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for the Church  
pg 8

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Friday, 5th April 2024

# UNIVERSE CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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# Bible threatened by new hate speech law

**Concerns raised that principal tenets of Catholic catechism run the risk of being classed as inflammatory**

**Michael Winterbottom**

Christian campaigners in Scotland have voiced fears that honest conversations around subjects such as same-sex marriage and transgender rights will be hampered by the new hate crime legislation that came into force on Easter Monday.

The legislation – which applies only to Scotland – criminalises threats and abuse intended to stir up hatred and applies to religion, race, sexual orientation, age, disability and transgender identity.

But campaigners say the new law could be used to target innocent people.

Lois McLatchie Miller from Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADF Int) said her major fear was in the way the law has been written, which could lead to churchgoers being criminalised for their genuinely held religious beliefs.

McLatchie Miller says there are legitimate concerns about how this will impact free speech.

“People are going to be scared to engage in important conversations about their faith, about gender, about society, about marriage, about all these hot-button issues.

“Of course, nobody wants to stir up hatred, and many of us condemn the intent to stir up hatred. But the concern is that in society, we often

have disagreements with one another.

“It’s clear that many of us have disagreements about the topic of gender, the topic of marriage, and what it means to be best protecting and caring for children who are struggling with these issues. That often leads to very sensitive conversations taking place.

“But if it means that we may be guilty of a criminal offence by saying something that accidentally is offensive, or is perceived to be offensive by others around us simply for putting forward a point of view, it’s a very difficult scenario.”

The director of the Catholic Parliamentary Office, Anthony Horan, agreed, pointing out that central points of the Bible could fall foul of the new law. “A new offence of possessing ‘inflammatory material’ could render the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church labelled as inflammatory,” he said.

For instance, “the Catholic Church’s understanding of the human person, including the belief that sex and gender are not fluid and changeable, could fall foul of the new law,” he said.

“Allowing for respectful debate means avoiding censorship and accepting divergent views.”

**Continued on page 2**

**Nelson oversees stunning re-enactment of the Easter story**



London’s historic Trafalgar Square welcomed thousands of spectators on Good Friday as a cast of over 100 actors from the Wintershall Players performed a spectacular Easter Passion Play. The event was described as “stunning” and a welcome antidote to the current secular narrative in the UK. See pg 5.

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# New law prompts faith fears

Continued from page 1

multitude of arguments inhabiting society,” he said.

He added: “Stirring up hatred is morally wrong, and we all support moves to discourage and condemn such behaviour.

“But the bishops have expressed concerns about the lack of clarity around definitions, and there is a potentially low threshold for committing an offence, which they fear, could lead to a deluge of vexatious claims.”

Rebecca Crowther, chief executive of Equality Network in Scotland, defended the legislation. She said: “This legislation is not going to catch people online saying things that I might disagree with, that you might disagree with, things that might upset me, things that might upset others in the community.

“Freedom of expression is really important, and there’s a defence for that within the legislation.

“People are free to say what they like, even if it might cause offence or it might cause shock or disturb people, that’s just what we live with when we live with the freedom of speech.

“What it does legislate against is when that freedom of speech strays into something that is abusive, that could cause fear and alarm, and that also incites hatred or incites people to act on that hatred.”

David Kennedy of the Scottish Police Federation said the new laws will require officers to assess “emotive” subjects and “will cause havoc with trust in police in Scotland.”

Lorcan Price, another member of the team at ADF said the new law contains “significant dangers” for the free exercise of religion.

“We only need to look to neighbouring jurisdictions to see where prosecutions have occurred as a result of people expressing religious views that have led to a criminal complaint, police investigation and prosecutions,” he said.

Protesters  
outside  
Holyrood



Price referred to the case of Päivi Räsänen, a Finnish lawmaker who has faced successive prosecutions since 2019 after she criticised the Lutheran Church of Finland’s participation in gay pride events.

She was found not guilty in 2022, however prosecutors said they would appeal this, and the case was finally dismissed late last year after

*“Stirring up hatred is morally wrong, and we all support moves to discourage and condemn such behaviour. But we have concerns about the lack of clarity around some definitions...”*

the prosecution appeal failed.

Meanwhile, best-selling author J.K. Rowling has been told she will not face charges after she posted a number of tweets that she claimed could fall foul of the new law.

On April 1 she invited police to arrest her if they believe she has committed an offence when she refused to describe biological men who now identify as female as women.

On the social media site X, for-

merly Twitter, the Scottish-based writer said “freedom of speech and belief” was at an end if accurate description of biological sex was outlawed.

Police Scotland confirmed they had received complaints about the social media posts but added: “The comments are not assessed to be criminal and no further action will be taken.”

Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan also weighed into the argument, saying no-one should be arrested for their views on transgender issues, adding that the new Scottish hate crime law is a “terrible piece of legislation.”

“I am pretty sure that the police in Scotland, as are the police in England, should be much more focused on fighting crime than policing people’s thoughts.

“So I reiterate this is a terrible bit of legislation. It is not something we will be introducing in this country.”

She voiced her support for the Police Scotland decision not to bring charges against JK Rowling. “People shouldn’t be criminalised for just stating biological facts and it does seem odd that I think one of the ministers in Scotland said that you could be arrested for misgendering.”

**Universe comment: Page 6**



A poster in Edinburgh advertising the new law, which bans hate speech. While agreeing that hate speech should be stopped, Catholics and other groups are concerned that the language used to define a ‘hate crime’ in this law is open to interpretation, and religious groups and their believers could fall foul of the new law as a result

# Aid halted as Israel admits deadly strike on Gaza relief convoy

Catholic aid agencies working in Gaza have warned that the region faces acute famine as relief supplies were halted after the death of seven aid workers on Tuesday.

The dead – which included three Britons and a Catholic – all worked for Aid World Central Kitchen (WCK), a humanitarian organisation which delivers food in war-torn countries. It expressed its outrage after the seven were killed in an Israeli missile strike on Monday.

In an April 2 statement, the WCK, which was founded by celebrity Catholic chef José Andrés, said the workers were leaving the Deir al-Balah warehouse after delivering 100 tons of humanitarian food in “two armoured cars branded with the WCK logo” when the attack happened.

