochondria on the rest of the human genome which affects growth and development is unknown and so too are the consequences on the DNA that may be passed down to further generations. This is why individuals who are born from this technique are being closely monitored. So, in other words, this is effectively human experimentation which is being slipped under the radar in the name of progress, choice, and compassion.

Scientists are keen to stress that the term ‘three parent babies’ is misleading and sensational,

Left, an IVF scientist works with an embryo bank. The news that a baby has been born with three parents’ DNA confirms that science is going down a worrying path as far as Catholic teaching goes

nevertheless a third person’s DNA is introduced into a human being, the consequences of which could potentially significantly affect future generations and also introduce unfair burdens on those individuals themselves. Wanting to define our identity, working out our place in the world, which also includes being able to identify our roots and knowing where we come from, is a natural and normal part of the human psyche. This is why TV series on human genealogy are so popular. We want to know who our ancestors are, in order to work out who we are and contextualise ourselves in the world around us. Individuals who are born from donor eggs and sperm often experience significant anxiety and guilt for wanting to discover more about their genetic ancestors, and are made to feel as though they should just shut up and be grateful, even though, in some cases, knowing our genetic legacy can be life-saving.

While it is stressed that this mitochondrial technique is currently only being used in a minuscule amount of cases, with would-be parents having to apply to the Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority on a case-by-case basis and needing to prove why they qualify, like IVF, this could soon become the norm. Already scientists are discussing how this technology could potentially help other couples, such as those for whom IVF has proven to be unsuccessful, to conceive.

As is the case with all bio-ethical matters, once the rubicon has been crossed, it is very difficult to take a step back, and soon we will heading off arguments that patient choice, the desire for parents to be able to choose characteristics such as sex, hair and eye colour, ought to become the norm. This then leads to yet further commodification and devaluation of human life.

Already, it has become extremely difficult to object to IVF. Catholic teaching is seen as like something from a prehistoric age, but what needs to be remembered, is that this teaching is not about imposing rigid ideals for the sake of, but rather following the loving plan of a Creator who has our best interests in mind.



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## In brief

## Three stabbings in London

Three people were stabbed to death in separate incidents in London over a period of less than eight hours.

The Met police said murder investigations are underway after the deaths of an 18-year-old and a man in his late 20s, and detectives are still hunting for the killers of a 16-year-old who was ambushed as he left school and stabbed to death.

The capital has been “exceptionally busy” with King Charles’s coronation, the police said.

## Gove’s plans dubbed ‘communist’

Airbnb said it will fight Michael Gove’s holiday let crackdown, as the Housing Secretary is branded a “communist” for his plans.

Gove has suggested forcing second homeowners to seek planning permission before renting out their properties as holiday lets but the tech company wants him to water down his proposals, warning of “unintended consequences”.

Tory donor Crispin Odey said the minister’s second home interventions are “communist”. Gove said the spread of holiday homes was turning coastal towns into an “almost permanent Airbnb setting”.

## Cheap flights ‘won’t return’

The era of ultra-cheap flights is over, the head of Europe’s biggest tourism conglomerate has said. Sebastian Ebel, chief executive of the Tui group, said that because demand significantly outstrips supply, there will be no return to the days when airlines discounted plane tickets to less than 50 (£44) to fill seats.

He said there were already parts of the Mediterranean, especially in Greece, where there were “virtually no beds left” for the summer. The cost of air travel has risen by well over a fifth over the past year, noted *The Times*.

## Millions missed bills last month

Two million households in the UK missed or defaulted on at least one mortgage, rent, loan, credit card payment or bill last month, according to *Which*. The consumer group found that 700,000 had missed their housing payments. *The Mirror* said 3.1 per cent also missed mortgage payments as Bank of England interest rates continued to climb.

The “shock figures” come among a “backdrop of rising costs putting a strain on UK households in recent months”, said the paper.

# Russia’s young men aren’t buying into Putin’s appeal

WORLD AFFAIRS

Marina Yusupova



In his 9th May Victory Parade speech, Russian president Vladimir Putin likened the war in Ukraine to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, saying “real war” had been unleashed against Russia.

He is reported to be planning to mobilise an extra 500,000 troops in 2023. In April he passed new legislation introducing electronic military draft papers, which will make it much harder to avoid conscription.

The last wave of conscription in September 2022 prompted an exodus of hundreds of thousands of young men to neighbouring countries. So, to encourage men to enlist, the Kremlin has launched a massive media campaign appealing to the notion of ‘warrior masculinity’.

Russian news outlets and social media platforms as well as billboards and lampposts in big cities have been filled with adverts explaining that a man who joins the military is a hero – a real man deserving respect and admiration.

The advertising videos tell the stories of men who volunteered to join up. It’s a familiar tale of how signing up drastically improves men’s lives. Their children and wives admire their heroism, their ex-girlfriends fall back in love with them again and they gain the respect of their communities.

Those who have left are portrayed as selfish cowards, as with one advert in which a woman says: ‘The boys left, the men stayed.’ Another advert, which ends with the caption ‘You’re a real man, be one,’ emphasises the good wages on offer to men who join up. Enlisting is presented as a means to improve one’s financial standing – pay off a debt, buy a car, move out from a small town into a large city.

But how effective are campaigns like this? My research on Russian masculinities suggests that the themes of ‘be a man’ and ‘make more money’ play into two of the most common anxieties among Russian men. But the problems experienced last September when – according to some reports – up to 700,000 left Russia to avoid conscription (something the Kremlin has denied) suggests that these messages haven’t worked very well.

Two paradoxes, which are legacies of the fall of the Soviet Union, can help explain the lukewarm response to the call to arms. The first is a structural contradiction which has persisted since the break-up of the



Soviet Union. Despite the fact that military service remains a constitutional duty for men aged 18-27, only a minority of men in the draft pool end up serving in the armed forces. The rest avoid military call-up via legal and illegal means.

According to Canadian researcher Maya Eichler, compared to the Soviet era when 70 per cent to 85 per cent of draft-age men were conscripted, in the first post-Soviet decade or so the Russian state was only able to call up about 10 per cent to 30 per cent of men in the draft pool.

Second, my research has found that while Russian men tend to support the military as an institution, they are very critical of the way it is run in Russia. Men I spoke to – across several generations – called the Russian army “corrupt”, “venal”, “deeply damaged”, “rotten”, “discredited”, “severely underfunded”, and “a shameful place based on *dedovshchina*” (hazing and bullying).

I conducted these interviews in 2012-2014 and found the majority of men I spoke with expressed personal unwillingness to serve in the Russian army and were strictly against their own sons serving.

My research comprised in-depth biographical interviews with 40 Russian men of different ages and highly varied socioeconomic and professional backgrounds living in Russia and in the UK. In almost half

of those interviews, militarised notions of masculinity and heroic fantasies were expressed. For 17 participants, the idea of being a man was first and foremost linked to the notion of a warrior or defender.

Conversations about the military were one of the main grounds where Russian men negotiated and established their masculinity, as well as that of other men. A lack of military experience was explicitly or implicitly perceived as a lack of respectable masculinity. This was evident whether or not the men I was interviewing had done military service.

Despite Putin’s military reforms, my interviewees regarded Soviet and post-Soviet Russian armies as two completely different social institutions. The former was seen as a social lift, a place where masculinity is forged and where ordinary men become heroes. The post-Soviet army, by contrast, was often seen as a corrupt and dangerous place, a waste of time, and a place for poor people with no other life prospects.

In 2004, a Human Rights Watch report found that the transition to a market economy had a serious impact on conscription. Young men from relatively privileged backgrounds can buy their way out of the army or get a draft deferment to attend university, so the majority of conscripts in Russia come from the most disadvantaged, least

affluent parts of society.

In her 2012 book, *Militarizing Men: Gender, Conscription, and War in Post-Soviet Russia*, Canadian scholar Maya Eichler asserts that army service has become “increasingly tied to a marginal masculinity differentiated by class”.

The Russian army in Ukraine is overwhelmingly made up of soldiers from the poorest regions of the country. Mobilisation has also disproportionately targeted ethnic minority regions such as republics of Buryatia and Dagestan, where for many, signing an army contract is the only way to make a living.

But the breakdown of the old Soviet social contract on which men’s soldiering rested (guaranteed employment, housing, and other state-funded benefits), and the failure of the current Russian state to provide similarly tangible rewards, have radically undermined men’s willingness to serve in the military.

The transition to capitalism and free market created new notions of masculinity tied to financial success. This new masculinity entered into conflict with the patriotic, self-sacrificing militarised masculinity of the Soviet times.

In his work on the contradictions in modern militarism, US scholar Michael Mann likens public interest in the national use of armed forces to a “spectator sport”. I found this in my research, where it became clear that the Soviet-era citizen-soldier has turned into a citizen-spectator. Individuals may vocally support militarism while refusing to personally engage in any military practices.

Marina Yusupova is a Lecturer in Sociology, Edinburgh Napier University



Army service has become increasingly tied to a marginal masculinity differentiated by class, with the army in Ukraine overwhelmingly made up of soldiers from the poorest regions ...



# Decision to base new museum on historic church site praised

**Andy Drozdziak**

The announcement of a new museum about the history of Catholicism in Scotland in Glasgow has been welcomed by a leading Scottish historian.

A diverse and popular collection of paintings, church textiles and Jacobite memorabilia will move from Blairs Museum in Aberdeen to the former St Mary's school, in Orr Street in the Calton area of Glasgow's East End.

The collection includes the Memorial Portrait of Mary Queen of Scots.

The building was previously the school of St Mary's parish, which once served as the pro-cathedral of the Archdiocese of Glasgow in the mid-19th century and was home to many immigrant Catholics. The monument to those who suffered from famine in the Scottish Highlands and Ireland in the 19th century is located on this site.

Scottish historian, Professor Sir Tom Devine, told *The Herald*: "The Bishops Conference of Scotland have chosen wisely in siting their new office accommodation, the Scottish Catholic

Archives and a very welcome new addition – a Scottish Catholic Museum – in Orr Street, Calton.

"This is an area which has great significance for Irish Catholic immigration in the 19th century and especially during the terrible era of the Great Famine, commemorated in a nearby monument to those who suffered during an Gorta Mór.

"St Mary's, Abercromby Street, the second oldest Catholic parish in the Archdiocese, opened in 1842, just three years before the potato blight started to ravage Ireland and is also in the neighbourhood."

As well as being a significant cost-cutting exercise, the presence of the archives and museum in Glasgow will give greater accessibility to the historical records and artefacts of the history of the Catholic Church in Scotland – pre-Reformation, the Penal Laws when Catholicism was banned in Scotland, and the Emancipation of Catholics in 1829 up until the present day.

Bishop Joseph Toal, who has responsibility for Catholic Heritage and

Culture in the Scottish Bishops' Conference, said: "It is good that the bishops have taken the decision to bring together the Offices of the Bishops, the Catholic Archives and Museum. In the chosen location we wish to identify with plans to regenerate the area around St Mary's, Abercromby Street, which itself has such strong historical and cultural links with the development of the Catholic Church in Scotland through the last two centuries."

Ronnie Convery, head of communications for the Archdiocese of Glasgow, told *The Herald*: "The initiative underlines the bishops' commitment to using the richness of Scottish Catholic culture – including the famous portrait of Mary Queen of Scots – and many Jacobite artefacts to tell our story through the ages, engaging with the many nearby historical religious sites of the life of St Mungo, but also as a means of informing and evangelising."

It is hoped that the transfer to the new premises will be completed by Spring 2024.



The Memorial Portrait of Mary Queen of Scots is one of the new museum's most prized exhibits

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# A day to remember



A Universe Catholic Weekly picture special as King Charles III was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 6th May, amid all the splendour, pomp and ceremony the Crown can muster









## Be missionary in spirit, pope tells Catholic universities

Catholic universities must be outward looking and prepare their students to engage with the world's problems rather than teaching rigid ideas, Pope Francis said.

"We need minds, hearts and hands that are up to the challenge of reality, not the narrowness of ideologies," he told a delegation from the Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean during their visit to the Vatican last week.

"A Catholic university should be missionary with its doors facing out, given that mission is the inspiration, the impetus, the strength and reward of the whole Church," he said.

The pope encouraged delegates to help their students become "social poets" who, by learning "the grammar and vocabulary of humanity, have the spark that allows them to imagine the unexpected."

Such a spirit, he said, is common among researchers, who, like missionaries, are "not satisfied with what they have, but go out looking."

"The researcher has a missionary head and heart," he said. "It is precisely that tension between knowing and not knowing that pushes them forward and protects them from the presumption of knowing everything. They know, and they let themselves be surprised by what they will know."

The researcher and the missionary are also alike in their "shared love for reciprocity," said the pope. "They teach and learn, convinced that everyone has something to teach them."

The university organisation is composed of 115 universities around Latin America and the Caribbean and represents some 1.5 million students.

Pope Francis told the delegation that the role of a Catholic university is to "contribute to the formation of Catholic minds, capable of observing not only the object of their interest," but also having a "panoramic view of the mystery of Christ and the world, the mystery of man and woman."

"An overly precise and focused view can become fixed and exclusive," he said. "It has the precision of a radar, but it loses the panorama."

A Catholicism which integrates the mind, the heart and the hands, the pope said, can heal the wounds that afflict a world where "the rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer." Yet he urged them not to be afraid of disorder, since "it is from there that God makes his most beautiful and creative works."

# A college, a coronation and a Catholic conference: Leadership in times of change and challenge

**Dr Ann Marie Mealey**  
Director of Catholic Mission,  
Leeds Trinity University.

This week I had the great privilege of attending 'The Stella Maris' leadership awards, presented by Bishop Marcus Stock, at Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College where I am appointed as a Foundation Governor.

The awards, set up by the Director of Catholic Life, Catherine Herring, and supported every step of the way by the Principal, Justine Barlow, focus on the development of character virtues for ethical leadership for young people.

The ethos of Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College includes the belief that education is ultimately about the holistic formation of the whole person, and developing others to have 'good character' and to lead with integrity for justice and goodness. Everyone connected with the recipients of the awards – teachers, parents, friends, governors, clergy and the Bishop of Leeds – gathered together this week to celebrate 'leadership.' A key theme that emerged from what the students said and from those who spoke at the event was hope.

Many speakers expressed the hope that students would continue the work that they had achieved for themselves, and for others, in the future wherever life would take them.

This theme of hope continued throughout my entire week as the coronation of His Majesty The King took place at the weekend. The celebrations were multiple and varied around me, and the opinions about what was about to happen in the coronation were far from unified. I heard comments from those who were attending civic events and street parties to those who were celebrating not being involved at all and doing something entirely unrelated – or deliberately staying away until it was all over and done with. Nevertheless, irrespective of the views being expressed, the theme of 'hope' continued – with some hoping that the fuss would soon be over to others hoping that this King would serve with integrity and honesty in service of the mission that is now bestowed upon him.

Unexpectedly, though, the upcoming conference that I was leading as part of my work as Director of Catholic Mission at Leeds Trinity University had to migrate from an 'in-person'



Bishop Marcus Stock at Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College where he presented the 'The Stella Maris' leadership awards

### Speakers at the event include

- Professor Philip Booth, on Expectations, Challenges and Possibilities – The Catholic University in the UK;
  - Dr Ann Marie Mealey, on Leadership, Values and Mission in the Contemporary HE Sector: Making the Connection between Faith and Education;
  - Professor Karen Sanders, on Ethics, Character and Leadership in the Curriculum;
  - Sir John Battle, on Leadership, Faith and Politics: Leadership through the Cross to Resurrection in Today's World.
- There will also be panel session with the Vice Chancellors of Leeds Trinity University, Liverpool Hope University, St Mary's University and Newman University; a panel of Stella Maris recipients, on youth leadership; and Professor Nicolas Vergier and Dr Francois Mabilbe from the International Federation of Catholic Universities will discuss international perspectives.

experience on our campus in Leeds to an online version due to national train strikes. So, I spent much of the week hoping that the delegates who had already booked would understand and join in my hope that there could be a hidden blessing somewhere in the changed circumstances around the conference. And since the conference is on 'Leadership, Faith and Spirituality in the Catholic Curriculum' I was very concerned to approach the challenge with care for the people who were supporting me, including the Vice-Chancellors from St Mary's Twickenham (Anthony McClaran), Liverpool Hope University (Professor Claire Ozanne), Professor Jackie Dunne from Newman University and my own line manager and Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Trinity University, Professor Charles Egbu.

I went through moments of vulnerability and self-doubt. I asked myself: 'should the show still go on or should we cancel?' Should we risk going ahead or postpone? Should we hope that the strikes won't go-ahead and wait a few more

days before letting people know? Or act now to ensure a smooth transition to an online format?

Leadership is not an easy place – especially when it involves challenge and managing the expectations of others. But the first step (I feel) is often to act in a way that enables a spirit of trust, that things will still work out okay. The other steps include listening to, and understanding, how people might be feeling in times of sudden change, responding in a supportive and empathetic way, and committing to providing a hopeful vision of what the change could mean.

Fuse consultancy – a leading voice in change management training – speak of three aspects of leading change which include 'communication', 'collaboration' and 'commitment' (Cf. *The 3 C's of Change Leadership* | Fuse ([fuse-consultancy.co.uk](http://fuse-consultancy.co.uk)). The advice given includes the need to communicate the change clearly and effectively, collaborate with others to bring it about and commit to seeing it through. But perhaps this is where

the theological lens really has so much real-life relevance in all sectors of society. When we change something and even plan for that change to come about, we need to give people hope that the changed circumstances will bring something more, something better, something greater than that which was there before. Hope for those of faith includes a 'confident expectation' that blessings that are now unseen will come. Since even death doesn't have the last word in the Christian tradition, those who lead with faith should have a greater reason to quietly trust in 'things unseen' and to 'hope' for the things to come – without being over-confident or aggressive. There is always hope for those who believe.