The organisation said that despite co-ordinating the delivery with the Israeli military, the convoy was struck in an apparent “targeted attack by the IDF,” or Israeli Defense Forces.

WCK CEO Erin Gore said she was “heartbroken and appalled” by the killing of the aid workers who hailed from Australia, Poland, a US - Canada dual citizen and Palestine, as well as the three from the UK.

“This is not only an attack against WCK, this is an attack on humanitarian organisations working in the most dire of situations where food is being used as a weapon of war. This is unforgivable,” Gore said.

The relief organisation said it would pause operations in the region.

That pause came into effect immediately, with a WCK barge which had sailed from Cyprus loaded with critically needed supplies turning back.

“One third (of the aid cargo) was delivered, and two-thirds is coming back”, a Cypriot official told Reuters.

A spokesperson for Caritas said the attack could have big implications for those dependent on aid in Gaza. “The are over a million people who depend on aid coming in from ourselves, and from other organisations like the Red Cross. If we all stop delivering vital supplies, there will be famine throughout Gaza. It’s that serious; aid charities are the slender thread holding lives together in Gaza.”

Israel faced strong condemnation for the attack, which it admitted had been a “mistake”. Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari expressed his condolences “to the entire World Central Kitchen family” and said that “our forces unintentionally struck innocent people.” He promised an independent probe “would examine this serious incident further.”

“This will help us reduce the risk of such an event from occurring again,” Hagari said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

was also heavily criticised after he appeared to make light of the tragedy, telling reporters, “It happens in war.”

The three Britons were all former members of the military, and were providing security to the aid column. They were named as former Royal Marine James Henderson, 33; former SBS soldier John Chapman, 57; and British military veteran James Kirby.

They died alongside colleagues Australian Lalzawmi Frankcom, Polish national Damian Sobol, Palestinian Saifeddin Issam Ayad Abutahas and US-Canadian citizen Jacob Flickinger.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke with Mr Netanyahu on Tuesday evening, telling the Israeli PM that he was appalled by the incident and demanding a thorough and transparent investigation. Earlier the Israeli Ambassador to London had been summoned to the Foreign Office to receive a formal complaint – a highly unusual move to an ally.

Mr Sunak said he was “shocked and saddened” and sent his thoughts to the friends and families of the victims. He added that aid charities should be “praised and commended” for their work, which they should be allowed to do “unhindered”.

US President Joe Biden also condemned the killing, saying he was “outraged and heartbroken”. He accused Israel of not doing enough to protect aid workers.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said he had demanded an independent investigation from Israel Katz, his Israeli counterpart, while his Prime Minister, Donald Tusk said his nation had stood squarely behind Israel, “but our support is now being severely tested.”

Damian Soból from Poland “never feared anything,” Krzysztof Rodzen, his friend from the Polish city of Przemyśl, bordering Ukraine, told reporters.

Soból was a Catholic “and a man who would help anyone even for the price of his own life,” he said.

Before delivering his *‘urbi et orbi’* (to the city and the world) blessing on March 31, Pope Francis called for an “immediate ceasefire” as well as the release of the hostages seized by Hamas and “that access to humanitarian aid be ensured to Gaza.”

In his homily during Easter Sunday Mass, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, also lamented the war that “never seems to end.”

“The only strong and decisive voice seems to be that of weapons,” Cardinal Pizzaballa said. “In vain have been the many attempts to cease hostilities. Useless seem to be the calls for ceasefire, which tried to resolve the conflict in a different way than with weapons.”

One of the WCK vehicles destroyed in the Israeli attack. It is clearly marked as being part of the WCK aid convoy, and its route had been cleared with the Israelis first.



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

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

**Mon 8<sup>th</sup> – Sun 14<sup>th</sup> April at Mullaghmore, Ireland (now full)**

**Mon 14<sup>th</sup> – Sun 20<sup>th</sup> October at Oblate Centre, Crewe**

**Mon 28<sup>th</sup> Oct – Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov at Mullaghmore, Ireland**

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

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

You will need to be able to attend the whole of the course.

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



## In Brief

### Vine's April Fool reported to police

TV and radio broadcaster Jeremy Vine was forced to clarify that a video he posted of his drone apparently being taken out by a hawk was an April Fool's Day prank, after social media users reported him to the police.

The BBC presenter and cycling crusader, who frequently posts videos of his daily London commute, shared footage on Monday which appeared to show his drone being smashed into by a bird of prey while he was cycling in Hyde Park.

On X he wrote: "*WHAT THE HELL – using a drone for today's early cycle ride, and it got taken out by a hawk or red kite in HYDE PARK. Smashed to bits, £400 gone in a second.*"

Hours later, he announced that the post was an April Fool's Day joke after Twitter users said they had reported him to the Metropolitan Police, the RSPCA, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Royal Parks.

### Sunak confident he can 'stop the boats'

Rishi Sunak is still confident he can deliver on his pledge to "stop the boats" despite a record start to 2024 for migrant Channel crossings.

Small boat arrivals passed 5,000 by the end of March for the first time ever this year despite Mr Sunak's pledge, made in January 2023, to stop the crossings.

Asked whether the Prime Minister was still confident of meeting his pledge, a No 10 spokeswoman said: "Yes. We need to break the model of the criminal gangs by getting our Rwanda partnership running."

We want to get flights off the ground, and we know the impact that a successful deterrent can have."

# Bishop in fresh attack on MSP's 'dangerous' assisted dying plan

## Michael Winterbottom

The Bishop of Paisley has labelled plans to introduce assisted suicide into Scottish law as "a dangerous idea".

Rt John Keenan made the remarks as the Assisted Dying Bill was introduced to Holyrood last week. The bill, expected to be debated in autumn and potentially voted on next year, requires patients to have a terminal illness, be mentally sound, and gains approval from two doctors.

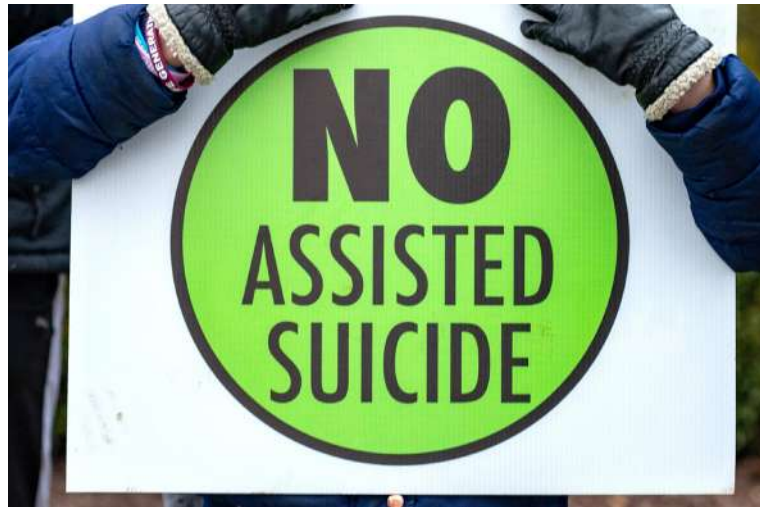
The bill introduced by the Lib Dem MSP, Liam MacArthur, is facing opposition from religious groups, including the Catholic Church in Scotland, the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Association of Mosques.

Bishop John believes the problems with the Bill start with its name, a euphemism for 'assisted suicide'.

He said: "The concept of assisted dying is something that is already practised by our health professionals and organisations, in the form of palliative care."

"A more accurate term for what the Bill seeks to legalise is assisted suicide. It is a law that will allow a doctor to provide patients with a lethal cocktail of drugs to kill themselves."

"Implicit in assisted suicide is that the value of human life is measured by efficiency and utility and not by dignity. In crude terms, it



means an individual can lose their value to society because of illness or disability. We are called to care for those who suffer, including those at the end of life. In this way, the appropriate response of civic society to suffering is not to facilitate death by prescription, but rather, to provide good, reliable care, including palliative care, for all those who need it."

First Minister Humza Yousaf, who is a Muslim, has indicated he will likely vote against it. The proposal stipulates strict criteria and emphasises patient autonomy, requiring them to administer the medication themselves.

According to Dignity in Dying, several countries have legalised forms of assisted dying. Examples include Switzerland as well as Australia, Canada, Spain and Colombia.

Most Britons who ended their lives at assisted dying clinics in Switzerland over the past eight years had non-terminal illnesses, according to a study.

The research showed that of 405 UK residents who had assisted deaths in Switzerland between 2016 and 2022, 201 (or 49.6 per cent) had neurological conditions. These included Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and locked-in syndrome – none of which are classed as terminal illnesses.

A further 21 cases, equivalent to 5 per cent, suffered from "intractable pain" and 13 people (3 per cent) had some form of dementia.

In comparison, just 22 per cent of UK residents who died through a medically assisted death in Switzerland had a potentially terminal

physical illness, namely cancer.

Researchers from the pro-assisted dying campaign group My Death My Decision (MDMD) undertook the study, published last month in the *BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care Journal*.

It was based on data collated on the health diagnosis of British citizens provided by three Swiss assisted dying organisations: Dignitas, Pegasos and Life Circle.

Dr Gordon MacDonald, the chief executive of Care Not Killing, which opposes the legalisation of assisted dying, condemned the MDMD study as "chilling" and said it was an "extreme version" of already dangerous proposals.

He said: "It would see the introduction of a law similar to the ones used in Canada, Belgium and the Netherlands, where a system initially sold to the public as being for terminally ill people has expanded to include, disability, degenerative non-terminal conditions and even mental health problems."

The study comes amid growing calls for assisted dying to be legalised in Britain, with high profile campaigners such as Dame Esther Rantzen, Dame Prue Leith and Jonathan Dimbleby backing the change.

Assisted suicide is against the law in the UK and punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

**Concern as Canada broadens assisted dying's reach: page 20**

## Anger over stealth tax raid on 1.6m pensioners

Up to 1.6 million more pensioners will be paying income tax within four years as a result of a series of Conservative Government stealth tax raids, new analysis has revealed.

As many as 9.3 million older

people will be paying the tax by 2028 after the Government froze the threshold at which people start to pay.

Currently, 8.5 million pensioners pay income tax – but analysis by the House of Commons Library has

found that the frozen income threshold means an extra 1.6 million will pay the tax than would have done if the threshold had risen along with inflation since 2021.

That means around an extra 850,000 pensioners paying income

tax in 2028 than this year, taking the number to 9.35 million – the highest on record.

In 2010, when the Tories came to power, just 4.9 million paid income tax on their pensions and other earnings.

## UNIVERSE CONTACTS

Universe Catholic Weekly, PO Box 585, Sale M33 0JH

General enquiries: t: 0743 6617650  
e: [info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Editorial enquiries: t: 0743 6617604  
e: [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Executive Chairman  
Clive W. Leach, KSG, CBE  
t: [clive.leach@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:clive.leach@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Managing Editorial Director: Michael Winterbottom  
e: [michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 6617650

News: Andy Drozdziak  
e: [andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 07527 237293

Advertising and Sales  
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: 0791856 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 6617650

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)  
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## Stunning display of the Easter story wows crowd in Trafalgar Square

Trafalgar Square played host to another stunning re-enactment of the Easter story on Good Friday, as the Wintershall Players depicted the events leading up to and including the Crucifixion of Jesus.

A cast of more than 100 actors and volunteers were all dressed in period costumes, as well as horses, donkeys and doves, to bring the story to life again.

Running for over ten years, this performance has now become a

permanent fixture of London's Easter weekend and attracts thousands of spectators, embracing those of all faiths and none.

The 90-minute performances are free as a gift to Londoners and visitors, and supported by the Mayor of London.

Jamie Chapman, who was among the thousands who watched the play, told the *Universe*: "It was stunning, a quite brilliant depiction of Christ's final days.

"You could see it moved many Christians in the audience, but what I was most taken by were comments from people who were not religious, who were also drawn in by the superb story-telling.

"It was brilliant, in these secular times, to see such an avowed display of faith in the public square – and let's face it, you don't get much more public than the most famous square in Britain!"



## Dani Wardman appointed as Medaille Trust's CEO

Medaille Trust has announced that Dani Wardman will be joining them in June as the new CEO.

Dani is currently working for the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) where she has served as its first CEO since 2021. She was previously CEO at Survive, a specialist sexual violence charity providing therapeutic counselling and support to victims, and brings extensive experience of supporting survivors to the Catholic charity.