As the opening lines of *Spe Salvi* (2007) remind us: '*SPE SALVI facti sumus*'—in hope we were saved [...]

In short, therefore, the Catholic Conference at Leeds Trinity University is not cancelled because of train strikes. It is going ahead in the 'hope' that it will transform more of us in our thinking and reflections about the interplay between leadership, faith and spirituality when considered through the lens that our Catholic faith can provide.

**All are welcome to join us online, FREE OF CHARGE, for the conference, which will begin at 10am on Saturday, 13th of May.**

The conference agenda is on our website.

### Book your place...

Please click here to book your place at the online Leeds Trinity Catholic Conference, via the Leeds Trinity University Online Store





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From the Universe Catholic Weekly

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## In brief

**Punish abusers – but our faith says we must care, too**

Punishing and condemning those guilty of abuse is an act of charity, Pope Francis said. “The abuser is an enemy. Each of us feels this because we empathise with the suffering of the abused,” he said during a private meeting with Jesuits. Those guilty of abuse “deserve punishment, but they also deserve pastoral care.”

“The abuser is always to be condemned, indeed, but as a brother. Condemning him is to be understood as an act of charity,” the pope said.

The Second Vatican Council has changed the relationship between the Church and the modern world, the added, and its findings “were still being applied.”

It will probably take many more decades for its teachings “to be assimilated fully,” he said. The problem “the resistance (to its decrees) is terrible. There is an unbelievable (support for) restorationism, what I call ‘*indietrismo*’ or the desire to go back in time.”

**Tale of two Popes in the Vatican**

Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II, patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, joined the pope at this week’s audience, as part of celebrations to commemorate the joint declaration signed by St. Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in 1973 outlining the beliefs shared by their Churches.

During the audience, the two publicly exchanged greetings and took turns addressing the crowd. “Despite the differences in our roots and affiliations, we are united by the love of Christ who dwells within us and the host of our apostle fathers and saints who guide us,” Pope Tawadros said, speaking in Arabic. “Let us walk together in life bearing in mind the promise (God) has made to us – eternal life – accompanying and supporting each other with prayers according to this promise.”

Pope Francis thanked Pope Tawadros for his visit to Rome and commitment to the “growing friendship” between their Churches.

Pope Tawadros with the Holy Father in St Peter’s Square



# Commission asked to move quicker in safeguarding work

## ‘Now is the time to repair the damage done to previous generations and to those who suffer’

**Carol Glatz**

Safeguarding minors and vulnerable persons must be a priority for everyone in the Church, Pope Francis said.

“The principles of respect for the dignity of all, for right conduct and a sound way of life must become a universal rule, independent of people’s culture or economic and social condition,” he said during an audience with staff and members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors at the Vatican.

“All the Church’s ministers must respect this rule in the way they serve the faithful and they, in turn, must be treated with respect and dignity by those who lead the community,” he said. “Indeed, a culture of safeguarding will only take root if there is a pastoral conversion in this regard among the Church’s leaders.”

The commission – led by Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley of Boston, commission president, and Oblate Father Andrew Small, commission secretary – was holding its plenary assembly at the commission’s new offices in Rome.

The meeting came several weeks after Jesuit Father Hans Zollner, a longtime member of the commission, resigned, citing among the reasons for his departure: “structural and practical issues with the commission and a lack of transparency, compliance

and responsibility.”

Father Zollner criticised Pope Francis for putting the commission within the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, adding that he still did not know how the two bodies were meant to work together.

But in his speech to the commission, the pope said that he “would like to provide you with some suggestions” over its future workload.

“The failure to act properly to halt this evil (of sexual abuse) and to assist its victims has sullied our witness to God’s love,” he said.

These sins of omission “are very real, and they hurt the community as much as others, if not more so.”

But “we have not remained silent or inactive” in response to the failures, citing how in encyclical *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the light of the world), on the responsibilities and accountability of leaders, “safeguarding is now permanently in place as a definitive part of Church procedures.

The document also sets standards for the pastoral support of victims and it “calls, in particular, for setting aside places for receiving accusations and caring for those who report that they have been harmed,” the pope said.

“To be sure, improvements can be made, and commission members should use their skills to help repair a terrible scourge in the Church, because “the importance of safeguarding minors and vulnerable persons must be the rule for everyone.”

He said he was encouraged by plans to help with training programmes and assistance to victims in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



Pope Francis holds a padel racket, painted in the Vatican colours and featuring his coat of arms, during an audience at the Vatican with adults and children attending events associated with the International Symposium for Tennis and Padel. The pope urged players and coaches to remember that tennis and padel are games: “don’t be robbed of the enjoyment of playing sports for passion, for fun and enjoyment.”

“It is not right that the most prosperous areas of the world should have well-trained and well-funded safeguarding programmes, while in other parts of the world they suffer in silence, perhaps rejected or stigmatised,” he said.

But he added that the commission must ensure that efforts to improve guidelines for the conduct of clergy and religious must continue.

The commission must consider reparations, how to heal the victims of abuse, and how to cultivate “an approach that mirrors the respect and

kindness of God himself,” he said, quoting Maya Angelou, poet and activist, who wrote that “people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

“Now is the time to repair the damage done to previous generations and to those who continue to suffer,” the pope said, reminding them that a new time is being prepared by God, “made fruitful by the work and tears we share with those who have suffered.”

“That is why it is important that we never stop pressing ahead.”

## Vatican reveals social media to guide pilgrims in Holy Year

The Vatican has released the first details of the planned Holy Year in 2025.

A new website has been launched and an app released to help people register and to guide them along their pilgrimage in Rome.

If you register at [iubilaeum2025.va](http://iubilaeum2025.va) or on the Jubilee app, you will receive a free digital ‘pilgrim’s card’, which will be needed to participate in jubilee events, especially gaining access to the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica.

The jubilee website is available in Italian and English and registration opens in September.

The digital pilgrim’s card is a personal QR code needed to access jubilee events and better facilitate the pilgrimage to the Holy Door, said Mgr Graham Bell, undersecretary of the Dicastery for Evangelization and one of the co-ordinators. There also will be an option to purchase a ‘service card’ for a nominal fee to receive special discounts for transportation, lodg-

ing, food and museums during the pilgrimage.

The jubilee website and app will give news and information on the Holy Door of St. Peter’s and the other basilicas as well as offer the possibility of organising one’s own pilgrimage within the city, Mgr Bell said.

People can choose from three proposed pilgrimages: the traditional pilgrimage of St. Philip Neri with the seven churches; the pilgrimage on the churches dedicated to the women doctors of the Church and patrons of Europe; and the *Iter Europaeum*, that is, the 28 churches in 27 different European countries, plus the church that represents the European Union.

“Tools are being prepared to better introduce pilgrims into these paths and to promote knowledge of the works of art in the various churches,” he said. It marks “an important effort carried out in agreement with the (Italian) Ministry of Tourism, which

will encourage the discovery of many places often unknown to tourists themselves.”

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, prefect of the section, added that “Rome has always been a cultural attraction and our aim is that the pilgrim may also become a tourist, just as the tourist may be fascinated by the pilgrim experience.”

Pope Francis has asked Catholics worldwide to prepare for the next jubilee year by spending 2023 studying the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially its four constitutions, which focused on: the liturgy; the church as the people of God; Scripture; and the role of the church in the modern world.

Among the events planned for the Holy Year are an exhibition of works by El Greco which have never previously left Spain, at the church of Sant’Agnese in Agone facing onto Piazza Navona.

## Respect is key to interfaith relationships

Interreligious dialogue requires sincerity and respect to be fruitful, Pope Francis told Christian and Muslim leaders. It also requires “the awareness of both convergences and divergences between different faiths,” he said, but with emphasis on “what unites us on a religious and spiritual level as well as on an ethical-moral level.”

He made his comments during a meeting with Catholic and Muslim leaders gathered in Rome for the sixth colloquium between the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, which is based in Amman, Jordan.

Jordan’s Prince El Hassan bin Talal founded the institute in 1994 to promote “common human and ethical values that contribute to strengthening co-operation and interfaith relations.”

Pope Francis praised the “enlightened leadership” of the prince and the institute’s work on “the preservation and enhancement of the Arab Christian heritage.”



# Ready to serve you, Holy Father



Pope Francis asked 23 new members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard to draw close to the sacraments, read Scripture and meditate on spiritual texts, including during calm shifts on guard. “Your mission here in the Vatican is a path the Lord has opened for you to live your baptism and bear joyful witness of faith in Christ,” the pope told them.

“In the many faces that approach you each day, be they members of the Roman Curia or pilgrims and tourists, may you see just as many invitations to recognise and share God’s love with each person.”

The pope met with the recruits and their families before the traditional swearing-in ceremony in a

Vatican courtyard. The ceremony is held on 6th May each year to commemorate the 147 Swiss soldiers who died protecting Pope Clement VII during the Sack of Rome on that date in 1527.

Pope Francis said that the guard, now composed of 125 Swiss men, should be “an environment of human and Christian formation for all.”

After the late afternoon swearing-in ceremony, which the pope did not attend, the new cohort of guards were marched in formation before their families, members of the Roman Curia and Swiss dignitaries in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace.



## Pope reveals pain of Argentina’s ‘dirty war’

**Cindy Wooden**

Pope Francis has tackled one of the most challenging times in his life when he was asked to explain his conduct during Argentina’s so-called ‘Dirty War’ in the 1970s and 80s.

The question came from the confreres of a Hungarian Jesuit kidnapped with another priest and imprisoned during Argentina’s murderous military dictatorship, a period during which Pope Francis said he “did what I felt I had to do to defend them. It was a very painful affair.”

As is customary during his papal visits overseas, Pope Francis met with local Jesuits during his three-day trip to Budapest, Hungary, but the transcript of their conversation has only just been released.

One of the Jesuits at the meeting asked the pope of his recollections of Father Ferenc Jálcs, the kidnapped Hungarian, adding that “serious accusations have been made against you” regarding the Holy Father’s conduct during the period.

Fr Jálcs and another Jesuit, Fr Orlando Yorio, were kidnapped by Argentina’s military junta in 1976. The pope, then-Jesuit Father Jorge Mario

Bergoglio, was the Jesuit provincial of Argentina from 1973 to 1979, the height of the clandestine war that saw as many as 30,000 Argentines kidnapped, tortured, murdered or disappeared, never to be seen again.

Allegations periodically have surfaced that then-Father Bergoglio either failed to protect the Fathers or even that he facilitated their kidnapping.

Responding to the question, Pope Francis told the Jesuits that Fr Jálcs had been his spiritual director during his theology studies.

“In the neighbourhood where he worked there was a guerrilla cell. But the two Jesuits had nothing to do with them: they were pastors, not politicians,” the pope said. “They were innocent when taken prisoner. The military found nothing to charge them with, but they spent nine months in prison, suffering threats and torture.”

They were released, “but these things leave deep wounds,” the pope said, and because the situation in the country was “confusing and uncertain,” he advised Fr Jálcs to go to the United States, where his mother was.

“Then the legend developed that I had handed them over to be impris-

oned,” the pope said. “You should know that a month ago the Argentine bishops’ conference published two volumes, of three planned, with all the documents related to what happened between the Church and the military. You will find everything there.”

Later, as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, the pope was formally questioned about the kidnapping.

Pope Francis told the Hungarian Jesuits that he was questioned “about the way I behaved” during the dictatorship for “four hours and 10 minutes.”

“In the end, my innocence was established,” he said.

The pope said he had met several times with Fr Jálcs in the years since his release, including in Rome.

“But when he came the last time to see me in the Vatican, I could see that he was suffering because he didn’t know how to talk to me. There was a distance,” the pope said. “The wounds of those past years remained both in me and in him, because we both experienced that persecution.”

Fr Jálcs died in Budapest in 2021 at the age of 94. Father Yorio died in 2000 in Uruguay.

## Christ is the glue that binds families together

Pope Francis has told a diocesan group visiting the Vatican that the family “remains a key value” even though it is “a reality that has changed so much and continues to change.”

“But do you know when the real ‘revolution’ of the family happened? It was Jesus,” he told the pilgrims from the Diocese of Asti during an audience at the Vatican. The Italian diocese is where his father’s family came from.

Pope Francis said he addressed the pilgrims as “brothers and sisters” not because it is a traditional phrase the popes use, but because “it is a reality, a new reality generated by Jesus.”

“The strongest, most important bond for us as Christians is no longer one of blood, but it is the love of Christ,” the pope said. “His love transforms the family, frees it from the dynamics of selfishness, which stem from the human condition and from sin, liberates it and enriches it with a new bond, even stronger but free, not dominated by the interests and conventions of kinship, but animated by gratitude, thankfulness, mutual service.”

Everyone should thank God for the gift of life and for their parents who gave it to them, he said.

But, he said, Christians also give

thanks “because Jesus Christ has called us to be part of his family, in which what matters is doing the will of the Father who is in Heaven.”

Faith can give new meaning and value to blood relationships, he said, but being part of Jesus’ family also should impact relationships with other people in the Church and in the community by increasing “gratuitousness, respect, acceptance and other human values.”

That is one reason, he said, that he chose the phrase *Fratelli tutti* – which means ‘brothers and sisters all’ – as the title for his 2020 encyclical on human fraternity and friendship.

The pope also said he was pleased the diocese of Asti had chosen *Fratelli Tutti* as the name of its new outpatient medical clinic for the poor.

“*Fratelli tutti* means that there, in that environment, a family will be formed by the people who are cared for and by the doctors, nurses and all the volunteers,” he said.

In cities and towns and parishes, the concept of ‘fraternity’ should not be just “an ideal for dreamers,” Pope Francis said, because “it has a foundation, Jesus, who made us all brothers and sisters, and it has a way, the Gospel, to walk in love, in service.”



## In brief

**Brit pleads guilty to Twitter hack**

A British man has pleaded guilty in New York to a role in one of the biggest hacks in social media history. The hacking of Twitter in July 2020 affected over 130 accounts including those of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Joseph James O'Connor, 23, known as PlugwalkJoe, pleaded guilty to hacking charges carrying a total maximum sentence of over 70 years in prison.

O'Connor was also involved in hacking two influencer's TikTok accounts, through a "complex sim card swap", said Sky News.

**Canada expels Beijing diplomat**

Canada has expelled a Chinese diplomat following claims that Beijing tried to intimidate a Canadian politician and interfere in the country's elections.

Canada's Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly declared Toronto-based diplomat Zhao Wei "persona non grata". The Canadian Security Intelligence Service found an accredited Chinese diplomat in the country had targeted opposition lawmaker Michael Chong, and his relatives in China, after he supported a motion to condemn China's treatment of its Uyghur Muslim minority group.

**Deaths as boat capsizes in India**

At least 22 people have died after a packed tourist boat capsized in India's southern state of Kerala. Speaking to Reuters, Abdul Nazar, junior superintendent of police of Malappuram district, said that overcrowding caused the double-decker boat to capsize.

Some eyewitnesses have claimed that the boat was carrying about 50 people, or double its capacity, when it overturned on Sunday night.

Most of the passengers did not have life jackets, said the *Indian Express*.

**AI 'more urgent than climate change'**

Artificial intelligence could pose a "more urgent" threat to humanity than climate change, according to a former Google computer scientist.

Known as the "Godfather of AI", Geoffrey Hinton resigned from Google so he could "speak freely" about the risks posed by increasingly intelligent machines. The professor said: "I wouldn't like to devalue climate change. I wouldn't like to say, 'you shouldn't worry about climate change'. That's a huge risk too. But I think this might end up being more urgent."

# Flooding leaves 400 dead as Congo pleads for foreign aid

**Fredrick Nzwili**

The death toll from flooding and landslides in Congo has surpassed 400, with as many as 100,000 people forced out of their homes by rising water.

Catholic bishops in the country expressed their deep sorrow over the worsening picture, and called for international support.

Archbishop Marcel Utambi Tapa of Kisangani, president of Congo's bishops' conference, said it was a sad moment for the country as rescue workers continued to pull out bodies trapped in mud in the villages of Bushushu and Nyamukubi in Kalehe territory in South Kivu province.

The slow-moving tragedy began a week ago following days of heavy downpour in the region near the shores of Lake Kivu, triggering landslides and causing rivers to burst their banks.

The resulting sludge covered homes, as it swept away people and farmlands. However, the region is isolated and the full picture of the tragedy has only begun to emerge in the past few days.

"I urge the people to pray for those who have lost their lives. I call for help for the many affected by the floods," Archbishop Tapa told OSV News. "Many people have lost their homes and have been displaced. They have no food, shelter and other basic needs. They need help."

Caritas – the humanitarian arm of the Catholic Church – is among the organisations that are responding to the disaster.

According to Bishop Emile Mushosho Matabaro of Doruma-Dungu, the local people are doing as much as they can: "There is some support from Kinshasa (the capital city). However, it is not enough," Bishop Matabaro said.

The situation is desperate, as families reported hundreds of missing persons. On 8th May, the global Christian humanitarian organisation World Vision said that over 4,000 people were missing and more than 100,000 had been displaced.

One devastated mother in Nya-



The village of Nyamukubi was one of the worst affected after flooding and landslides ripped through Congo

mukubi said her husband had survived and was in the hospital but all her children were gone. "It's like the end of the world," 27-year-old Gentille Ndagijimana, who also lost her parents and two sisters, told the AFP news agency.

"The Nyamukubi and Chishova rivers overflowed their banks and washed away everything in their path. Homes, a market, two schools, a health center, a multipurpose hall and a warehouse were wiped out in one of the communities at the foot of the green hills of Kalehe," Jean-Baptiste Mirindi, World Vision's senior communications officer in Congo, said.

Humanitarian agencies are facing difficulties reaching the affected people, since the floods had turned roads into impassable currents.

"We call on the international community to do everything they can to help us access communities where lives have been devastated by these floods.

We must do everything we can to avoid further loss of life," said Mirindi.

President Felix Tshisekedi declared a day of mourning for Monday, and sent a team of ministers to co-ordinate humanitarian efforts and the rescue operations.

Images posted on social media showed rescuers and family members digging in the mudslides using their bare hands in searching for bodies. The teams were wrapping dead bodies in blankets because of a shortage of body bags.

Environmental experts say this kind of weather disasters are happening more frequently and with greater intensity due to climate change.

"This is a new illustration of the acceleration of climate change and its disastrous impact on countries that have not contributed in any way to a warming planet," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said while on a visit to Burundi while expressing

his solidarity and condolences.

The situation is just as critical across the opposite side of Lake Kivu, where floods killed at least 130 people in neighbouring Rwanda. There the floods struck the night of 2nd-3rd May in the northern and western provinces, destroying over 5,000 houses and displacing thousands to church compounds and schools.

Caritas operating in the Diocese of Nyundo in the west of Rwanda said the priorities include the distribution of food items, emergency relief non-food items, hygiene materials and shelter materials to support affected populations.

According to Fr Jean Paul Rutakisha, director of regional Caritas, the organization has distributed food and non-food items to 280 households and sent mobile money transfers to another 209 with support from Trocaire, the humanitarian agency of the Irish Catholics.

## Five killed as gunman attacks Tunisian synagogue

The number of people killed in an attack on a synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba during an annual Jewish pilgrimage has risen to five, a news agency has said.

The victims included two Jewish pilgrims and three Tunisian police guards.

One police guard died from his injuries following the attack on Tuesday.

Four other injured members of security forces were hospitalised in Djerba, including one who was in a critical condition.

The Tunisian foreign ministry said the civilians killed were a 42-year-old French national and a 30-year-old

Tunisian. Israeli authorities and the family identified them as cousins Aviel Haddad, who held dual Tunisian and Israeli citizenship, and Ben Haddad, who was French.

Four civilians were also injured, the Tunisian interior ministry said.

The attacker was killed by security guards.

In a statement, the French foreign ministry expressed its "deep sadness" at the attack.

France paid tribute to the "rapid intervention of the Tunisian security forces and stands by Tunisia to continue the fight against antisemitism and all forms of fanaticism", the statement said.

Israel's diaspora affairs minister Amichai Chikli considered "the terrible attack in Djerba gravely" and noted that "unfortunately the incident was preceded by a tense period of shouts and harassment of the Jewish community at the site", according to his office.

The European Jewish Congress expressed its "shock and outrage".

"Terror attacks continue to target Jews around the world even when they are gathered in prayer, as we know from countless experiences over the years including at this very synagogue," EJC president Ariel Muzicant said in a statement.

The motive for the attack was under

investigation.

Djerba, a picturesque island off the southern coast of Tunisia, is home to the North African country's main Jewish community. An annual pilgrimage at the 2,500-year-old Ghriba temple, one of Africa's oldest synagogues, attracts thousands of visitors from around the world.

The assailant was identified as a guard affiliated with the National Guard naval centre in the port town of Aghir on Djerba. He first killed a colleague with his service weapon before seizing ammunition and heading towards the Ghriba synagogue where he opened fire on security units stationed at the temple.



## Nicaragua shuts down Red Cross

Nicaragua has passed a law to close the country's Red Cross, in a crackdown that has seen the government shut down religious orders, charities and civic groups.

The legislature voted to close the Nicaraguan Red Cross, accusing it of "attacks on peace and stability" during anti-government demonstrations in 2018. The local Red Cross says it just helped treat injured protesters during the demonstrations.

The legislature, which is dominated by President Daniel Ortega's Sandinista party, ordered the country's Health Department to create "a new Nicaragua Red Cross".

The current Red Cross, founded in 1958, is largely funded by domestic donations. The new law confiscates Red Cross properties and equipment in Nicaragua and turns them over to the government.

Rights groups estimate that during the government's crackdown on the 2018 protests, 355 people were killed and as many as 2,000 were injured.

The crackdown since then has jailed or exiled almost all the country's organised opposition and has outlawed or closed down more than 3,000 civic groups and non-governmental organisations.

Many of those groups provided healthcare or social services in an impoverished country where governmental services cannot cover the needs of the people.

Mr Ortega's government has shut civic groups ranging from an equestrian centre to the 94-year-old Nicaraguan Academy of Letters.

Mr Ortega has accused the civic groups and opposition activists of working with foreign interests in an attempt to topple his government.

In April, the Vatican closed its embassy in Nicaragua after the country's government proposed suspending diplomatic relations.

Two congregations of nuns, including from the Missionaries of Charity order founded by Mother Teresa, were expelled from Nicaragua last year, while prominent critic Bishop Rolando Alvarez was sentenced to 26 years in prison last month after he refused to board an airplane that flew 222 dissidents and priests to exile in the United States. He also was stripped of his Nicaraguan citizenship.

The pope called Nicaragua a "gross dictatorship" and compared the regime to the Nazis. He demanded the bishop's release, but the Nicaraguan Government responded by saying it would crackdown further on Church activities, and immediately arrested several priests.



**Bishop Rolando Alvarez**

# US facing migrant chaos as controversial law expires

The US is heading for a major domestic row over its immigration policy as the Biden administration ends the "Title 42" public health mandate, which was introduced to stop the spread of Covid-19 at the start of the pandemic and cited as a reason to bar migrants from claiming asylum.

The use of public health legislation to curb migrants has produced a huge amount of criticism, but with its expiration on 11th May officials fear as many as 10,000 people a day may attempt to enter the US illegally, and then claim asylum.

Since its 2020 implementation, Title 42 has been invoked more than 2.7 million times to expel migrants, including those seeking asylum.

A huge number of migrants from South and Central America are currently in Mexico, mainly from Honduras, Guatemala and Colombia, and President Biden admitted that things at the border "may be quote sticky for a bit", but the situation would calm down quickly.

Biden has replaced Title 42 with new rules that presume individuals to be ineligible for asylum in most cases if they cross the border illegally or fail to first apply for safe harbour in another nation. It is similar to a Trump-era policy dubbed the 'transit ban.'

Migrants must either claim asylum at one of the US's new processing centres in Mexico or Colombia, or use a mobile app to apply, despite claims few would be able to access it.

The Biden administration has also said it will expedite expulsion of those whose asylum claims fail, in some cases within days and without chance to appeal.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters that



**U.S. Border Patrol agents usher families who have entered the USA near San Diego**

"our overall approach is to build lawful pathways for people to come to the United States and to impose tougher consequences on those who choose not to use those pathways."

"We are a nation of immigrants," Mayorkas added. "We are also a nation of laws. Our immigration laws today are outdated. The solutions we are implementing are the best available within our current legal authority, but they are short-term solutions to a decade's old problem."

Kevin Appleby, of the Center for Migration Studies, said that Title 42

"has been used by two administrations to deny asylum protection to an untold number of asylum seekers who deserved U.S. protection."

"Good riddance to a bad law." Appleby, who used to advise the US Bishops' Conference on migration issues, said Biden had now placed "new restrictions on immigrants' rights. The new transit ban could limit, if not effectively eliminate, the right to asylum in this country."

He added: "These new barriers to asylum betray our values as a nation, which was built upon the protection

of human rights." New channels for migrants to claim asylum were "laudable" but unlikely to work for many people, "and they are not a substitute for a fair and workable asylum system."

In his view, America's "reputation as a safe haven for the world's persecuted is at risk... nations will no longer follow our example as a protector of human rights."

"Over the long-term, these policies will not work, as they do not address the underlying global forces driving migration or repair a broken US immigration system. Congress must take responsibility and work to pass immigration reform. It can no longer wait for the next election."

The US bishops have appealed for a more tolerant view to be taken of those fleeing desperate hardship and gangland violence to the south, saying that the USA is at risk of building walls "where bridges should be instead."

Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas said the bishops "strongly support increased refugee resettlement from Latin America and the Caribbean as a reliable pathway to lasting safety for those who have been forcibly displaced."

However, the bishops are greatly concerned that "families, including those with young children, and others will be subjected to rushed proceedings without meaningful due process," saying plans for "expedited removal" coupled with "severe restrictions on asylum eligibility and access" is a major concern.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said new migrant processing centers in Latin America will provide "qualified individuals with access to resettlement in the United States."

## Trump denounces court and praises rioters who attacked Capitol Hill

Donald Trump has claimed a court ruling of sexual assault against him was "fake" and praised supporters who attacked Capitol Hill on 6th January just before he stood down as president, as he took part in a debate on CNN.

CNN moderator Kaitlan Collins asked if he regretted his actions on January 6 2021, with the former president praising the size of the crowd he spoke to that day before some attacked the Capitol. He also repeated his claim the election he lost was "rigged."

The rioters "were proud. They were there with love in their heart. That was unbelievable and it was a beautiful day," he said.

Asked the first question about why he should be elected again, Mr Trump started by repeating his claims about the 2020 presidential election and un-

founded allegations of election fraud.

Striking a more muted tone on stage than before his cheering supporters, the former president called it a "rigged election" and a "shame" before Ms Collins cut him off, correcting his statements and asking him to publicly acknowledge his loss to Mr Biden.

In response, he immediately returned to his claims.

As Ms Collins continued to try to fact check Mr Trump, he interrupted again, calling for honest elections and pivoting to other subjects like immigration.

His appearance came a day after a New York jury found him liable in a civil case for sexually abusing Elizabeth Jean Carroll nearly 30 years ago and defaming her when she spoke about it publicly.

Asked about the verdict, he said his poll numbers went up and repeated

his statements that he did not know Ms Carroll, although at least one photograph has surfaced of them together.

"I don't know her. I never met her. I had no idea who she is," he said.

He dismissed a question about Ms Collins about whether it would impact his standing with female voters, launching into a recounting of Ms Carroll's claims in a mocking voice, drawing laughs and claps from the live audience.

He called it "a fake story" and referred to Ms Carroll as "a wack job".

Responding to a question about the US Supreme Court overturning abortion rights last year, he took credit for appointing three of the justices who joined in the majority ruling.

"It was such a great victory and people are starting to understand it now," he said.

## Journalist killed in Ukraine

A 32-year-old journalist working for the French international news agency Agence France-Presse has been killed during a rocket attack near the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut.

Video co-ordinator Arman Soldin was with a team of its journalists travelling with Ukrainian soldiers when the group came under fire with Grad rockets.

The rest of the AFP team was uninjured.

## Germany to make gender change easier

The German government has presented a proposal to make it easier for people to change their name and gender legally.

Under the planned 'self-determination law', adults would be able to change their first name and legal gender at register offices without assessments from medical professionals.



## VATICAN LETTER

JUSTIN MCLELLAN

# Bernini's Christ masterpiece inspires airport visitors to look to the Heavens

If you are fortunate enough to visit Rome in the next few weeks on your holidays, and use the city's Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport, keep your eyes peeled for a Baroque masterpiece on loan from the Vatican.

That's right: alongside the shops, bars, departure listings and boarding gates, the 35,000 passengers who walk through Terminal 1 at Rome's largest airport each day can also see a marble masterpiece of Christ on their way to catch a flight.

Known as the 'Salvator Mundi' – or 'Saviour of the World', the sculpture depicts Christ raising his hand in blessing. It was sculpted by Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini in 1679 and was the artist's final work, and is considered his spiritual testimony.

And until 12th July it stands over a sea of curious recent arrivals to the Eternal City and bored departees lazily awaiting flights. The temporary display was launched by Rome's Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport in partnership with the Italian Ministry of Culture.

"We are the city of Rome, which contains Vatican City in our territory, so of course, Catholicism is

part of our culture," said Veronica Pamio, vice president of external relations at the airport, on the selection of the sculpture.

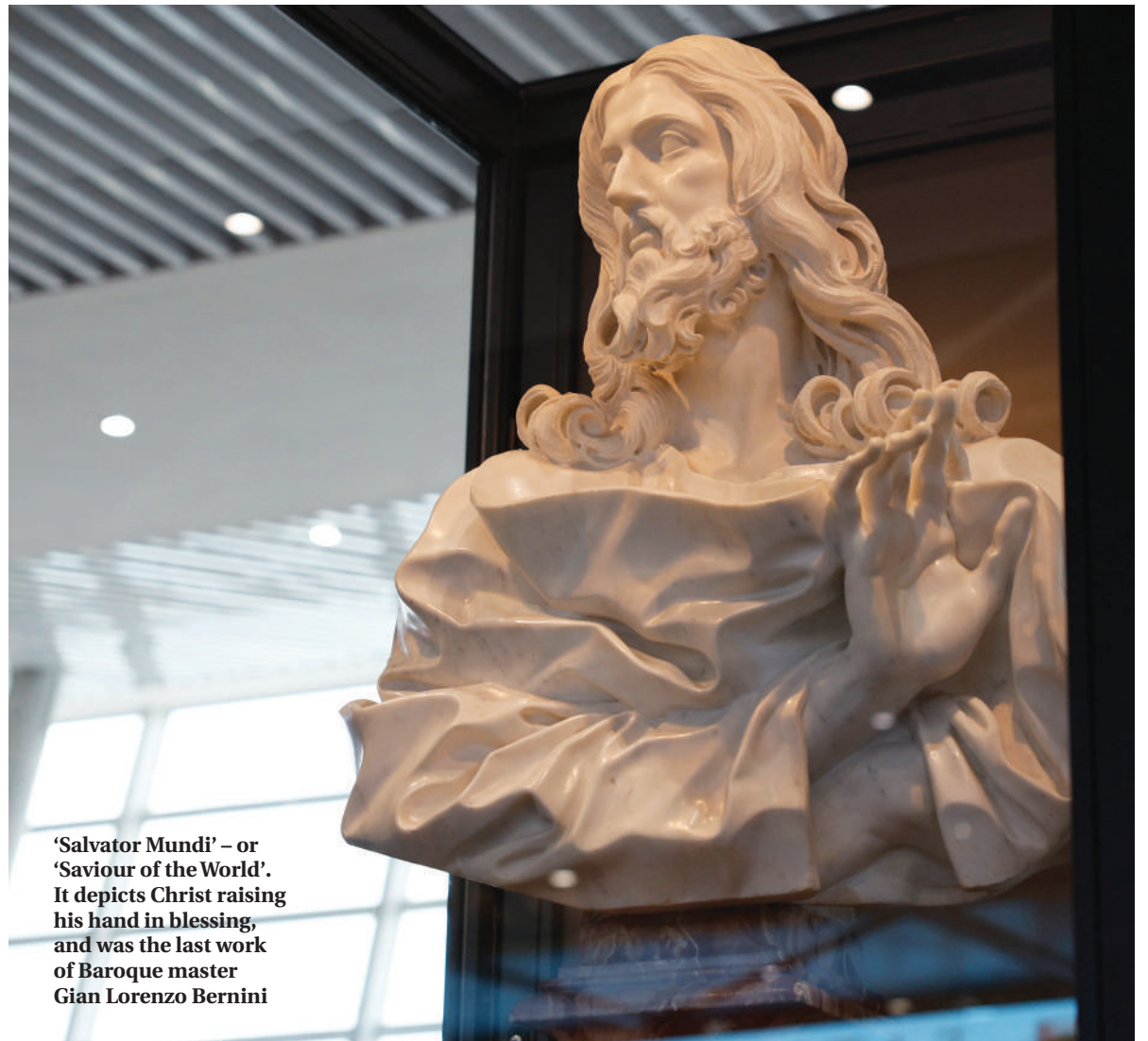
"As a point of entry into the country we want to be a window into the beauty of Italy. The 'Salvator Mundi' has a deep religious value but also value for anyone who was born and raised in Italy, because it represents Italian culture."

For centuries, Bernini has wowed pilgrims who come to Rome. He designed the massive bronze baldachin that stands over the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica and the colonnade that encompasses St. Peter's Square.

Yet unlike his other works, the imposing statue of Christ, scaled 1.5 times larger than a life-sized representation, was not intended for public display.

Bernini, who completed the work at the age of 80, kept it in his home until his death just months later. He left it to Queen Cristina of Sweden, a Catholic convert who was eventually buried in the grotto of St. Peter's Basilica. Upon her death, she gave the sculpture to Pope Innocent XI before it plunged into obscurity.

While several copies thought to be



**'Salvator Mundi' – or 'Saviour of the World'. It depicts Christ raising his hand in blessing, and was the last work of Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini**

originals were found around the world over the centuries, it wasn't until 2001 that what is now widely agreed to be the original sculpture was rediscovered in a Roman church by art historian Francesco Petrucci.

"It was a personal gift given to the pope, it wasn't a gift to the church, so often these historical objects are found in the collections of the popes' families," he said.

By observing the style of the sculpture's hands and face, Petrucci said he was able to identify the

sculpture as a Bernini original and later matched it to the artist's written description of the piece.

Petrucci added that the work is among Bernini's greatest, since it represents the pinnacle of the artist's spirituality, which grew stronger as he approached death.

"In the last stage of his life, Bernini dedicated his thoughts and creativity to spiritual subjects, to Christ and the message of the Gospel," he said. "'Salvator Mundi' was his last work, so the idea of

death and resurrection was deeply tied to this figure of the savior of the world, who saves humanity through his extreme sacrifice."

Petrucci noted that immediately prior to completing *Salvator Mundi*, Bernini drew a sketch of the Crucifixion – titled 'Sanguis Christi' – in which the crucified Christ is carried toward Heaven by angels while his open wounds create a sea of blood below him. "The theme of salvation was central in his final days," he explained.