Commenting on the appointment Dani said: "I am delighted to be appointed as the CEO for Medaille Trust. I am looking forward to working with the staff team, trustees and our partners to provide vital services for victims of modern slavery."

Sr Jane Maltby RSCJ, the Medaille Trust chair, welcomed the appointment: "Dani comes to us from a strong background in working with victims of violence, abuse and degradation.

"Her starting point is the welfare and development of the whole person, and she will take forward the excellent work of the past few years.

"Her recent experience will enable her to renew and strengthen the bonds Medaille has had with Religious Congregations since the founding initiative of Sr. Ann Teresa



SSJA. It is an exciting moment for us and we look forward to Dani joining."

Dani replaces Garry Smith, who is leaving Medaille after a highly successful six-year period for a new role as Director of Mission with Salvation Army Trading Company Ltd (SATCoL).

Medaille Trust was started by the late Sr. Ann Teresa SSJA in 2006 with the support of Catholic Religious Congregations across the country, helping women escape from the evils of prostitution and modern slavery.

Today it runs ten safe houses across the country, making it one of the UK's largest providers of supported accommodation for victims of modern slavery. Sr. Ann Teresa's vision and that of the Catholic Religious congregations remain key to its identity.

## Ursuline Links is seeking a Director

An exciting opportunity has arisen to join Ursuline Links as the Director, to action the strategic direction for the charity's future. The ideal candidate will have a personal faith commitment and previous experience of working to motivate and inspire young people. This role will involve working with the Ursuline schools and other interested groups involved in Catholic youth ministry.

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Hours - 37.5 hours per week

Location - Forest Gate, London (flexibility for home working)

Contract - Permanent

Salary - £38,500 - £45,500 PA

Annual Leave - 33 days holiday (pro rata) per year inclusive of bank holidays.

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- Manage existing resources and prepare a budget for new equipment.
- Fundraise for projects as required.
- Co-ordinate participation of UL students at third party events such as Flame.
- Manage the website and social media.
- Keep contacts with past student and arrange reunions.
- The preparation of liturgical services and parent meetings as required.
- Review policies and guidelines, and Charity Commission reports.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO HAVE:

- Education to degree level
- Recent experience of working (for at least 2 years) with young people up to the age of 20 either as a teacher, chaplain or within a youth retreat centre, including presenting to large and small groups of adults and young people and delivery of prayer and activity sessions
- Understand safeguarding requirements for working with young people.

### HOW TO APPLY:

If you feel you have the relevant skills and experience to fulfil this role successfully, please apply in the first instance with your CV to [officemanager@ursulines-ru.uk](mailto:officemanager@ursulines-ru.uk). All suitable applicants will be sent the full job description and an application form to complete. If you have any further questions, please contact Elizabeth Durrant on 020 3422 0901.

**Closing Date 19th April 2024**  
**Interviews w/c 6th May 2024**



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UNIVERSE  
CATHOLIC WEEKLY

## COMMENT

We recently saw the first anniversary of Humza Yousaf becoming First Minister of Scotland, and the fact that the provisions under the Hate and Public Order (Scotland) Act were enacted on 1st April to virtually coincide with that anniversary may be entirely coincidental.

But it may also be appropriate as this controversial measure could almost be said to be all his own work.

While it was first passed during Nicola Sturgeon's administration, three years ago, Mr Yousaf was then the justice minister and its driving force; today he appears proud that it is his Government ushering it in as the law of the land, at least in Scotland.

He is investing all of his political reputation into making this legislation work, even if it does, in the opinion of many, threaten the very tenets of freedom of expression.

Its provisions, extending offences of stirring up hatred to cover disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity, have attracted widespread criticism, especially as they include comments made not just privately but even within the home, which could now be judged as hate crime.

In defending his legislation, the First Minister has said that it will not prevent people "expressing controversial or offensive views", providing, he added, they "don't do it in an abusive way, likely to stir up hatred".

It is confusing messages like these that have led rank and file police officers to claim that the act will force them to "police what people think or feel".

Mr Yousaf says the existing laws on race hatred had protected him as he grew up but he insists that still, "there is far too much hatred in our society". However, this law appears ripe for abuse and will over-burden an already stretched police force, where officers may be forced to deal with hundreds of malicious complaints.

Furthermore, their investigations would probably tarnish the names of innocent people and force them into silence.

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# Lords block Sunak's runway as Rwanda flights face more delays

POLITICS

**Natalie  
Hodgson**



The Government's goal to send a flight of asylum seekers to Rwanda this spring is looking less and less likely.

The plan has been in the works, blocked by a number of legal rulings, for nearly two years. All now hinges on the passage of a bill declaring Rwanda to be a "safe" country to send asylum seekers to.

But the bill has faced yet another parliamentary hurdle in the House of Lords. The upper house passed several amendments to bring the bill in line with the Refugee Convention and international law. It is now due back in the House of Commons, a process known as parliamentary 'ping pong'. If the bill passes, it won't be until after Easter.

Rishi Sunak has repeatedly said that the Government would like flights to take off in the spring. While it was recently reported that no flights to Rwanda would occur before mid-May, the Government might now need to wait even longer due to these latest delays.

## How did we get here?

In April 2022, the UK and Rwandan Governments announced a migration and economic development partnership. Under this arrangement, some asylum seekers who travel to the UK irregularly (such as by small boat across the Channel) will be sent to Rwanda. There, Rwandan officials will process their protection claims. If the person is found to be a refugee, they will be resettled in Rwanda.

In exchange, the UK has agreed to pay Rwanda £370 million to support economic growth in the country. The UK will also resettle a small number of vulnerable refugees from Rwanda in the UK.

Two months after the partnership was announced, the Government's attempt to send the first plane of people to Rwanda was foiled by the courts. After a number of legal challenges, the European Court of Human Rights issued an emergency order to stop the plane taking off.

Just before Christmas 2022, the High Court (one of the senior courts of England and Wales) ruled that the policy was lawful – but this finding was later overturned. Both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court found that Rwanda was not a "safe" country to send asylum seekers to.