Artists, Petrucci said, have "always considered art as the highest expression of human sensibility and the pursuit of God, and for Bernini, who was a great artist like Michelangelo, his most important works are those dedicated to Christianity that have a deep spirituality: these are his masterpieces."

In Rome, Pamio said, those masterpieces are often kept in churches and museums where they can be hard to find. She explained that the *Salvator Mundi* display is part of the airport's larger strategy to become a place where people can engage with Italy's vast cultural offerings.

"We want to be more than a shopping mall or a pipeline of people going from one place to another," she said. "If even only a few of the people who pass by are curious and feel enriched by the artwork, then we've done a great service to our passengers and the people of our country."



**Bernini's masterpiece looks out over the departure lounge at Terminal 1, drawing some interest from passengers waiting to catch their flights... and bored indifference from others**



## VATICAN LETTER

CAROL GLATZ



# Egyptian statues offer the world a 'passport to the past'

With the body of a woman and the head of a lioness, the ancient goddess Sekhmet was the protector of pharaohs, the patroness of physicians and the commander of diseases and plagues: able to cast them or cure them at will.

Countless carvings of her image were created in ancient Egypt as an idol for worship to try to appease her wrath, receive strength and ensure her protection on earth and in the afterlife.

That is what King Amenhotep III – a 14th-century B.C. pharaoh and Tutankhamun's grandfather – had in mind when he constructed the largest and most elaborate funerary complex ever built at the time in the region.

Scholars estimate at least 700 statues of Sekhmet sat or stood guard throughout his funerary temple, called 'The House of Millions of Years,' offering the deceased pharaoh power and protection 'like an army' for millions of years in the afterlife, said Alessia Amenta, Egyptologist and curator of the Vatican Museums' Department for the Antiquities of Egypt and the Near East.

She and others explained the latest developments in the 'Sekhmet Project,' which she spearheaded in 2017, during a presentation at the museums on 4th May.

The Vatican's Gregorian Egyptian Museum has 11 statues featuring Sekhmet, which were recently restored with funding from the Canadian chapter of the museums' Patrons of the Arts programme. The statues come from the king's funerary temple and were acquired by the museums in the early 19th century from the Cavazzi-Guidi collections.

The cleaning, preservation and cataloging of the huge pieces of hard granodiorite stone inspired Amenta to delve deeper into studying not just these pieces, but also dozens in a collection in Turin's Egyptian Museum and dozens more on-site in Egypt.

Amenhotep III ordered the creation of hundreds of Sekhmet statues for his funerary temple, but they were also dispersed to other temples by his successors. Amenta said about 280 statues of the goddess have been found at Amenhotep's funerary temple, another 288 at the Mut temple and 210 scattered around collections worldwide.

A massive earthquake levelled Amenhotep's funerary complex just 150 years after it was built, so statues and broken stone were repurposed



The Vatican's Gregorian Egyptian Museum

by successors, a flooding Nile covered most of the remains and 'Egyptomania' among Europeans in the 19th century pilfered what was accessible.

Amenta said the Sekhmet project aims to build a database cataloging precise details and measurements of as many as possible of the 1,000 known statues in the world and then use AI-processing to reveal patterns and details about the pieces and create 3D-model images. This will provide a visible reconstruction of how the pieces may have been arranged within the temple, help decipher how the pieces were carved, and discover how construction and transport may have been organised.

It is hoped the details can assist a massive conservation project of the Amenhotep III Temple led by Hourig Sourouzian, who hopes to reconstruct the largest museum of statuary 'in situ' in Egypt.

According to the Sekhmet project's details, assisting with the study and understanding of the funerary complex "will finally allow the philological relocation of the goddess' statues in their original context, contributing to the restitution of the grandiose funerary temple of Amenhotep III as an open-air museum."

"Our goal is to collaborate with



the excavation to reposition all these statues in their original arrangement within the temple," Amenta told Vatican News.

Archaeologists today should "let the statues talk," she said added.

Minute details and big patterns can all come together to help people today learn about past technologies, beliefs, economies and science, she said. It is like "a passport" into the past.

**A statue depicting the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, who has the body of a woman and the head of a lioness, is seen at the Vatican's Gregorian Egyptian Museum**



# Brave sister never flinched under fire as she took aid to Ukraine

The Ukraine-Russia conflict does not dominate the media as it did when the fighting started, but the needs of the people caught up in the war zones are more acute than ever. LAURA IERACI caught up with a brave taxi firm that is still running supplies into the frontline – aided by a group of resourceful religious sisters who are willing to risk their own lives for others

Ukrainians Ivan Smyglia and Denys Kurpikov say they had “no other option” but to assist in delivering food and much-needed supplies to some of the hardest-to-reach and most dangerous places in a country at war.

“Together with Sister Lucia, we often went into a ‘grey zone.’ These are the villages on the front line, between our army and the army of the Russian Federation – territories that Ukraine does not control,” said Kuprikov in an interview in Zaporizhzhia in southeast Ukraine.

Kuprikov was referring to Sister Lucia Murashko, a member of the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Sister Murashko lives in a monastery in Zaporizhzhia, with other Basilian sisters who serve at the local Ukrainian Catholic parish. The sisters, too, have been providing humanitarian aid within their parish community, as well as to the civilians and Ukrainian soldiers on the front, only 30 miles away, since the war began on 24th February, 2022.

Smyglia was running a successful company, Ivan-taxi, in 10 Ukrainian cities and in Warsaw, Poland, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

“When the war started, my team and I had no other option. I had a feeling deep inside that we needed to help,” he said. “And together with friends, we took our cars and some savings that we had – called some people, some people prepared food – and we started to deliver aid to our military.”

The two men have been delivering humanitarian aid full time to Ukrainian soldiers and civilians on or close to the front line ever since. Smyglia said his unofficial humanitarian aid initiative began very simply. “I just wrote a message on my apartment building’s chat app: ‘Please bring whatever you can.’”

At first, people brought large shopping bags filled with goods. “But after a month or two, people got tired,” he said. They “started thinking about their own needs and



Sister Lucia Murashko chats with Ivan and Denys during an aid run to villages near the frontline



‘Sister Lucia took my hand and said, “Everything is OK. God is with us.” These were not words I paid much attention to before, but now, when things are difficult, I recall Sister Lucia’s words and I feel better.’

donations started to dwindle.”

“Then, just when we thought that we couldn’t do any more, somehow – I don’t know, maybe it was destiny – we met Sister Lucia,” said Kuprikov. “And we came to an agreement that she would help us.”

Last July, the sisters began providing Smyglia and Kuprikov with a variety of supplies, including food, clothing, mats, sleeping bags and electric generators. Any time

they told the sisters about the needs they encountered in the field, “the answer was: ‘Send us a list and we will take care of it,’” said Smyglia.

“They always loaded us up with so much,” he said, his voice cracking with emotion.

Kuprikov recalled once driving into the grey zone under mortar fire with Sister Murashko.

“It was difficult, frightening,” he said. “I remember we brought food

to one old man and mortar exploded close by. I had a 40-lb bag in my hands and I jumped on the spot.

“Sister Lucia took my hand and said, ‘Everything is OK. God is with us.’ These were not words I paid much attention to before,” he said. “But now, when I’m driving alone or when I’m together with Ivan and there are some difficult circumstances, I recall Sister Lucia’s words and I feel better.”

Smyglia said it was impossible for him to calculate the amount of aid they had delivered to soldiers and civilians, including in villages where local authorities have been unable to provide assistance, such as Preobrazhenka, Novodanylivka and Mala Tokmachka.

“There were old men and women, who were not able to leave the villages,” said Kuprikov. “Many people had been without water or electricity for several months by the time we arrived.”

Smyglia’s experience with the Basilian sisters and the Ukrainian Catholic Church this past year also started a “new page” in his life.

“I had really no clue about the Church, the faith, and my opinion about all of that,” he said. “I didn’t understand it. There was no one to teach me when I was little.”

After reevaluating his life and faith in light of the war, he decided to propose to his wife of 21 years that they marry in the church.

“Our marriage will be stronger I think,” he said. “I love my wife and my children very much – they are my soul and my heart – I cannot imagine my life without them, but we should be wed in the eyes of God.”

**Laura Ieraci is assistant editor of ONE magazine, the quarterly magazine of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Contributing to this story was Konstantin Chernichkin in Zaporizhzhia, who conducted the interviews.**



**JOURNEY IN FAITH**

**CHRIS MCDONNELL**



# The changing seasons

Beyond the fence are the fields of a farm where the ticking clock of the passing seasons is played out by the sprawling oak tree that stands close by the wooden slats.

Now resplendent in foliage green of late spring, a spread hand against a blue and white sky, it stands firm and bold.

With the coming weeks it will provide shelter for summer birds and grazing flocks till autumn comes and the green canopy gives way to assorted yellows and browns.

With the onset of the autumn tree fall piles of brittle leaves gather on the ground, blown by October winds, till drenched by rain showers, they become a squelchy mass. Above them the stark grey bare branches claw the chill sky as winter hurries on.

Lipped with the frost and snow of January days, it seems improbable that vibrant life will return. But with spring days green shoots appear and the annual cycle begins again.

During the now distant days of lockdown, when sheep returned to the fields, I wrote these few lines.

*The scruffs return  
The woolly coats are back  
in the field beyond the wood*



*and wire fence, scruffy as ever.  
Bedraggled fleeces, black faces  
chewing grass, then moving on  
for no apparent reason.  
For a brief time their presence*

*will offer random movement  
on the still, green land, oblivious  
of the weather. Rain or wind  
make no difference to their  
expressionless lockdown faces.*

*Endless days repeated without  
change, wandering back and forth  
on four feet, feeding, raising heads  
then feeding again, day after day*

*much as we do now, in endless  
repetition from morning to evening.*

In a similar pattern, the liturgical cycle of the Church follows the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Nazarene as year after year we retell his story and marvel in his gift. Our month-by-month experience of seasonal rotation gives a sharp image of our story in faith and helps us on our journey.

As we struggle to make sense of daily life, with so many stresses and contradictions, let us reflect on the changing seasons and the challenge they present to us.

A popular Easter hymn written by Laura Wright, *Now the green blade rises*, concludes each verse with the line 'Love is come again like wheat that springeth green'.

Love, life gains nutrition from the earth it is ours to care for. That is the everyday task that we are confronted with in the words of our morning prayer 'Give us this day our daily bread'.

Trees reach to the sky from many land masses of our planet, they help the planet breathe, they give us shelter and provide a material resource. They keep us in tune with our cycle of life and with the living God who made us.

**A VIEW FROM THE PEWS**

**MICHAEL CAINE,**  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



# What are your favourite Gospels ?

Each Sunday we have wonderful readings during Mass, but being human, have you any favourite Gospels? If you have, what makes them special to you?

My suggestion is that you write them down and then find more. As an example, what about: (John 20:19-31)

In Year A, the Second Sunday of Easter, this Gospel is relatively small, but in it there are some great happenings instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, such as:

1. Sudden miraculous appearance to the disciples in a locked room.
2. Showing the disciples that he truly loves them.
3. Beginning the work of the Church.
4. Providing mankind with the knowledge of when an individual's sins have been forgiven.
5. Yet another proof of the existence of the Holy Spirit.
6. Proving beyond doubt that Jesus is the Son of God.
7. Illustrating the importance and

wonder of Faith.  
8. Poof that God is eternal.

**It is truly a remarkable reading.**

Now let's take in turn, each of the items mentioned above'

No.1: The disciples had locked themselves in a secret room with windows and doors barred for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus appears among them and they were filled with joy. How? Here's something that's hardly mentioned as a miracle.



It's a great one too as he'd only been killed and put in a tomb a few days earlier.

No.2: When Jesus was being whipped, abused and crucified, where were his disciples? When Jesus appeared among them, he didn't admonish them asking, "Where were you?" Rather, he said "peace be with you." Total forgiveness. This was a great and very important lesson, showing them that if he could forgive them, for what could be called their betrayal of him, they should never even think of not forgiving anyone.

No. 3: After witnessing their joy at seeing Jesus alive and well, and saying peace be with you, he said: "As the Father sent me, So am I sending you." Jesus was instructing them to begin the start of Christianity.

No.4: Immediately after saying "As the Father sent..." he went on to say: "Receive the Holy Spirit.

For those whose sins you forgive They are forgiven

For those whose sins you retain They are retained."

Here was the sacrament of Reconciliation being introduced. It meant that anyone going to this sacrament honestly, would have their sins forgiven by God. It's the only way we have of knowing for sure that our sins have been forgiven. What a great gift from God.

No. 5: In No.3 and 4 above, Jesus starts with the words "As the Father sent me..." and "receive the Holy Spirit". What more proof do we need for the existence of the Holy Trinity?

No. 6: Showing the disciples the holes in his hands and feet made by the nails during his crucifixion, and the hole in his side made by a Roman soldier's spear thrust at the same time, was undeniable proof that he'd risen from the dead. He was the Son of God. Even doubting Thomas said 'My Lord and my God'.

No. 7: Christ said to Thomas, "you believe because you can see me. Happy are those who cannot see and yet believe."

Jesus was illustrating the wonder and power of faith of the millions of people who would never be able to see what Thomas and the other disciples witnessed.

No. 8: Here was the final proof to all the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead.

If Jesus, who is part of the Holy Trinity can die and then come back alive once, he can do it again and again and again for all time. This proves beyond any doubt that God is eternal.

There are readings read out on Sundays spread over three years. Have you any favourites, like the above example which contains happenings important to you? Write them down explaining why. The more you find, the more you will appreciate the messages in the readings.

Try this one: Another reading that people enjoy is the first reading in Year A on 33rd Sunday in Ordinary time.

It's a definition of a wife!



## CREDO

FR HUGH DUFFY

# The word of Jesus: ‘I am the way, the truth and the light’

The power of personal example is the best form of witness. Jesus witnessed by example, and encouraged his followers to do the same. The early Christians took to heart the words of Jesus proclaiming himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Gospel of John 14:6). Is it any wonder that they grew from strength to strength in so short a time-span and attracted other followers from all over the known world to join them? These early Christians made the words of Jesus their own by imitating the Way he lived, by absorbing into their hearts the awesome Truth of his teaching, and by transforming their lives into new people through the new Life of his gospel.

As the Way, Jesus shows us how to live our lives by imitating him. His whole life was an unbroken testimony to the power of God’s Love for all humankind, a Love that embraced every man, woman and child: the lame, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the back-sliders, the least among us, the good and the bad. His Love was boundless like the reach of the sun which shines on the “just and the unjust” alike. This is the kind of Love that lights up our Way in this world in our dealings with one another. Be gentle and humble the Way Jesus treated others. Be patient with everyone, forgiving shortcomings, and choose kindness over anger whenever you

are put to the test. There is tremendous power in a simple touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, a well-meant compliment or any act of caring. These practical examples of love can save a life, your life and the lives of others.

As the Truth, the words of Jesus are words of Wisdom. They flowed from the purest fount of truth which He possessed as the Son of God. He taught by means of parables and conveyed the mysteries of his kingdom in language and images that even a child could grasp. People marveled at his words and wondered where he derived such wisdom. He taught them about faith, a gift not reserved for “the wise and the clever” but for those who have “the spirit of the child.” In your life, get acquainted with the words of Jesus in scripture, not by giving lip-service, but by absorbing them into your heart and living according to them.

As the Life, the message of Jesus is always one of new life, of which he is the living embodiment. The Resurrection of Jesus made it possible for us to rise again, not just on the last day, but every day of our lives. Our lives take on new meaning because of the new life of the Resurrection. We are not condemned to live without hope. We have been given the power to live as children of the Light, fashioned in



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

his image, to be bearers of new life in the world in which we live. In the course of your life, you will be buffeted by temptations, problems and obstacles that tend to rob you of Hope.

Do not cave in, but rise up to new

life by trusting in Jesus to renew you because he is the giver of Life.

Even though we are fallible and weak, we are privileged to follow Jesus “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” who will never abandon us even in our darkest hour. This wide-

-ranging teaching impacts every dimension of our lives. It is a teaching that is both practical and life-changing.

May God give us the grace to follow his Son, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

## Repent when you lose track of the Good News

**‘The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.’**  
Gospel of Mark 1 : 13

This Gospel reading urges us to ferret out the evil in and around us – the evil that is so often flashy and attractive but is ultimately an empty cheat.

The message is simple: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Jesus has tipped the course of human nature Godward by His example. To follow Him we need first to repent of our sins, to renounce the selfish pursuit of money, the glitter of fame and notoriety, the temptation to lord it over others and to control them and use them for our own advantage.

Repentance is no good if you keep doing

what you’re sorry for. You have to turn your life around if you want to accept the gospel. Repentance is of the essence if we are to free ourselves of the evil within and the evil without. The evil within leads to acts of rage, hatred, jealousy, gluttony, spite and disregard for others. The evil without tends to entrap us in compromise and in all kinds of worldly temptations.

Jesus invites all humankind to let God reign in their hearts, and to do this we need to be reconciled with God and our fellow man. Many of the problems plaguing our world are traceable to the disharmony that separates mankind from God and from one another. By getting to the root cause of disharmony in our lives and in our society, we position ourselves to receive God’s grace in all areas of our lives. But, we cannot have this harmony without first repenting of our sins, and accepting the good news of the gospel.

The difference between the true Christian and the false Christian is precisely this. The true Christian finds Christ in his or her life by first repenting of sin. The false Christian, on the other hand, finds himself or herself in Christ; that is, they do not repent of sin but only use Christ to serve themselves. They give lip service but not Christian service. They are neither hot nor cold.

When a delegation of Lakota Indians arrived in Washington in the late 19th century to negotiate with the ‘Great white father’, as they referred to the President of the day, they were appalled at the state of disharmony and poverty in the white man’s culture in spite of enormous wealth. The voracious lust for wealth and power created disharmony in the white man’s culture rather than harmony.

What Jesus asks of us in today’s scripture is to put God’s kingdom first in our lives as

a condition to avoiding such disharmony and inequality.

People often come to Church looking for Jesus but they do not find Him. Why? Because they are looking for Him for all the wrong reasons. They are looking for what they want and are not interested in what Jesus can give them. Jesus is interested in our welfare, and to avoid disappointment we need to let go of our selfish selves, and let Him into our hearts. He’ll take care of the rest if we put His kingdom and approval first in our lives.

Let us look hard at our own renewal and face up to the reality of sin and evil. We need to know our dark side so we can know where we have cheated ourselves and one another.

We need to know where we have lost track of the Good News of the Gospel.

Today we must make up our minds to really repent so we can follow Him.



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Respect each other, or you can never really be a true follower of Jesus

14th May 2023 – 6th Sunday of Easter, (A)  
1st Reading: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

## Philip's mission in Samaria shows the joy of the original Gospel faith

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralysed or lame were cured. So there was great joy in that city.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

## Responsorial: Psalm 65: 1-7, 16, 20

*R./: Let all the earth cry out to God with joy*

*Cry out with joy to God all the earth,  
O sing to the glory of his name.  
O render him glorious praise.  
Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds! (R./)*

*'Before you all the earth shall bow;  
shall sing to you, sing to your name!'*

*Come and see the works of God,  
tremendous his deeds among men. (R./)*

*He turned the sea into dry land,  
they passed through the river dry-shod.*

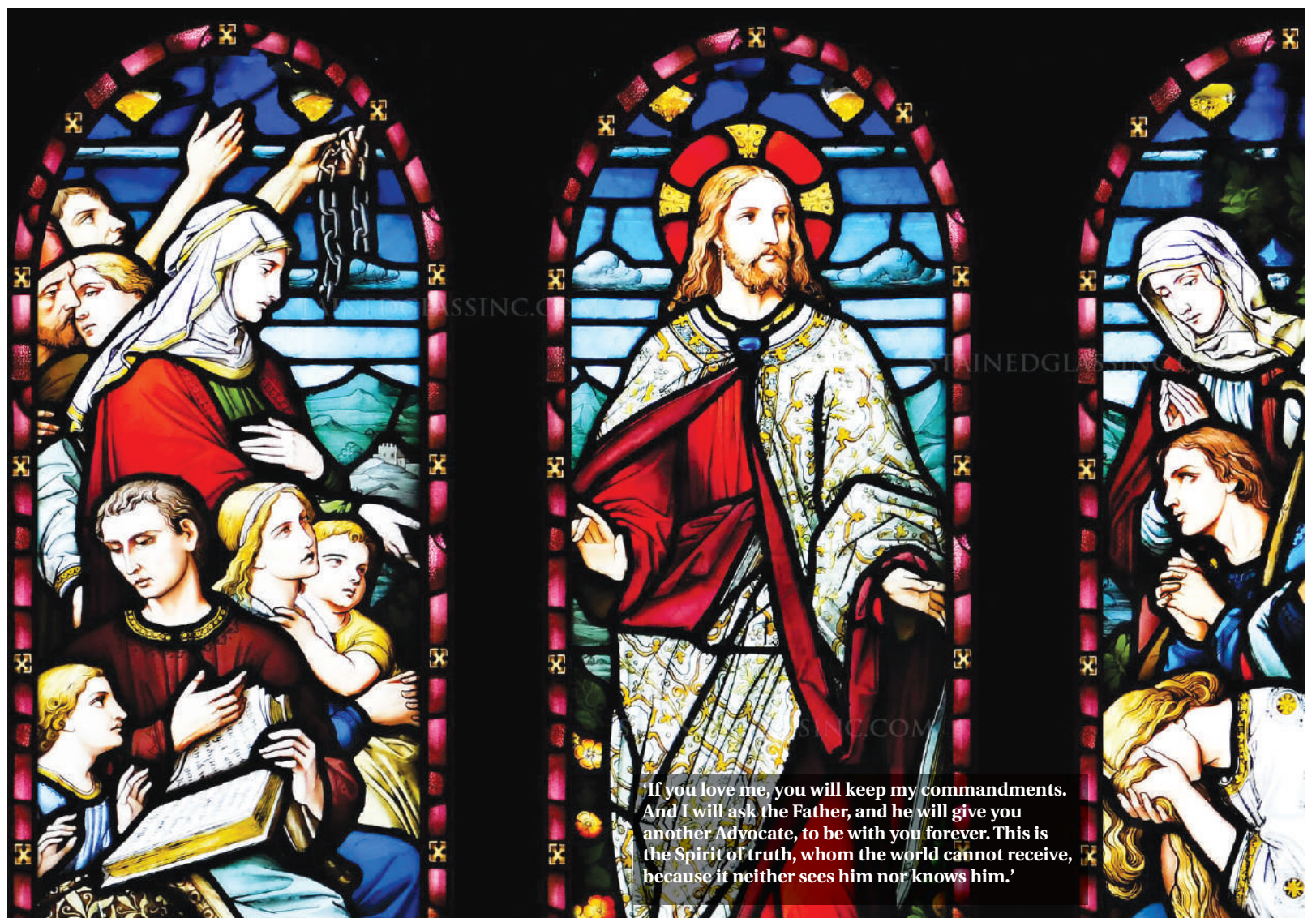
*Let our joy then be in him;  
he rules for ever by his might. (R./)*

*Come and hear, all who fear God.  
I will tell what he did for my soul:  
Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer  
nor withhold his love from me.  
Let all the earth cry out to God with joy. (R./)*

## 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18

### Peter prepares us for persecution, reminding us of the suffering of Christ

Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands



**If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.'**

from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

## Gospel: John 14:15-21

### The Spirit of truth is in those who love God. Our love of God should show in our actions

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with

you, and he will be in you. "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

## Reviving our sense of the sacred

Some of the social formalities of the past are now a dim memory. Our teachers and priests used to be greeted with a salute when we passed them in the street. Other adults we called 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' and deferred to them. Similar courtesies were expected as good manners. Something of the kind survives in rural Ireland where, as a mark of respect for the dead people still bow their heads when a funeral passes by. Now most of these formalities

have gone, like the world of my childhood which valued them so highly.

Many of the old-time courtesies were undermined by the cinema and television, which linked freedom and informality. The screen personalities, cowboys and crooks, cops and hoodlums, were not noted for courtly manners. They shot from the hip, verbally as well as with six-guns. Many an audience, like eager students, were ready shed their manners like an overcoat. Nowhere seems immune to flippant informality. Even in the church we seem to have lost some of our habits of reverence.

"Revere the Lord in your hearts," says Saint Peter. This reverence should reach out into all our other relationships too. If, on the contrary, reverence for God is lost, nothing is truly sacred anymore. And, as a quiet warning to people engaged in religious debate, in Britain, Ireland and elsewhere, Peter urges us to make our arguments "with courtesy

and respect," qualities that are notably lacking in the discussion of political and social issues on our ubiquitous media.

Reverence for God, respect and courtesy for others are parts of the same virtue. Not all courteous persons are explicit followers of Jesus Christ, but neither is a discourteous person ever a true follower of his way.

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## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH FR DOYLE

# Mary and Joseph lived a full marriage – and trust in God over Heaven entry

**Q. If sex is so important to a marriage, would you consider the marriage between the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Joseph to have been a valid marriage?**

A. Yes, the marriage of Mary and Joseph was a valid marriage. Even though this marriage was never consummated, it was the spouses' consent that validated the marriage bond, and their decision to maintain Mary's virginity was made mutually.

They gave full consent to their unique call to raise the child Jesus as husband and wife. The Church's understanding is that marriage is ordered by its nature both to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. At the time of their marriage, both Mary and Joseph knew of Mary's pregnancy.

The Gospel of Matthew (1:16) explicitly recognises the validity of this marriage when it calls Joseph 'the husband of Mary'; and in the eucharistic prayer of the Mass we say, "Blessed Joseph, her Spouse."



**Last supper picture: 'What we receive in holy Communion is the greatest gift of all, and sacred vessels denote the preciousness of the contents in a way that common and profane containers do not.'**

witness to the faith we hold dear. Entrust your children to the care of God (who loves them even more than you do) and keep praying for them, as I will, too. God is merciful, patient and full of compassion—in ways that are infinitely better than we can fathom or understand. Do not be afraid.

**Q. I am a student in secondary school. I believe in God and in the Christian way of life, but I do have a question. How does God influence our lives, and how can one have a closer relationship with him? I want to depend on God for the decisions I make in my life, but many people say that they can live independently, without God. I only want to know the truth.**

A. You are to be congratulated – and envied. To have come to understand at a young age that your daily existence depends on the providence of the Lord and that God's will offers the best chance at a happy life is something of a rarity. One might think this to be a self-evident truth that ought to be grasped readily, but many people take many years to incorporate it into their thinking.

As you move through your teenage years, you will surely draw even closer to God – by seeking to align your desires with the will of God.

The Lord does influence our lives in several ways: in the inner comfort and guidance we feel during quiet times and in prayer; with advice from trusted friends and mentors; and in the opportunities he provides, through the ever-changing circumstances of our lives. A useful way to become aware of God's presence is to pray the simple prayer: 'Come, Holy Spirit.'

The Spirit knows the mind of God and knows us intimately, and helps us come into that close relationship with our heavenly Father, where we can know and be confident in several facts: first, that we are totally 'beloved', His blessed children; secondly, that He forgives us for our worst crimes and, thirdly, that nothing can separate us from His everlasting love. That truly is good news!

**Please note that this column does not accept reader inquiries or questions**

**Q. Can a Catholic priest officiate at the renewal of vows for a non-Catholic couple?**

A. I've never seen any 'rule' on this, but if asked by a non-Catholic couple I would have no hesitancy doing what you say—listening to them repeat their marriage vows and then saying a prayer to bless their union. This, of course, assumes that the couple is in a marriage considered valid by the Catholic Church.

I would not participate if, for example, either of the parties was remarried with a former spouse still alive, because that would be inconsistent with the Catholic Church's views on marriage and divorce.

**Q. On reaching old age (82), my thoughts have been on Jesus and the apostles being poor and humble. By contrast, I see priests, bishops and cardinals attired at Mass with gold-embazoned apparel and celebrating the consecration using chalices of gold. Yet the statuary of Christ and the saints depicts them as people of poverty. Why this obvious imbalance in celebrating our faith?**

A. I agree in substance with your observation. It's probable that Jesus at the Last Supper used a humble clay cup in blessing the wine, and I don't think we should stray far from that simplicity.

At the same time, though, the church does want to highlight the 'specialness' of the Eucharist. What we receive in holy Communion is the greatest gift of all, and sacred

vessels denote the preciousness of the contents in a way that common and profane containers do not. The sacrifice of the Mass brings us into contact with the divine and 'lifts us up' to Heaven.

And so, the guidance the Church offers us on this is contained in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which is the Church's 'rule book' on liturgical matters.

There we read, 'Sacred vessels should be made from precious metal. If they are made from metal that rusts or from a metal less precious than gold, they should generally be gilded on the inside.'

In a section on sacred furnishings, the general instruction says that 'noble simplicity' should be the governing goal in matters liturgical (No. 325). As applied to vestments, this would mean that 'it is fitting that the beauty and nobility of each vestment not be sought in an abundance of overlaid ornamentation, but rather in the material used and in the design' (No. 344).

I have noticed over the years a tendency toward greater simplicity in liturgical vestments, and that trend is consistent with the Church's goal.

**Q. Is the happiness of Heaven dependent on human factors? Specifically, when I die and – hopefully – get to Heaven, how will I be eternally happy if my children were not to make it with me? (The way things are right now, that is a distinct possibility.)**

**How could I ever be at peace knowing that they are not there with me?**

A. In the kingdom of Heaven, according to the promise of the Book of Revelation (21:4), God "will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away."

How exactly that is going to happen is hidden from us while we are on this side of Heaven. To be honest, I have no direct answer to your question, which is a perennial one, except to say that I choose to put my trust in the revealed word of God.

Some theologians have explained it this way: In Heaven, we will better understand how the Lord is just, that those who reject him by the way they live have chosen their fate. God

will not override that choice – and we will be comforted by this fuller knowledge.

Truthfully, that explanation doesn't help me much, but this one does: I believe that the mercy of God is expansive and that many more people are in heaven than we imagine. Only the Lord knows the true state of our souls, and I am encouraged by Matthew's Gospel, which says in Chapter 25 that we will ultimately be judged by how we responded to people who needed our help.

I love the story of Monica, who prayed, over many years, with many tears, for her son Augustine when he was living far from the Christian life, and how St. Ambrose told her that it was impossible that a "child of such tears" would perish.

So, take heart, continue to give





## SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



# The power and love of the Rosary

**David continues his course on Our Lady's Teaching on Prayer. This week, part 11, the mystery of the rosary**

St Paul called the wondrous divine plan to share the glory and joy of heaven with everyone, the Mysterion. In English this is translated as 'God's secret plan' from the Greek word meaning secret, hidden or invisible. Throughout history, even Jewish history, this plan remained a secret although the Jews believed that when God's special envoy, the Messiah arrived, all would be revealed.

When the Messiah did arrive as promised, he explained God's plan, but told them that only those who radically changed their lives and continually changed them, would be qualified to enter into this new world that he called the 'Kingdom of God'. Knowing that human beings are weak, after his departure from this world he promised to send his love or his Holy Spirit to surcharge weak human love with divine love to help make the journey to heavenly bliss possible. The first to receive his Holy Spirit was his own mother, Mary, together with the first Apostles and three thousand others on the first Pentecost day.

## The journey into paradise

Mary and the Apostles were immediately drawn up and into the mystical body of Christ where in future, together with all who through baptism would join them, they would begin their journey into what both Jesus, and St Paul, called Paradise. Because of her Immaculate Conception Mary would immediately be united with and become as one with the dear son to whom she had given birth.

Her contemplation would now be as one with his contemplation, as they would together gaze upon, and be enthralled by the glory of the One whom Jesus said was their divine and loving Dad.

Until the Apostles were ready and prepared, Mary would stay on in this world before joining her son in glory. While on earth Jesus was the flesh and blood embodiment of God's plan here on earth. That is why he was the world's first true mystic. In other words he was not only at all times open to receive the inner mystical life and love of God, but he was able to transmit it to others: And after his death he continued to do this. The Apostles would become mystics too when, after continual repentance, the love of Jesus that was poured upon them, began to reside within them, and began to

**Our Lady has constantly recommended praying the Rosary to those to whom she has appeared in recent years.**



overflow onto and into all who met them. The first priests then were mystics, as all priests are meant to be. They were not only empowered to administer what were then called the mysteries, or later the sacraments to others, but to continually support and guide them on their journey in Christ, to reach the paradise for which he had prepared them.

## The First Apostles were mystics

All priests and to the end of time, are expected to become mystics to do this work, as were the first Apostles who were mystics before them. They are all called, and this is their vocation, to come to know and experience for themselves that love to which they are called to guide others. If the reader is bemused by what I am saying, then it is a clear sign just how far we have come from the implementation of God's plan as he originally conceived it. It is a sad and deplorable state of affairs, if those people ordained to implement the mysteries, now called the sacraments to sanctify and make holy those who receive them, are not mystics.

By mystics I mean men whose whole lives are dedicated to receiving for themselves the inner hidden or mystical inner life and love of God. Men therefore, whose whole formation is primarily orientated from the first day to this end, long before the requisite intellectual knowledge deemed necessary is introduced. This is the best possible way that the faithful have good and holy priests to guide

them. This also enables those with no aptitude for what matters most, to be sent away.

Our Lady never used the Rosary herself while she was on earth, neither did the Apostles, later saints or any of the faithful for over a thousand years, because the prayer had not yet been devised. It is nevertheless the prayer that she has constantly recommended to those to whom she has appeared in recent years. Despite the fact that this new means of prayer is not a sacrament, it can be called a sacramental, because it can do today what the first mysteries did for the early Christians for whom she was a mother. That is why they are called the mysteries of the Rosary, because by saying them and meditating upon them they can generate the love in us that enables us to enter ever more deeply into the Mysterion, God's plan for us made flesh and blood in the glorified body of Our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

## The way to all prayer

This prayer contains within it the way to all prayer and that is why Our Lady calls upon us all to use it. It may seem to begin with that it is purely devised to encourage vocal prayer, but that would only be a superficial understanding of this prayer. Practitioners who through the Hail Mary relentlessly call upon Our Lady to pray for them, will be led on by the same Holy Spirit who conceived Christ in her, into the meditation that leads to contemplation. Here they will experience the supreme prayer that

was the daily prayer of Our Lady herself. This is the prayer that finally enabled her Sacred Heart to be united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, even in this life, as it can do for us, if we only follow her example.

## A revolutionary prayer

But for the person who uses it as intended, it can be the most revolutionary of all prayers, because it can lead those committed to it, as Our Lady intended, into the sort of meditation that she both encouraged and made possible in the early Church. Thence from meditation to contemplation.

When I used to visit my mother at the end of her life, she lay in bed holding her Rosary and she said that she could no longer use it as she once did. It was enough to hold it in her hands as she said the Holy Name, or some other simple prayer, before lapsing into moments of contemplative stillness. It was then that my mother joined Mary in the prayer that she said on earth, and still says in Heaven.