Members of the staff board a plane reported by British media to be the first to transport migrants to Rwanda, at MOD Boscombe Down base in Wiltshire, 14th June, 2022.

In particular, judges raised concerns about Rwanda's domestic legal system, and the extent to which it would make accurate and fair decisions about whether a person was a refugee.

Because of this, both courts found that people sent to Rwanda were at risk of refoulement – that is, being sent back to their home country where they might be tortured, persecuted or killed. Non-refoulement is a key principle in the refugee convention and is recognised in UK law.

## Resurrecting the Rwanda plan

Following the Supreme Court's decision, the Government doubled down. It has taken a number of desperate steps to try and bypass the courts, making it legal to send people to Rwanda for asylum processing and resettlement.

It signed a new treaty with Rwanda, requiring the country to process claims in accordance with the refugee convention and provide refugees with support and accommodation. Rwanda's commitments under this treaty are binding under international law.

In September and November last year, the Home Office held training days for Rwandan government officials, lawyers and judges on refugee law and effective asylum decision-making.

Most significantly, the Government introduced the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) bill. This requires every immigration officer, tribunal and court in the UK to treat Rwanda as a safe country. By declaring in law that Rwanda is safe, the Government is hoping to prevent courts from ruling against its policy.

The bill also says that courts and tribunals must ignore any emergency orders made by the European Court of Human Rights to prevent a person being removed to Rwanda.

The House of Lords opposed many of these provisions as contrary to the domestic and international rule of law. The Lords have repeatedly pushed back on the Rwanda plan, but appear unlikely to try and block the bill altogether. It has now been sent back to the House of Commons for further debate.

## What happens if the bill passes?

Even if the legislation is passed, the Rwanda plan will likely be subject to another round of legal challenges. We can expect these to focus on whether or not the Government can pass a law that overrides the courts on whether Rwanda is safe. Legal experts have expressed serious concerns about the legislation, suggesting it could even trigger a

"constitutional crisis".

Courts might also be asked to consider whether the Government's efforts to ensure Rwanda's safety (such as signing a new treaty and training Rwandan officials) are sufficient to overcome the problems previously identified with the policy.

Even if the bill somehow avoids legal hurdles, there are still questions of logistics, capacity and cost. In addition to the £370 million being paid to Rwanda to support economic growth, the UK will also pay it £151,000 for every person relocated.

Currently, Rwanda only has capacity to accept up to 200 asylum seekers at a time from the UK. This pales in comparison to the 29,437 people who crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2023. Many people who travel to the UK on small boats are found to be refugees.

Under the Illegal Migration Act, passed in 2023, anyone who travels to the UK irregularly will never have their asylum claim considered by the Government. These people, if not sent to Rwanda, will likely be trapped in legal limbo in the government's "perma-backlog" of asylum applications.

Politically, the Government is staking a lot on this plan. But it also needs a plan for the thousands of asylum seekers who will not be removed to Rwanda.

**Natalie Hodgson is an Assistant Professor in Law, University of Nottingham**

*"Another round of legal challenges will focus on whether or not the Government can pass a law that overrides the courts on whether Rwanda is safe..."*



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CAN BE ABORTED UNTIL BIRTH**

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*[spuc.org.uk/abortionamendments](https://spuc.org.uk/abortionamendments)*

IMAGE: BABY GIRL BORN AT 6TH MONTH OF PREGNANCY



Society for the Protection  
of Unborn Children

## Resurrection now!

**Sir John Battle**



Leaving the crematorium after a tragic humanist funeral for a young man, I was approached by one of the young mourners who knew I attended the local community Catholic Church. He asked me “Does your God mean there to be a happy ending?”

It was a direct way of putting that difficult ‘theodicy question’ of why God allows suffering and death. Explaining that the Resurrection is not the same as resuscitation but a process of transformation into a radically new life is not easy. Nor is Jesus Christ’s Resurrection to be taken as a on-off past event. As part of the mystery of a paschal cycle, Good Friday marks a real death and loss of life; Easter Sunday marks the ‘reception of new life’; followed by ‘forty days’ which are ‘a time for readjustment to the new and for grieving the old’.

This is then followed by the Ascension which is ‘letting go of the old and letting it bless you’ then to be capped by Pentecost; ‘the reception of the new spirit for the new life that one is already living’.

In other words Christ’s Resurrection for us is not an end of life one-off event. The paschal mystery is the key to life.

As Fr Gerard W. Hughes puts it in *God, Where Are You?*: “The scriptures and Church doctrine are given to us, not primarily as a record of past events but as a means of helping us to recognise God at work in our own lives now. If it is true that Christ has risen and that we too are to rise again, then that truth is given in order to help us to live now... therefore the resurrection is a source of endless help and reassurance and belief in the resurrection is not simply a hope for the future but also a power in the present”.

The Resurrection thus means hope, amidst the suffering and continuing crucifixions of the innocent, for ourselves, for society and the whole world.

Our Easter challenge is to hold suffering and hope together for all others as we are called to continue walking with Christ and side by side with his people today.

*“Our Easter challenge is to hold suffering and hope together for all as we continue walking with Christ and side by side with his people today...”*

# Heavens above, it looks like Christianity is back in vogue!

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Caroline Farrow**



If the headlines are to be believed, Catholicism may be experiencing the green shoots of revival across the Western world.

Westminster Cathedral, which has a maximum capacity of 3,000, was forced to stop letting people into the solemn liturgy on Good Friday and as prominent Catholic Robert Stephenson-Padron posted on social media platform X, St James Church in Spanish Place London, was similarly full, although he was at least allowed to find a space standing among the crowds amongst the back.

Stephenson-Padron, who is the CEO of Penrose Care, a company which works to overcome the exploitation of workers in the care sector, remarked that Easter 2024 appears to be very special and is the first time since his own baptism in 2006 that there seems to be a flood of new converts into the Catholic Church.

His X page was full of posts from around the world highlighting this trend, including a post from the Dominicans highlighting 1,100 new Church members in the diocese of Charlotte, North Carolina this Easter. One church in a very rural part of North Carolina reported 800 attendees for the Easter vigil, and standing room only, for a service that ran to four hours.

Anecdotal reports of the Easter vigil taking much longer than usual due to the number of catechumens received were widespread.