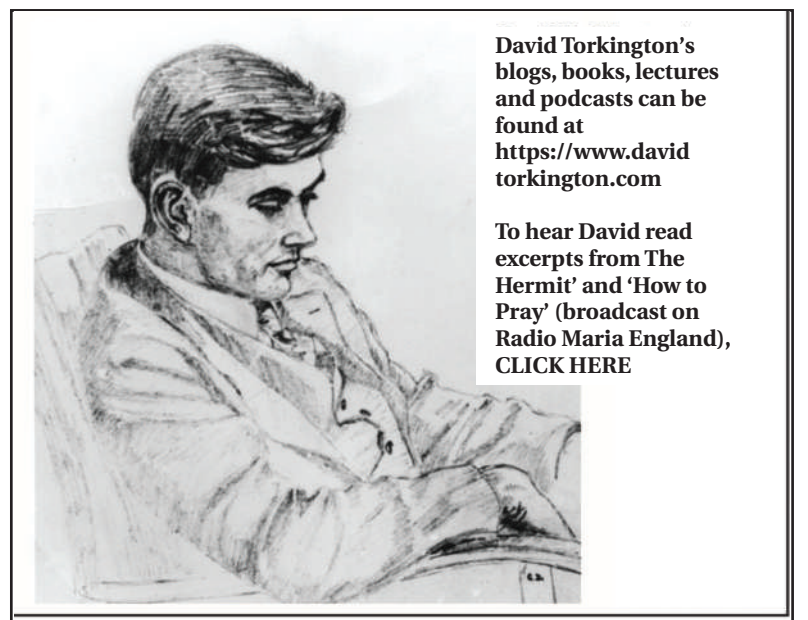
Each of the mysteries of the Rosary help lead a beginner into meditation. This is the meditation that Our Lady, more than any other presided over in the early Church and the Holy Spirit will then lead the believer where he will. It may be the ideal to say the whole of the Rosary when it is said in common, but when said alone, just one decade may be enough if it is said slowly and prayerfully, and meditated upon with deep loving affection and prayerful reactions as long as the Holy Spirit determines.

That is more than enough, until he leads you onward, in whatever way he wishes.

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

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To hear David read excerpts from *The Hermit* and *'How to Pray'* (broadcast on Radio Maria England), [CLICK HERE](#)







# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION



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

## Southwark's shrine to St Oscar Romero given national status

The Archdiocese of Southwark has announced that the Diocesan Shrine of St Oscar Romero at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, has been elevated to the status of a National Shrine for England and Wales.

Following a petition to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales by the Archbishop of Southwark, Archbishop John Wilson, the bishops gave their unanimous approval to the new National Shrine at their recent Spring Plenary Meeting in Leeds.

Commenting on the elevation to a National Shrine, Archbishop John Wilson said: "We are very grateful to the Bishops of England and Wales for their support in enabling our Diocesan Shrine to now become a National Shrine for the benefit of people across our dioceses.

"St Oscar Romero calls us to faithful discipleship of the Lord Jesus and to the full proclamation of the Gospel. When Christ taught us to love and to serve he really did mean us to put this into practice, especially towards those in most need. Love of Christ and love of neighbour mean that defending human life and dignity, and working for justice and peace, are integral to our witness. In this, we look to St

Oscar's inspiring example and ask his heavenly intercession."

St Oscar Romero (b. 1917) was Archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador from February 1977 until his assassination and martyrdom on 24th March 1980. He was an outspoken advocate of the Gospel and the teaching of the Catholic Church in defence of justice and peace, human rights and the protection of the poor. He was canonised by Pope Francis on 14th October 2018.

The Romero Shrine in St George's Cathedral was implicitly recognised as a Diocesan Shrine in 2013, and this was made explicit through the promulgation of Statutes in 2019. Since then, St Oscar Romero has been beatified and canonised and there is growing appreciation of Romero in the UK, including through the work of the Romero Trust and the Romero Award (for schools), and also ecumenically.

The Romero Cross contains a reliquary holding a precious fragment of the blood-stained relics of the Romero Shrine alb that was part of Archbishop Romero's martyrdom clothing as he celebrated Mass on 24th March 1980. This is the heart of the Shrine. Displayed alongside is a zucchetto,

one of St Oscar Romero's episcopal skullcaps. These were donated to the archdiocese, through the good offices of the Archbishop Romero Trust and CAFOD, for permanent display and veneration by visitors to the Cathedral and pilgrims from near and far. The Cross is overlooked by a bust of Archbishop Romero by the artist, Lado Goudjbidze.

The Shrine is erected to the Greater Glory of God and to foster devotion to St Oscar Romero and, in a related way, to the martyrs of El Salvador. It is established for the spiritual benefit of the People of God in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The shrine will make devotional materials available to assist its mission and purpose. These include enabling pilgrims and visitors to seek the intercession of St Oscar Romero and to promote the Church's evangelising mission to proclaim the Gospel.

The shrine is also established to become more authentic missionary disciples, inspired by the martyrdom of St Oscar Romero, and to assist pilgrims to find affirmation and consolation from St Oscar Romero's immersion in the 'Word of God' and the 'World of the Poor'.



We are very grateful to the bishops for their support in enabling our Diocesan Shrine to now become a National Shrine for the benefit of people across our dioceses. St Oscar Romero calls us to faithful discipleship of the Lord Jesus and to the full proclamation of the Gospel...

Archbishop Wilson (left, pictured with a poster of St Oscar Romero)

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Just email the story to **Andy Drozdziak** at [News@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:News@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)



# Full day of fun and faith

A successful pilot local youth day took place on Saturday, 22nd April at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark.

120 children (aged 10-16) joined eight clergy and 20 lay helpers drawn from 10 parishes in south London.

The day started with an icebreaker shortly followed by faith input, with a talk from Fr Matthew O’Gorman on ‘Why do we exist?’

This was followed by a mixture of activities after lunch including football, dodgeball, table-tennis, games and crafts.

In the afternoon, eucharistic adoration and moving praise/worship took place in the Cathedral, led by Fr Tansi Ibsi of the Franciscan Friars of the renewal.

Children were offered the opportunity to ask questions about their faith with a ‘Question box’, and there were a number of questions, ranging from “what is Heaven like?” to “why do we have celibacy?”.

In the evening, there was pizza and a social event, ending with a short address from Bishop Philip Moger and a moving reflection and prayer from Fr Patrick Udotai.



# Archbishop on hand to help mark anniversary

**Ronnie Convery**

There was a special welcome at Motherwell’s Cathedral of Our Lady of Good Aid as Archbishop Nolan celebrated a special Mass to mark the foundation of his home diocese in 1948.

The 75 years of Motherwell diocese have a special significance for the archbishop as he served as a priest of Motherwell from his ordination in 1977 for 38 years.

But it was in the role of Metropolitan Archbishop of Glasgow that he returned to commemorate the decision of Pope Pius XII shortly after the Second World War to divide the huge territory of Glasgow into three, creating the new dioceses of Motherwell and Paisley.

The current Bishop of Motherwell, Bishop Joe Toal, was on hand to welcome ‘home’ Archbishop Nolan, as were a large number of his former colleagues among the Motherwell priests and former parishioners from his time as a parish priest.

The archbishop took the opportunity to pay tribute to the faith of the people and priests of Lanarkshire which had seen the development of Motherwell diocese over the last 75 years.

He said: “Times were different then and people rose to the challenges of establishing the new diocese. Parishes were real centres of community and the faith was strong. Today the challenges are different. There is more individualism and that can make it harder for parishes to flourish. The challenge now is to reach out to people and show them that faith is something attractive and relevant in their lives.”

In its 75 years of life, Motherwell diocese has been a powerhouse of the Catholic Church in Scotland. Five bishops have led the community there: Bishop Edward Douglas (1948–1954), Bishop James Scanlan (1955–1964), Bishop Francis Thomson (1965–1982), Bishop Joe Devine (1983–2013) and Bishop Joe Toal since 2014.

Although the decree separating Motherwell from Glasgow took effect 75 years ago, the two communities have continued to work together in faith. Cardinal Tom Winning was originally a priest of Motherwell diocese while Bishop Joe Devine was originally a priest of Glasgow Archdiocese. Today, Archbishop Nolan carries on the tradition of sharing resources.

Left, Archbishop Nolan celebrates Mass in Motherwell



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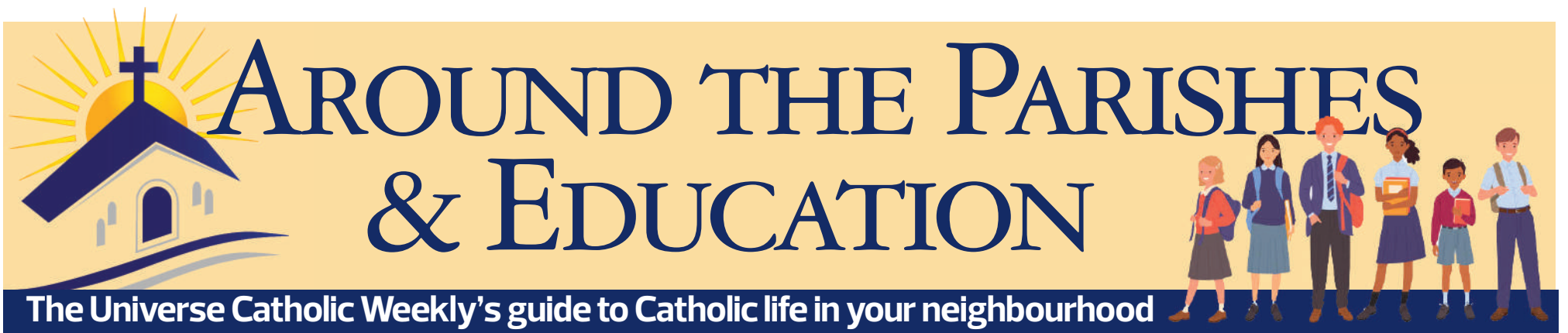


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# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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

## SVP flies the flag for Church at ecumenical FUEL festival

Ely's St Etheldreda SVP conference joined other churches and Christians Together in Ely at an ecumenical FUEL festival held on Ely's Cathedral Green on 22nd April.

The SVP Conference members presented information about the SVP and St Etheldreda's Catholic church in Ely, and led activities for children around the subjects of 'Jesus gave Bread and Fishes – what can I give?' and 'Forget me Not' – remembering others in prayer.

It was great meeting, with lots of chatting to old

friends and making new ones with offers of help and co-working.

There were stalls from the churches and Christian organisations in Ely; music, food stalls, plant stalls, information and lots of activities for children.

The SVP members were joined by representatives from the Christian Motorcyclists Association and Christian Weightlifters, culminating in a 'battle of the vicars' for the weightlifting championship.

The sun shone and there was a wonderful atmosphere of faith, unity, and love.



## Poet's corner



The Poetry Club from Saint Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe recently visited the Portico Library in Manchester – a wonderful unique experience.

Year 9 pupil, Kira, explained: "Books of varying ages surrounded us, in an interior that had stayed almost the same as it had been hundreds of years ago, which gave a grand, mystical and ornate aura to the setting."

In the Portico, the Poetry Club were in the presence of many first edition texts, such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Captain Cook's journals, and other texts by authors such as Coleridge and Tennyson.

"In this atmosphere we immersed ourselves even more in the literary culture of the Romantic and Victorian periods," Kira said.

"We were able to read and hold many first edition texts, including collections of poetry from these periods. Along with the expert historical knowledge of our guide, this gave us the opportunity to learn not only about the poetry itself, but the evolution of how poetry and writing has changed over the years."

Kira continued: "Our fascination and enthusiasm were clear on our faces as we had the unique chance to ask questions about these texts as we held editions of the books in our hands that would have been held by some of their first readers."

English teacher and organiser of the Poetry Club, Jemima Burrell, said the visit had given the pupils a chance to develop their own poetry skills via this insight into the history of some of our great poets."

## Double joy for Tamil community at Sacred Heart Mass

The monthly Mass of the Tamil-speaking chaplaincy took place once more in Sacred Heart Church, Bilton, Rugby, where Canon Gerard Murray is parish priest.

The people who gathered there are in the main from Tamil Nadu in India and from Sri Lanka.

The chaplain is Fr Arul Samy and he is assisted by a wonderfully active group of young families led by Gilbert Raja. This latest Mass was a particularly joyful occasion as it marked marking Easter and Independence Day.

The families came in traditional dress, sang in their own language and played their instruments. It was a beautiful Mass, presided over by Fr Arul, and incorporating elements of Tamil culture.

After Mass came the social time with music, dance and sketches, followed by a beautiful meal, and special presentations showing their appreciation of diocesan support for the special chaplaincy provision, which keeps people strong in their faith.





# Animal visitors add some natural fun to school life

It isn't only children who attend a Durham Catholic primary school – lots of wildlife call in, too.

From hares to foxes, hedgehogs to a variety of birds, they have all been captured on a wildlife camera at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic primary school.

The Shotton Colliery school has been involved in a year-long project with the British Ecology Society (BES) called Connecting Schools to Nature.

The school's science lead and Year 3 class teacher, Adam McPhail, explained: "This is a citizen science project, aiming to help children reconnect with, understand, and support their local environment.

"As part of this project, we have received equipment to use in our school grounds, such as a trap camera. We have captured over 3,500 images of animals in our school environment, including deer, foxes, hares, hedgehogs and a wide variety of birds."

The project has really captured the children's imaginations and sparked a passion for science. "I have loved learning about all the animals that use our school," said Olly Whitehead, eight, a Year 3 pupil.

The school has won several awards for its participation in the project, including silver awards for its module on birds.

"We made bird feeders to use on our site to encourage birds and have gathered nesting material (grass cuttings, sticks and hay) for birds to use when making their

nest," added Mr McPhail. "We also won the 2023 Trap Camera Competition for submitting the most photos from a school trap camera. Our £100 prize will be spent voucher to further improve our school grounds for wildlife. We have also secured an additional £400 worth of funding through the project, which we are hoping to use to create a wildflower area in our school to provide an area for pollinators."

The project has had a big impact on the school children. "The children are more

engaged with local environmental issues and have a greater awareness of the local environment," he added. "They have loved using the camera particularly, as they love seeing what animals have been visiting our school."

Alexa Roditi, outreach project assistant for the British Ecological Society, said: "All of their efforts have certainly paid off, with the school reaching bronze and silver awards for their work on the invertebrates and birds modules respectively."



Teacher Adam McPhail and pupils



## Canadian visitors sound superb

Our Lady and the English Martyrs parish, Cambridge, welcomed 40 boys from the Saint Michael's Catholic Choir School, Toronto, Canada on 27th April. The entire choir school of some 200 boys were on tour to the UK, where they performed, among other places, at Westminster, Coventry and Ely cathedrals.

The boys, who were joined by a large congregation, including parents and staff, sang the regular lunchtime Mass.

Pictured with the boys is choir director, Maria Conkey, organist Philip Fillion from the Cathedral Basilica in Toronto, and the Rector of OLEM, Monsignor Eugene Harkness, who celebrated the Mass.

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## HEALTH

# Concussion impacts can be felt six months after initial blow



### New research indicates long-lasting effects of brain injury

Rebecca Woodrow, David Menon & Emmanuel A Stamatakis

Around 56 million people globally suffer a concussion each year. It's common for concussion to cause short-term symptoms such as a headache, nausea, sensitivity to light and problems concentrating.

But many people also struggle with long-term symptoms – including fatigue, trouble sleeping and concentrating, and emotional distress. Previous research found that clinicians estimated one in ten people might experience long-term symptoms after a concussion.

But our recent study estimates that post-concussive symptoms are far more common. Our study, published in *Brain*, found that almost half of people who suffered a concussion had not fully recovered six months after their injury.

To conduct our study, we analysed brain scans from over 100 patients who had recently experienced concussion from all across Europe. These brain scans were conducted using a technique called resting-state functional MRI (fMRI).

A resting-state fMRI measures brain activity when a person is at rest, which can be used to understand how different

regions of the brain communicate. This allows us to understand if the brain is functioning as it should or if there are problems with a person's brain connectivity.

A resting-state fMRI can also tell us more than a CT scan or MRI might. While these types of scans are often given to concussion patients, both only look for structural changes in the brain – such as inflammation or bruising.

Such changes often don't occur in mild concussion cases soon after injury, which may lead clinicians to believe no brain damage has occurred. But a resting-state fMRI can show us more subtle changes in brain function – and may help us better predict who is more likely to develop long-term symptoms.

In our analyses, we specifically looked for changes in a region in the centre of the brain called the thalamus. This region is important in integrating sensory information and relaying it throughout the entire brain.

The thalamus is also thought to be very vulnerable to the kind of external force that leads to concussion (such as a

fall or blow to the head).

Our research found that concussion was associated with increased functional connectivity between the thalamus and the rest of the brain very shortly after injury, when compared to 76 healthy control subjects.

In other words, the thalamus was trying to communicate more as a result of the injury. This was despite routine MRI and CT imaging showing no structural changes in the brain.

While many of us would assume that more connectivity in the brain is a good thing, research looking at more severe head injuries indicates that greater connectivity between brain regions might actually be a sign of the brain trying to compensate and offset damage across the brain.

We also found that almost half of people with concussion had not fully recovered six months after the injury. Our analysis showed that participants who had signs of greater thalamus connectivity in their brain very soon after injury were more likely to later develop post-concussive symptoms, such as

fatigue and poor concentration.

#### Concussion treatment

Our research makes an important step in understanding concussion, showing that even a single brain injury can have clear consequences in some people. This damage may also not show up in the types of scans concussion patients are routinely given, suggesting it may be time to expand the types of imaging used.

We found that in people who experienced long-term symptoms, functional changes were still present in the brain 12 months after the injury. These effects were found in a sub-group who returned for scanning a year after their injury, and were not seen in patients without long-term symptoms.