Catholics on social media also reported surges in attendance in New York City, with one commentator reporting that this year’s number of attendees to the Easter Mass was the highest he has seen in over 25 years. Another parish in Auburn, Alabama, reported an incredible 82 people being received into the Church at Easter, and a poster from Florida claimed 50 baptisms and 30 confirmations.

There are, as yet, no official figures, but numbers coming from France were equally positive: it confirmed that 7,135 adults were baptised in French churches this Easter, double the figures from 20 years ago, with a third of these new adults aged between 18 and 25.

Certainly my own social media feed appeared to confirm this joyful news; everywhere I looked people were posting photos and stories of catechumens from their own parishes.



**Rite of Election in Westminster Cathedral. 398 adults from 82 parishes received the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter 2024. © Mazur/catholicchurch.org.uk**

In my home parish, the Good Friday liturgy certainly seemed fuller than usual; greeters at the back ran out of Mass books, and the Easter Sunday morning Masses were standing room only. The vigil didn’t seem any busier than usual but they were certainly longer, thanks to baptisms and adult confirmations.

There was also heartening news of ‘celebrity confirmations’, notably Tammy Peterson, the wife of famous cultural commentator Jordan Peterson, who was received during the Easter Vigil at the Holy Rosary Church in Toronto and is currently doing the rounds of various Catholic media outlets, giving inspirational interviews about her faith and how praying the rosary gave her strength as she was undergoing cancer treatment.

Perhaps one of the most incredible statements to emerge this Easter was the one from evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, who is also world-famous for being an atheist. He said in an interview on LBC that while he was happy that overall, the number of believing Christians was declining, he nonetheless counted himself as a “cultural Christian”. Dawkins waxed lyrical about how he grew up in a world of hymns at Christmas and how he would be horrified if our beautiful parish churches and cathedrals disappeared.

Dawkins was speaking in the context of the controversy surrounding the erection of lights on Oxford Street to celebrate Ramadan which was deemed culturally insensitive seeing as

Ramadan also coincides with Lent, and the flying of the Pakistani flag, complete with the crescent of Islam, on the rooftop of Westminster Abbey. “Christianity” said Dawkins, “is a fundamentally decent religion whereas Islam is not”.

Dawkins was keen to make a distinction between the doctrine of Islam and ordinary Muslims, but he said that he objected to Islam because of its supposed hostile attitude to women and gays (sic), and that he preferred to live in a culturally Christian country, even though he did not believe a single word of the Christian faith.

Naturally enough, Dawkins’ words have caused great uproar both among the liberal atheist community who feel as though he has let them down, and among Christians, who are seizing on them as a sign of hope and stating that Dawkins should be applauded. Dawkins has also made very welcome comments about the differences between male and female and condemned gender ideology.

Personally, I find it difficult to award Dawkins any credit because, effectively, what he was saying is that he prefers a Christian society to an Islamic one and that he would prefer to live in a society based on Christian values of love and acceptance, but without any of the hard stuff. For example, one of Dawkins’ beliefs is that it is immoral for parents to bring children with Down syndrome into the world knowingly.

There is a palpable sense that

people are beginning to turn to Christianity because they are sick of secular ideology, of the constant LGBT dogma and critical race theories being imposed upon society and because they are frightened as the comforting cultural Christianity outlined by Dawkins begins to disappear from view, although Dawkins himself appears to display a staggering lack of self-awareness that it is the actions of people like him that have contributed to the erosion of respect for Christianity across the West.

I’m certainly not going to criticise or bemoan the beautiful signs of encouragement we have seen this Easter, but I would also advise a note of caution. Christianity should not be embraced because it is the best value or social system, but because it is grounded in what Peter Hitchens recently called a “dangerous truth”. There’s a current online trend whereby people address each other ironically online as “my brother in Christ” or say “Christ is King” as form of provocation or to demonstrate that they are on trend, which isn’t to be welcomed as increasing acceptance of Christ, but an abuse of the Holy Name.

We must remember that those who have converted this Easter have done so following a period of serious instruction and deep prayerful reflection because they have learned the truth of Christ, not merely because they have seen Christianity as an antidote to ‘wokeism’.



## New direction needed as channel crossings reach new record

More than 4,600 asylum seekers have arrived in Britain on small boats so far in 2024, a record total for the first three months of the year and giving Prime Minister Rishi Sunak a fresh political headache.

Provisional data from the Home Office showed on Wednesday that 4,644 people had been detected arriving across the Channel on small boats. That compares with 3,770 for the same period last year and 4,162 for 2022, the previous record high.

Mr Sunak is hoping his flagship scheme to deport those arriving in Britain without permission to Rwanda will deter people from making the dangerous cross-Chan-

nel crossings. Legislation which aims to get that plan up and running after a series of legal setbacks is due back in Parliament next month.

“The unacceptable number of people who continue to cross the Channel demonstrates exactly why we must get flights to Rwanda off the ground as soon as possible,” a Home Office spokesperson said.

“We continue to work closely with French police who are facing increasing violence and disruption on their beaches as they work tirelessly to prevent these dangerous, illegal and unnecessary journeys.”

However, JRS UK said the figures

masked a bigger problem. They told the *Universe*: “It is horrifying that refugees are forced to make dangerous journeys in order to seek sanctuary.

“Furthermore, there is strong evidence that punishing those who need to move only forces them to take more dangerous routes.

“Our Government must focus on building bridges rather than walls for refugees, and extending protection to those who need it.”

Overall, annual numbers fell 36 per cent last year from 2022’s record, which led to Sunak claiming the Government was beginning to have success in stopping the boats.



## Treading the boards with faith: Catholic Union Pub Talk with Alex Macqueen

Acclaimed BAFTA nominated actor and writer Alex Macqueen will be the guest speaker in the Catholic Union’s next ‘Pub Talk’ which takes place on Tuesday, 30th April.

Alex is rarely off our screens, small and big, and has appeared in popular shows such as *The Inbetweeners*, *Peaky Blinders* and *Downton Abbey* to name but a few. He has agreed to talk about being a Catholic in the acting world.

The Pub Talk will take place in the upstairs room of the Windsor Castle pub on Francis Street, behind Westminster Cathedral.

It will commence at 6pm and will be free to attend, but you are advised to book early as tickets will be limited.