Concussion is often viewed as a short-term event, but these findings suggest it can be a long-term disease, and some people may take longer to recover than others.

Our study also found that the long-term symptoms a person experiences may relate to different areas of the brain. We found that people who experienced long-term cognitive symptoms (such as concentration and memory problems) had increased connectivity from the thalamus to areas of the brain linked with noradrenaline – a chemical messenger in the brain.

Whereas people who experienced long-term emotional problems (such as depression or irritability) had greater

connectivity to areas that produced a different chemical messenger, serotonin.

This not only shows us how concussion affects people differently, it may also give us targets we can use to develop drugs that alleviate concussion symptoms.

While concussion is considered a "mild" traumatic brain injury, our findings show it's anything but – and can have long-term consequences for a large proportion of people. Although there's still a lot we don't know about concussion – including the effects that repetitive concussion may have on the brain – it's promising to see this condition is being taken more seriously, especially in sports where it can be common.

New UK guidelines for grassroots sports like football and rugby now require players to sit out of play for at least 24 hours after a suspected concussion, which may help to prevent concussion and improve recovery after one.

**Rebecca Woodrow is a PhD Student in Clinical Neurosciences, University of Cambridge**

**David Menon is a Professor, Head of Division of Anaesthesia, University of Cambridge**

**Emmanuel A Stamatakis is the Lead, Cognition and Consciousness Imaging Group, Division of Anaesthesia, University of Cambridge**

**"Almost half of people with concussion had not fully recovered six months after the injury. Our analysis showed that participants who had signs of greater thalamus connectivity in their brain very soon after injury were more likely to later develop post-concussive symptoms..."**



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## GARDENING

# The right way to plant a tree: success in seven simple steps

**With a little luck and good timing, simply sticking a tree in the ground and walking away can be enough for it to survive. But knowing how to plant a tree the right way, will ensure success every time. In fact, there are seven steps for planting success ...**

Suffice it to say, I've learned these all-important steps mostly by trial and error. It's always the best way to learn, especially when it comes to gardening.

Trees have been described as the lungs of the earth for good reason. Without them, there would be no life on this planet. That's reason enough to plant as many as we can. But when you learn just how important they are for so many reasons, you begin to understand my passion for trees and why we need more.

That's led to a lifelong crusade to encourage people to plant more trees. Or even one. So it only stands to reason how thrilled I was to team up with Lands' End recently to encourage everyone to #PlantATree in celebration of Earth Day this year.

So whether this is your first tree planting, or you've planted a forest by now, we're always learning. Knowing how to plant a tree the right way – especially now, considering such unprecedented climate conditions – will ensure your efforts will not be in vain.

To give you the whole story, check out this video we created to walk you through how to plant a tree the right way, along with the seven steps for getting it right every time.

## The best time to plant a tree

Trees (and shrubs) can be planted any time of the year that you can dig the proper planting hole. However, there are better times than others for multiple reasons.

Suffice it to say, the more time you can put between when you plant a tree, and the arrival of summer, the better. That makes fall the very best time of year to relocate trees and shrubs or plant new ones. Early spring is good, too.

How to plant a tree the right way – follow these seven important steps:

### 1. Prepare the proper planting hole.

When preparing any hole for planting,

make it three times wider than the current root mass but never deeper than the plant was growing in its previous environment.

An even better guide with trees is to look for the flare of the trunk near the soil level. Don't place the tree in the planting hole so deep that any part of that flare is covered with soil. The truth is, even nurseries sometimes put plants in containers too deeply. There have been many times where I've actually had to pull away soil to find the base of the trunk flare and true surface roots. Make a habit of checking this.

### 2. Plant high.

I go even one step further by placing trees and shrubs in their new environment with up to 25% of the root ball higher than the surrounding soil level. I then taper soil up to cover all the roots and add a generous layer of mulch above that. Newly disturbed soil tends to settle and shrubs and trees planted at grade can quickly settle below grade and succumb to root rot or disease.

It's always better to plant a tree or shrub slightly high and allow the area to drain away rather than for a plant to sit in a bowl and collect excess water.

### 3. Inspect the roots and disturb when necessary.

Once the plant is out of its container, look at the roots. If they are densely bound in a circular pattern or have started growing in the shape of the container (even slightly), break up the pattern.

It's vitally important to stop this pattern now. The biggest mistake you can make at this point is to place a rootbound plant into the ground as is. Unless you break up the pattern, you've likely sentenced the plant to a slow death. At a minimum, it will likely never establish



or reach a fraction of its potential.

Don't worry about hurting the roots or losing soil as you break the roots apart or even cut some away. Better to give them a fresh start than allow the constrictive pattern to only get worse below ground. While you don't want to be any rougher than necessary, do what you must to arrest the pattern.

I often scratch my fingers across the sides and bottom of the root mass in mild cases. In more severe situations, I'll slice up the roots vertically with a pruning saw, hack off the bottom inch or so, and or pull apart the root mass to clearly create new opportunities for non-circular new root development.

### 4. Don't amend the soil.

Contrary to traditional planting methods, contemporary research indicates that you should not amend the hole with additional organic material (unless you intend to amend the entire area where roots will eventually grow). Roots growing in amended soil rarely venture into harder native soil. The long-term affect is a smaller root system, reduced growth and a less hardy plant.

Instead, simply break up the clumps in existing soil, remove the rocks and backfill. Studies show plant roots growing in only the native soil actually did a better job at establishing and expanding beyond the original hole.

### 5. Eliminate air pockets.

While you could lightly tamp or hand-pack the soil around the plant roots to ensure good soil-to-root contact, I prefer to add a stiff spray of water to the hole after backfilling half way. Not only does it provide needed moisture but the water also helps eliminate air pockets that could otherwise result in dead roots or worse (without compacting the soil too much).

Finally, water again gently but thoroughly once all the soil is in place.

### 6. Add mulch.

Starting about two inches from the trunk (leave this area exposed), place roughly two inches of organic matter such as shredded leaves, or ground bark or nuggets around the plant, at least out to the drip line. Further is better. Mulch helps retain much-needed moisture and helps keep roots cooler near the surface—a very important requirement for newly installed plants.

### 7. Water properly until established.

The most important job you will have after planting is to keep plants and trees well watered until established. This can take weeks to months, to even a year or more in some cases. But don't worry. You can put this part of the process on auto-pilot. (I'll tell you how below.)

The key to proper watering and establishment is slow and deep irrigation. It's not practical to do that by hand. The only way to establish trees properly through irrigation is with soaker hoses or drip irrigation.

The slow and deep irrigation allows the soil around the roots to saturate, so the roots have time to absorb the moisture, while avoiding excess runoff. Short, manual blasts of water from an overhead hose or sprinkler system simply don't come close to providing the same effectiveness for water delivery.

I water newly planted trees every day for about the first week. For the next two weeks, I ease off to about every other day. Then gradually ease back from there.

However, there's a fine line between watering enough and watering too much—especially with large trees that arrive with root balls wrapped in burlap. These trees have lost all their feeder roots when dug from the ground. Providing adequate water is critical to their survival and establishment.

That said, I've killed more than one tree like this by overwatering. Even if you prepare a large planting hole, when drainage is poor, the root ball may be sitting in water and literally drown. There's no easy way to know how wet the soil is deeper into the planting hole.

The best advice I can offer is to pay

close attention to how the tree responds (and all your plants for that matter). While it's common for them to lose up to half their leaves to transplant stress (a normal part of the process), more can indicate a potential problem.

If you sense the tree is responding poorly, and you are watering consistently, you're likely over-watering. If the leaves are turning brown, drying up, and falling off, and the soil appears dry, water more.

To add to the challenge, soil that appears dry at the top may be very wet a few inches down. And the opposite is true as well. All the more reason it is important to apply your detective skills based on observation and knowing how much or little you've been watering.

In the first few weeks, soil that is moist but not soggy is your target range. And depending on what you're using to deliver the water will affect how long you need irrigate per session. So there's no simple answer.

### Put watering on auto-pilot

One of the best time-savers you can find to lighten the load and put your irrigation duties on auto-pilot is to use soaker hoses and/or drip irrigation combined with portable battery-operated timers. I cannot stress the importance and time-saving benefits enough!

### Fertilising

If you plant to fertilise, I don't suggest doing so until you know your trees or shrubs have taken to their new environment through successful establishment.

All energy should be concentrated on root development first. Adopt the walk-before-you-run approach. But even then, I still like to play it safe by using a slow-release, non-burning organic fertiliser that won't over-tax my plants.

While all the above steps are essential, your active engagement in monitoring newly planted trees for signs of distress over time will be the ultimate deciding factor in your tree planting success. Make any necessary adjustments in real-time, and you can likely reverse a potentially downward spiral into a tree that will live a happy and very long life.

**“The most important job you will have after planting is to keep plants and trees well watered until established. This can take weeks to months, to even a year or more in some cases.”**



## FOOD

# POTATO AND BACON BAKE

Two old-fashioned classics for you this week, after a few more exotic dishes in recent issues. First, a wholesome, filling and affordable dish that you'll want to make time and time again – potato and bacon bake. This dish goes well with anything. It can also be served on its own with salad and crusty rolls. To follow, how about a twist on the apple pie, baked apples in pastry. You can cook the dessert as your main meal is getting close to being finished, reducing the cooking costs.

## INGREDIENTS

- 3-4 large potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- plain flour, for sprinkling
- 2 small shallots, sliced
- 3 rashers bacon or sliced ham, chopped
- pepper to taste
- 125g mature Cheddar cheese, grated
- 125ml milk

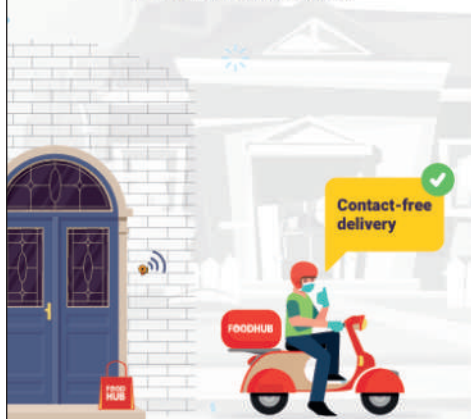
## METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180C.
2. Grease a baking dish.
3. Arrange a layer of potato in the dish and then sprinkle with flour.
4. Add the pepper, bacon, shallots and cheese and repeat until all ingredients are used up, finishing on potatoes and cheese.
5. Add some pepper according to taste.
6. Pour the milk over the potatoes and bake in preheated oven for 1 1/2 hours


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# BAKED APPLES IN PASTRY

Baked apples are an old-fashioned family standby for pudding, but this pastry-clad version is something special, particularly served with home-made custard or some whipped cream.

## INGREDIENTS

- 225g ready-made shortcrust pastry
- 4 small cooking apples, peeled and cored but not sliced
- 25g sultanas
- 25g light soft brown sugar
- 25g butter
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- caster sugar to decorate

## METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 220°C.
2. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface and cut out four circles using a large saucer or small plate as a guide to the shape and size.
3. Peel and core the apples. Place one apple in the centre of each piece of pastry.
4. Mix together the other ingredients and place a quarter of the mixture in the centre of each apple.
5. Cover the apples completely in pastry, turn them over to seal and place onto a baking sheet.
6. Brush the top of the pastry with egg or milk and bake for 25 minutes.
7. Sprinkle with caster sugar as they come out of the oven.

“Baked apples are an old-fashioned family standby for pudding, but this pastry-clad version is something special... serve with home-made custard or some whipped cream”





## CINEMA

# There's wit left in the tank for the Guardians

Chris Pratt reprises his starring role as Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord, in *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* (Disney), and writer-director James Gunn returns to helm the project. But there's a sombre tone to long patches of this wrap-up of Gunn's trilogy, which also lacks the verve that characterised its predecessors.

As leader of the titular team of miscellaneous superheroes, Peter is naturally alarmed when a previously unknown enemy endowed with mighty fighting prowess suddenly invades the ensemble's headquarters, Knowhere. But anxiety turns to anguish when a confrontation with the new foe leaves his racoon comrade Rocket (voice of Bradley Cooper) gravely wounded.

To save Rocket's life, Peter and his fellow warriors – likable brawny dope Drax (Dave Bautista), shifty trickster-turned-straight arrow Nebula (Karen Gillan), tentacled Mantis (Pom Klementieff) and anthropomorphised tree Groot (voice of Vin Diesel) – embark on a quest. They're out to retrieve the computer code that will override Rocket's programmed resistance to medicine.

Along the path of their journey, they receive off-and-on aid from Peter's ex-girlfriend, Gamora (Zoe Saldana). As fans of the interwoven *Avengers* franchise



will know, Gamora was killed off, only to reappear as an alternate, younger version of herself. Not only does this mean she's gone from Guardian to brigand, it also means she doesn't remember Peter or their relationship.

As Peter grapples with this awkward complication in his once-flourishing romantic life, back at Knowhere, Rocket lies near death. While in a comatose state, he experiences a series of flashbacks to his youth.

These reveal that young Rocket was among the victims of a villain called The High Evolutionary (Chukwudi Iwuji), who used his hyper-intelligent prisoner as experimental fodder in a drive toward creating an ideal world populated by perfect beings. The torturous tinkering Rocket underwent included installing the technology that's currently keeping him from healing.

Along with its implicitly pro-life warning about the dangers of interfering

with nature, Gunn's script satirises the urge to resort to needless mayhem and highlights heroism and friendship. But the grim backstory to which much of the running time is devoted reinforces the movie's inappropriateness for children.

Grown-ups, by contrast, will appreciate that the combat, although at times intense, is kept bloodless. They may also feel that even the weakest instalment of a series rich in charm and wit is worth patronising. If nothing else, they'll get one

more chance to hum along with Redbone's 1970s hit, *Come and Get Your Love* – and who doesn't enjoy that?

Pratt recently told *Total Film* that he would be keen to reprise his role as Peter Quill in *Guardians of the Galaxy* again – but it would be important to 'honour' director James Gunn, if he was not involved. It is currently unclear whether Gunn would be involved in future *Galaxy* productions.

"It would be strange to continue [Star Lord's] story without James," Pratt said. "He's done such a masterful job in the first three films. We really found the voice of Peter Quill together, and without him, obviously, I would never have had this opportunity. He writes it, he directs it, he dreams up the music; it's his imagination on screen. So, to continue to tell the story, it would really be important to honour what he's done in the first three films and to honour what the fans have grown to love about the character and not simply do it because people might show up to pay for it, you know?"

"I don't want to be cynical in the approach, and if that's the case, I just wouldn't do it at all. So maybe down the road, if something makes sense, I would do it, but it would really have to check a lot of the right boxes."

## LIFESTYLE

## Habits can be healthy

### Expert shares how to create healthy habits, break unhealthy ones and create positive change

It's an experience shared by many: You make an ambitious health goal and a few months – or weeks – later, you lose steam and throw in the towel. Break the cycle by focusing on simple, yet effective ways you can impact your wellness long term. The key? Small daily habits.

Nicholas Frye, MS, LCPC, CHES, behavioural counselling manager at OPTAVIA and an expert on psychological factors that influence health, shares how you can create lasting healthy habits, break those unhealthy ones and create positive changes to your wellbeing.

#### Forming new habits

Habits are a fundamental part of the health and wellbeing programme, OPTAVIA. Its approach is built around four key components: a supportive community, an independent coach, a blueprint for learning and mastering healthy habits, and easy nutrition.

"Forming a new, healthy habit involves repeating a health-promoting behaviour in response to some trigger that's already a part of your day, such as a specific location like the kitchen, certain

situation like making your morning coffee or particular person like your significant other, until there is a learned connection between trigger and behaviour," Frye said.

As an example, to develop a new, healthy walking habit, first select a specific health-promoting behaviour such as "go for a 10-minute walk." Then identify a stable cue which occurs daily in your life such as "after breakfast." Then repeatedly perform the walking behaviour in response to the after-breakfast cue which will, over time, result in an automatic habit.

It takes 66 days, on average, to develop a new habit, according to a 2009 study published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*. However, the exact timeframe is different for everyone. As the behaviour is repeated in response to the cue, the association between them becomes stronger, more efficient and automatic until the cue alone is enough to trigger the associated behaviour without conscious thought.

#### Breaking old habits

Forming new, healthy habits through behaviour and cue association is one part of a long-term approach to wellness, but how do you break an established, negative health habit?

"Breaking an old, unhealthy habit involves overwriting the old habit with a new, competing behaviour," Frye said.

"Basically, you substitute the unhealthy habit with a healthy new one."

For example, to break a habit of drinking sugary drinks while watching television, replace the soft drink with sparkling water every time you sit down to binge your favourite show. Eventually, you'll associate watching TV with this new, healthier behaviour.

#### Microhabits

Frye recommends instead of committing to a big, audacious goal, try incorporating small daily habits. This allows you one step closer to optimal health and wellbeing every day. These small behaviours are called microhabits and they can compound to have big results.

Some microhabit examples are parking at the back of a parking lot to get your steps in or taking a sip of water as soon as you wake up rather than hitting the snooze button.

"By developing these habits, one small step at a time, we can overcome the intention-behaviour gap – in other words, when what you do doesn't live up to your previous intentions – and it is all the less daunting," Frye said.

"This sets one up for success as opposed to overly ambitious goals that don't guide you from point A to point B."

**You can learn more about forming good habits at [OPTAVIA.com](https://optavia.com).**





# Ring for the King: the long history of England's bellringing tradition

## Katherine Butler

Ahead of King Charles's coronation last weekend, there were reports of a national shortage of bellringers. The UK counts 38,000 churches. The hope was that each would "ring for the king", as the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers labelled its appeal to get more people involved.

Since at least the 16th century, foreign visitors to Britain's shores have remarked on the ubiquity of its bellringing. Georg Friedrich Händel is credited with labelling the country a "ringing isle".

These centuries-old bells still sound from church towers today. Children still sing songs telling of their music. *Oranges and Lemons* famously takes its singers on a tour of London churches:

*Oranges and lemons, Say the bells of St Clement's.*

*You owe me five farthings, Say the bells of St. Martin's.*

*When will you pay me? Say the bells at Old Bailey.*

*When I grow rich, Say the bells at Shoreditch.*

*When will that be? Say the bells of Stepney.*

*I do not know, Says the great bell at Bow.*

Church bells have left their mark more widely on English culture specifically. Pubs named The Bell or The Ring o' Bells are found across the country. Bells are routinely pictured on Christmas and wedding cards.

As a musicologist, I have long been interested in the history of communal music-making, including popular ringing and singing for the monarchy. I am a campanologist myself, too, founding and directing our university handbell choir.

## The meanings of church bells

Common across Europe since the early Middle Ages, bells summoned the faithful to worship. They also marked the stages of life from baptism, to weddings, to passing bells for the dying.

Inscriptions on individual bells often gave them names and told their stories. One on a Cambridgeshire bell, dating from 1607 says: 'Of all the bells in Benet, I am the best. And yet for my casting, the parish paid the least.'

Sometimes these messages asked the bells to praise God or to carry the prayers of the faithful to Heaven. People believed they had the power to dispel thunder and drive away the plague or even devils.

Although hung in church towers, the significance of bells was not merely religious. Bells were aural markers of communities. The traditional definition of a Cockney is someone who lives within earshot of the bells of St Mary le Bow, on Cheapside in London.

As some of the loudest noises in the historic soundscape (before the



noise pollution of traffic), bells also had a practical function in signalling dangers such as fires, unrest, or invasion.

Even when the Reformation called the theology of bellringing into question, ringing was so deeply embedded in English communities that such practices were reinterpreted rather than suppressed.

## Recreational ringing

What really made English bellringing distinctive, however, was the enthusiasm, from around 1600, for a new kind of ringing. Until this point, ringing used simple tolling bells or what ringers call "rounds" (repeated descending scales of tuned bells).

Technological advances in the late

16th century saw bells mounted on fully rotating wheels (as opposed to half wheels with more limited motion). This gave ringers greater control over the timing and enabled the development of what is called "change ringing", with increasingly complex, predetermined tone patterns. Known as "methods", these come with charmingly esoteric names such as Cambridge Surprise Major: or Reverse Canterbury Doubles:

As a result, recreational ringing began to take off. In the 17th century, visitors to England reported hearing bellringing late into the evening by groups of young men often coming straight from drinking in the alehouse. They rang for exercise and for fun. They'd even make wagers as to who could ring

“Groups of young men often came straight from the alehouse. They rang for exercise and for fun. They'd even make wagers as to who could ring the longest, the loudest, or the best...

the longest, the loudest, or in the best fashion.

The 18th century saw the development of handbell ringing. Initially used by tower bellringers seeking to practise in warmer and more congenial surroundings, ringing well-known tunes on handbells soon became popular. At the height of its popularity in the late 19th century, large handbell ringing competitions were held at Belle Vue in Manchester, with community teams vying to defeat their neighbours.

## Royal ringing

Royal coronations, weddings and baptisms had long prompted local celebratory ringing, but during the reign of Elizabeth I many parishes started to ring yearly to mark what they called her 'Crownation' day (actually her accession day) on November 17.

Beginning in parishes near London, the trend soon spread across the country and persisted under Elizabeth's successors, James VI of Scotland (James I of England) and Charles I, the first two Stuart kings. It was subsequently revived after the Commonwealth. Significant political victories such as

the defeat of the Armada in 1588 or the failure of the Gunpowder plot in 1605 were also marked by ringing.

Such royal connections continue today. There are several methods named for Queen Elizabeth II: the Queen Elizabeth II delight major, or platinum jubilee surprise minor.

In June 2022, bells large and small rang across the UK to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee. And when Queen Elizabeth died in September 2022, bells fully muffled with leather patches chimed at Westminster Abbey and in churches far beyond – either for 96 minutes or 96 times – to mark each year of her life.

The coronation of Charles III is an opportunity for people to continue this long tradition. Find out about ringing groups in a local tower. If lighter bells or tune-ringing appeal, look up your local handbell team.

I have found it to be a fun way to connect with people of all ages and walks of life. A workout for mind and body, ringing takes practice, but the collective results are rewarding. You are making an audible contribution to your local community and the soundscape of your city.

**Katherine Butler is an Assistant Professor, Northumbria University, Newcastle**





Fr Vlad Felzmann continues his look at Christianity and sport through the ages

# The Jesuits knew that all work and no play does no-one any favours

## FAITH IN SPORT

### Fr Vlad Felzmann

The philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) stated that games should generate *'eutrapelia'*, – translated as good natured fun. St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) made it clear that the enjoyment of play should avoid harm and indecency. Too much – and too little – sport is, according to him, sinful. In medio stat virtus: The best option lies somewhere between two extremes.

Throughout the so called 'Middle Ages' – 500 to 1400/1500 CE – Christians participated in games and sports on Sundays as well as on feast days. After Mass in the morning, people tended to lounge or – if they were more energetic – play sports in the afternoon. Sundays were there to re-create the whole person – right across the PIES, the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual constituent parts of human life.

It seems that this basic pattern was followed throughout Europe. Blessed by Church leaders, accepted by landlords, and sanctified by tradition, some of these seasonal breaks in labour ran for several days. Wine or ale, music, and dance accompanied games and sport – as depicted on stained glass windows and woodcuts in churches and in prayer books. Feast days were so numerous that they seemed to have accounted for around one-third of the calendar year.

Monks and other clerics, living apart from the populace, might well preach strictures against certain types of physical recreation. However, parish clergy seemed to have agreed the need for play and sport and occasionally got involved themselves.

Physical education was not included in the monastic curriculum – offered to the monks or nuns, or indeed anyone aiming to go on to what we call 'higher education'. It did include what was then called 'The Seven Liberal Arts': the trivium with its grammar, logic, and rhetoric and the quadrivium with its arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry.

This was also true for the curriculum of the 'palace school', which was developed by the English monk, Alcuin of York (c. 735 – 804) for children of the nobles during the reign of Charlemagne, who ruled much of Western Europe from 768 to 814. However, the irrepressible urges and instincts of young people for play and sport could not be denied or, indeed, eradicated.

Bowmen of the 14th and 15th Centuries



Paintings and etchings of the period depicted such activities as wrestling, jumping, ball playing, stone casting, and running. However, the *Annales Lamberti*, a chronicle of 1075, complains about the typical lack of physical fitness among many farmers, a fact that discouraged the nobility from pressing them into service as foot soldiers in battle.

On the other hand, there were also the seemingly ageless contests that appeared at festivals and fairs such as foot racing, tug-of-war matches, sack races, quarter-staff throwing, archery, caber tossing, and bowling – with its many variations – all of which must have produced some sort of physical fitness in competitors.

Fifteenth century schools – primarily for lay students – included time to play games and sports in their daily schedule.

Mind you, life expectancy in 1200-1300 was 43 years. In 1300-1400, with the Black Death rampant, it was just 24 years and then in 1400-1500 it rose to 48 years. From the 1500s onward, till around the year 1800, life expectancy throughout Europe hovered between 30 and 40 years of age. Though it's hard to imagine, but it was only in the mid-1800s that doctors began regularly to wash their hands before surgery.

The first schools the Jesuits opened in the late 16th century, set

up in existing buildings, did not have any space for games and sports. However, in the school buildings the Jesuits themselves built, they always included a courtyard – what we would now call a MUGA, or a Multi-Use Games Area, in which students could enjoy games and sports.

The Jesuits provided an hour of recreation after the noon meal and shorter periods for recreation between classes. On one free – *non docens* – day in the middle of the week, students, who did not take part in games and sports, would be taken for a walk in the countryside.

The approach of the early Jesuits can be traced back to their founder, Ignatius of Loyola. The third part of the 'Rules of the Colleges', written for the first schools where young Jesuits lived and studied, is dedicated to Conserving the Health and Strength of the Body'.

The document makes it clear that

there will be 'some hours' for honest bodily recreation. 'Some form of relaxation is as useful for the body as for the studies, to which one returns with more of a disposition to make progress, when preceded by some honest bodily exercise.'

During the Renaissance, striving for perfection beyond life gave way to the striving for the full, all-around life in this world. Etiquette books on courtly behaviour advised youths to acquire a universal learning and proficiency in many arts, to give due attention to hygiene and physical exercise, to acquire skill in arms and every manly exercise, and to develop a graceful carriage and a beautifully proportioned body rather than mere strength.

Dancing and fencing masters were employed in court schools. Dancing and tournaments were fashionable. Tennis, archery, fencing, bowling and hunting were popular. On these, there seem to be no records of what

the Church hierarchy thought.

Engaged in sports, men could become over-excited. Moreover, as many sports lacked clear rules, religious leaders made efforts – not always successfully – to curb sports that led to riots, or the destruction of life or property.

After the Protestant Reformation, the Puritans rejected sport's connection with the Catholic festivals and feast days. As the Puritans sought to purify the Church back to what they thought Christ originally intended, they rejected the sporting activities that Catholics used to celebrate Sundays and feast days.

As the Roman Catholic Church started to fragment, leaders of the growing number of religious communities wrestled with these questions: 'What is the purpose of the Sunday sabbath? Is it for rest? Is it for devotion? Is it for worship? For recreation – even re-creation – across the PIES? What is allowable for the Christian to do and not do? Should sport be allowed?'

*The Declaration of Sports* (also known as *'The Book of Sports'*) of James I of England, issued just for Lancashire in 1617, nationally in 1618, and reissued by Charles I in 1633, addressed the tension between Catholics, who allowed sports on Sunday afternoons and the Puritans, who thought it was sinful to engage in sports on Sunday. For them, Sunday was the Day of Rest. The King James' declaration took the middle-ground position. The Church of England would allow "harmless recreation" after Sunday service.

I found it intriguing that the King's *Book of Sports* insisted that prohibiting sports on Sunday would hinder opportunities for Protestants to convert Catholics. Was this the first example of sport being utilised for evangelising purposes?

While the conversation around Sunday sports saw both Catholics and Protestants put their stakes in the ground, it would be wrong to think Protestants had a totally negative view of sports. Both Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) participated in – and enjoyed – sport. Luther admitted that he often visualised knocking down the bowling pins as knocking down Satan.

Calvin made it clear that, for him, sports had an intrinsic – not just instrumental – value. He believed that God's creation was a gift that, in appropriate moderation, was there to be enjoyed. Sports fell into the category of God's good gifts.

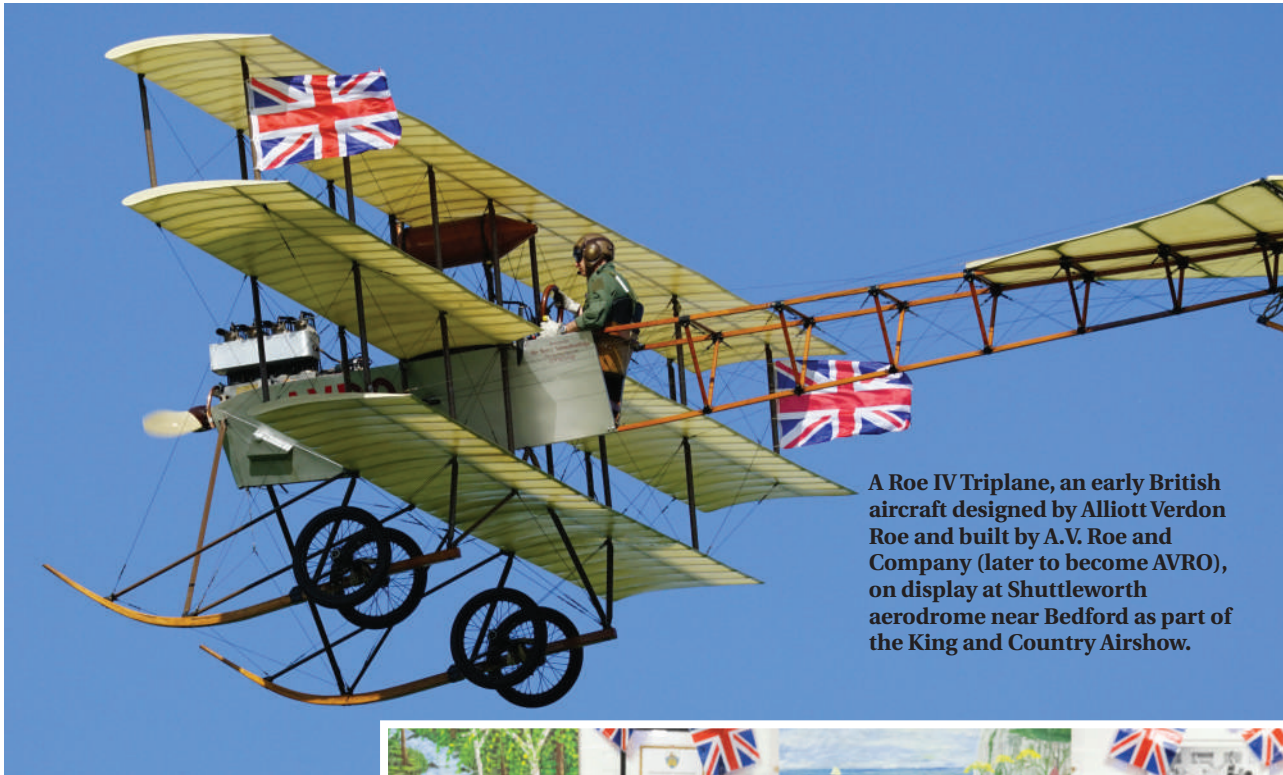
Both would have subscribed to the saying that 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' which first appeared in James Howell's *Proverbs* (1659) in English, Italian, French and Spanish.



Engaged in sports, men could become over excited. Moreover, as many sports lacked clear rules, religious leaders made efforts – not always successfully – to curb sports that led to riots, or the destruction of life or property.



# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days...



A Roe IV Triplane, an early British aircraft designed by Alliott Verdon Roe and built by A.V. Roe and Company (later to become AVRO), on display at Shuttleworth aerodrome near Bedford as part of the King and Country Airshow.



The Speaker of The House of Commons Sir Lindsay Hoyle unveils two stained glass windows dedicated to the overseas territories in Speaker's House in the Houses of Parliament in London. The windows also feature the Speaker's official coat of arms for the first time.



Prince George points at the Red Arrows fly past while stood on the balcony of Buckingham Palace after the King's coronation



Fitness instructor Derrick Evans 'Mr Motivator', actress Leslie Ash, singer Terry Caldwell and television presenter Anthea Turner at an event to celebrate 30 years of Cancer Research UK's Race for Life.

Below, EasyJet aircrew recreate special Eurovision memories as the airline announced its sponsorship of this year's event



The spectacular set for this year's Eurovision Song Contest, in Liverpool





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## LITURGICAL CALENDARS

## SPECIAL OFFER!

### Ordinary Form

#### Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar

**Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I**  
Sunday, 14th May: 6th Sunday of Easter  
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Ps. 66:1-7, 16, 20 r. 1; 1 Pet. 3:15-18; Jn. 14:15-21

**Monday, 15th May:** Weekday of Easter  
Acts 16:11-15; Ps. 149:1-6, 9; Jn. 15:26-16:4

**Tuesday, 16th May:** Weekday of Easter  
Acts 16:22-34; Ps. 138:1-3, 7-8; Jn. 16:5-11

**Wednesday, 17th May:** Weekday of Easter  
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1; Ps. 148:1-2, 11-14; Jn. 16:12-15

**Thursday, 18th May: The Ascension of the Lord:** Acts 1:1-11; Ps. 47:2-3, 6-9 r. 6; Eph. 1:17-23; Mt. 28:16-20

**Friday, 19th May:** Weekday of Easter or St Dunstan, Bishop: Acts 18:9-18; Ps. 47:2-7; Jn. 16:20-23

**Saturday, 20th May:** Weekday of Easter or St Bernardine of Siena, Priest, Religious, missionary Acts 18:23-28; Ps. 47:2-3, 8-10; Jn. 16:23-28

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### Extraordinary Form Calendar

according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

**Sunday, 14th May:** Fifth Sunday after Easter, Jas. 1:22-27; Jn. 16:23-30

**Monday, 15th May:** St John Baptist de la Salle, confessor, Ecclus. 31:8-11; Mt. 18:1-5

**Tuesday, 16th May:** St Ubaldo, bishop and confessor Eccl. 44:16-27, 45:3-20; Mt. 25:14-23

**Wednesday, 17th May:** Vigil of the Ascension Eph. 4:7-13; Jn. 17:1-11

**Thursday, 18th May:** Ascension of Our Lord Acts 1:1-11; Mk. 16:14-20

**Friday, 19th May:** St Peter Celestine, pope and confessor 1 Pet 5:1-4, 10-11; Mt. 16:13-19

**Saturday, 20th May:** St Bernardine of Siena, confessor Eccl. 31:8-11; Lk. 12:35-40

## PRAYERS/THANKSGIVING

'Grateful thanks to St Jude for favours granted'

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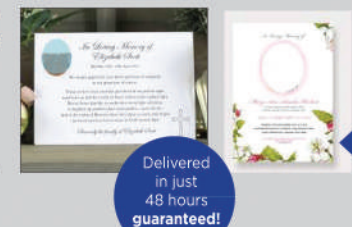


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