As with previous Pub Talks, the event is sponsored by the *Universe*.

Alex Macqueen comments: “I’m really looking forward to chatting about the making of *The Thick Of It* and my eccentric foray into politics as the Rt Hon The Lord Nicholson of Arnage CBE! It’ll be a great opportunity to reflect on what it lampooned at the time and what it foreshadowed, especially in the current climate”.

Catholic Union, Director, Nigel Parker, commented: “We’re delighted that Alex has agreed to join us for this talk. The Catholic Union has



been focusing on faith in the workplace, indeed this will be a large part of the Catholic Union’s Catholic Manifesto in advance of the General Election and it will be very interesting to see what insights Alex can share with us.”

The Catholic Union’s Pub Talk events are aimed at people with a background or interest in politics and public affairs but are open to everyone.

The events provide an informal opportunity for networking and discussion, and the chance to hear from a guest speaker.

**You can book on the event by going to:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/3v3y2rux>.  
**The event is free but pre-booking is required**

## King Charles makes welcome return to public duties

King Charles attended the annual Easter church service in Windsor on Easter Sunday, his first appearance at a public royal event since his cancer diagnosis was announced in February.

King Charles waved as he and Queen Camilla arrived by car at St George’s Chapel, the resting place of his late mother Queen Elizabeth, for the service.

Charles has postponed all previous public engagements since Buckingham Palace announced he was to undergo treatment for an unspecified form of cancer which was found in tests after he had a corrective procedure to an enlarged prostate in January.

While the king attended church on Sunday, the Prince of Wales and his family did not. The Princess of Wales said earlier this month she was undergoing preventative chemotherapy after cancer was discovered following abdominal surgery in January.

Charles has kept up with the bulk of his non-public state duties since

February, including greeting foreign officials and holding regular meetings with the Prime Minister.

However, he missed the annual Maundy Thursday service but issued an audio message which aired at the event, in which he expressed his sorrow at not being there and wished the public a happy Easter.



### Do you want there to be a strong Catholic voice in our society?



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Public Engagement  
by Catholics  
for the  
Common Good

## In Brief

### Reform pledges net zero referendum in challenge to Sunak

Reform UK has pledged to hold a referendum on net zero in a fresh challenge to Rishi Sunak.

Richard Tice, the Reform leader, said his insurgent party would support a Brexit-style poll on the 2050 climate target, which he has argued is damaging the economy and voters' lives.

Mr Sunak ruled out a referendum last summer after facing pressure from Tory MPs, including senior figures in Red Wall seats, to "rethink the headlong rush for net zero".

In 2022, Mr Tice and Nigel Farage, the honorary president of Reform, were involved in Vote Power, Not Poverty, a short-lived campaign group calling for the public to have its say on green targets brought in by Theresa May.

### Illnesses linked to polluted water up

Polluted water is causing 60 per cent more hospital admissions than a decade ago, official figures show. The number of people admitted to hospital for water-borne diseases, including dysentery and Weil's disease, has increased from 2,085 people in 2010-11 to 3,286 in 2022-23, according to NHS statistics.

In the last year alone, 122 people were diagnosed with leptospirosis (Weil's disease), which is contracted from the urine of infected rats, double the number diagnosed with the same disease in 2010.

### King in tribute to 'awful' BBC man

The King has offered a retirement tribute to the BBC's Nicholas Witchell, despite once being caught saying "I can't bear that man" in a hot mic moment.

Witchell, the broadcaster's royal correspondent since 1998, was famously branded "awful" by the then Prince of Wales on the ski slopes of Klosters, Switzerland, 19 years ago.

However, the monarch surprised the 70-year-old BBC journalist with a "warm-hearted" personal message to mark his retirement from the corporation after almost half a century.

The recording was played at Witchell's leaving party at Broadcasting House, central London, where guests were stunned to hear Charles joke about the "ups and downs" that the two men had experienced over the years.

# Decades of abuse has left the impoverished Tajiks easy prey for those who push terrorism

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Stephen Hall**



It has emerged that the four gunmen charged in the murder of at least 139 concert-goers at Moscow's Crocus City Hall theatre were all citizens of the small post-Soviet nation of Tajikistan in Central Asia.

Does their nationality have anything to do with their alleged terrorism? Many Russians probably think so.

Tajikistan, a landlocked country of 10 million sandwiched between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and China, is the most impoverished of the former Soviet republics. Known for its corruption and political repression, it has chafed under the iron-fisted rule of President Emomali Rahmon since 1994.

There are estimated to be well over three million Tajiks living in Russia, about one-third of the total Tajik population. Most of them hold the precarious status of 'guest workers,' holding low-paying jobs in construction, produce markets or even cleaning public toilets.

While Russia's declining population has led to increasing reliance on foreign workers to fill such needs within its labour force, the attitude of Russians towards natives of Central Asia and the Caucasus region is generally negative.

It's similar to the American stereotype about Mexicans so infamously expressed by Donald Trump in 2015: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists."

Non-Slavs are systematically discriminated against in Russia, and since 2022 they have been disproportionately conscripted and sent to Ukraine to serve as cannon fodder at the front.

#### Tajik exclusion

As I have described in a recent book, few nations in history have seen their standing so dramatically reduced as the Tajiks have over the past 100 years.

For more than a millennium, the Tajiks — Persian-speaking descendants of the ancient Sogdians who dominated the Silk Road — were Central Asia's cultural elite.

Beginning with what's known as the New Persian Renaissance of the 10th century when their capital, Bukhara, came to rival Baghdad as

Muhammadsobir Fayzov, a Tajik suspect in the Moscow terror attack, sits in a glass cage in the Basmanny District Court in Moscow on 24th March



a centre of Islamic learning and high culture, Tajiks were the principal scholars and bureaucrats of Central Asia's major cities right up to the time of the Russian Revolution.

The famous medieval polymath Avicenna was an ethnic Tajik, as were the hadith collector Bukhari, the Sufi poet Rumi, and many others.

But as the most significant purveyors of Central Asia's Islamic civilization, Tajiks were seen by the Bolsheviks as representing an obsolete legacy that socialism aimed to overcome.

The Tajiks were virtually excluded from the massive social and political restructuring imposed on Central Asia during the early years of the Soviet Union, with most of their historical territory, including the fabled cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, being awarded to the Turkic-speaking Uzbeks who were seen as being more malleable.

Only as late as 1929 were the Tajiks given their own republic, consisting mostly of marginal,

mountainous territory and deprived of any major urban centres.

#### Impoverished

Throughout the 20th century, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was the most impoverished and underdeveloped region of the former Soviet Union, and it has retained that unfortunate status since independence in 1991.

From 1992-1997, the country was plunged into a devastating civil war that destroyed what infrastructure remained from the Soviet period. Since that time, President Rahmon has used the threat of renewed civil conflict to vindicate his absolute rule.

The spectre of radical Islam emanating from neighbouring Afghanistan — where the Tajik population considerably outnumbers that of Tajikistan — has provided additional justification for Rahmon's repressive policies.

In today's Tajikistan even those with a university education find it almost impossible to earn a

salary that would enable them to build a normal family life.

That's why, disempowered and humiliated by the system, they are easy prey for radical Islamic preachers who give them a sense of value and purpose.

The added backdrop of financial desperation makes for an explosive cocktail: one of the suspects in the recent Moscow attacks reportedly told his Russian interrogators that he was promised a cash reward of half a million Russian rubles (about US\$5,300) to carry out his alleged atrocities.

#### Terrorism as desperation?

Normal, sane human beings everywhere are horrified by terrorist acts regardless of how they are justified by their perpetrators, and the long-suffering people of Tajikistan are no exception.

But unfortunately, the conditions under which a small number of extremists can perceive the psychopathic murder of innocent civilians for cash or ideology as an attractive option show no signs of abating.

Russia's laughable attempt to somehow link the Moscow attacks to Ukraine is a clumsy diversion from the consequences of its relations with Central Asia.

**Stephen Hall is a Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Russian and Post-Soviet Politics, University of Bath**

*"Throughout the 20th century, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was the most impoverished and underdeveloped region of the former Soviet Union, and it has retained that unfortunate status since independence in 1991..."*



Just like the Beatles: The Poor Clares on the iconic zebra crossing outside Abbey Road studios, where the album was mixed

## Poor Clares ready to take fans on a reflective, connected journey as they prepare for album launch

Members of the Poor Clares of Arundel recreated the Beatles' famous photograph on the zebra crossing outside Abbey Road recording studios in London, after they finished recording their new album.

Called *My Peace I Give You*, it comes out on 24th May and follows the success of their debut album, *Light for the World*, which sold more than 80,000 copies and 60 million streams in 2020.

At the heart of the new album, which is divided into seven songs, is the 'Canticle of Creation' by St Francis of Assisi.

The community comprises sisters aged between 50 and 96, drawn from six nationalities.

A spokesman for Decca, which is producing the album, said: "Our favourite nuns captured the hearts of millions with *Light for the World*, and the sisters are now gearing up to bring music from the 13th century back to the mainstream pop chart once again.

"For some artists, it is so often a case of the difficult second album, but the difficulty for the sisters was saying no to making one! Since the release and success of their first record, they have been inundated with fan mail asking for another.

"Recorded at the convent chapel in Arundel and mixed at the world-famous Abbey Road Studios, this new album is a message of peace for a fractured world and the importance of caring for the planet."

The sisters said the album has a universal messages "that we hope resonates with all who seek peace and harmony, especially in these challenging times.

"It is a call to embrace happiness, and invites listeners on a journey of reflection and connection with the world around us, sharing their ethos of kindness, calm and meditation through music."

Helping others is central to the work of the nuns, so the Poor Clares were delighted to donate their profits from sales of their first album to

charity and will continue to do so. The sisters have also continued their work in the community, from time spent at running their small guesthouse in Arundel, to helping the local community in Bungoma in Kenya, where the sisters have a foundation.

Paired with the teachings of St Francis and St Clare, the Poor Clare Sisters of Arunde celebrate peace, forgiveness, healing, patience and joy with this album.

As the nuns themselves say, there is no need to be religious to love their music. Sister Graça explains: "My longing is for our music to touch people's hearts, and that's been the response. A lot of people are saying, 'I don't believe in God, but there is something about your music that takes me somewhere that I had never experienced before. That's it.'"

**Out on May 24 on Decca Record. All profits from the album will be given to charity.**

## There's a rare whisky treat waiting for cathedral in 2039

To commemorate the 800th anniversary of the laying of the first foundation stones of Dornoch Cathedral, a unique cask of malt whisky has been filled.

Dubbed 'Cathedral Spirit,' this special whisky was set aside on 1st April, St Gilbert's Day and will be aged for 15 years in storage.

St Gilbert, originally known as Gilbert de Moravia, was a relation of the Earls of Moray and the first Earl of Sutherland, who was elected to the Bishopric of Caithness.

Recognised as 'one of the noblest and wisest ecclesiastics the medieval church produced' and the last Scotsman to whom a place was given in the Calendar of Saints, St Gil-

bert moved the seat of the diocese from Halkirk to Dornoch in 1224.

The whole history of the cathedral is marked by turmoil, including a devastating fire in 1570 and desecration of Gilbert's tomb during a clan feud between the Murrays of Dornoch and the Mackays of Strathnaver.

Though nearly razed, the cathedral's chancel and transept walls survived and underwent partial restoration in 1616, followed by full restoration between 1835 and 1837.

Despite now serving as a Presbyterian church, the cathedral retains its title as a reminder of its historical significance as a bishop's seat.

Scheduled to be uncorked and bottled in 2039, the whiskey will coincide with the 800th anniversary of worship services commencing at Scotland's smallest operational cathedral.

Profits from the sale of bottles will be put towards the upkeep of the building, which has three stained glass windows, donated in memory of the Scottish/American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who often holidayed at his Skibo estate nearby.

Rt Rev Sally-Foster-Fulton, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was at Dornoch Distillery to observe the cask being put aside.

## Letters to the Editor

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

### French school system fairer on parents

I have read much lately on Labour's (in my view), short-sighted proposal to impose VAT on school fees, which I am strongly against. Some of what I have read mentions being able to offset income tax against the fees.

It makes me think of the excellent system in France, where parents choosing to educate their children privately receive the amount from the state that would have been spent if the child had remained in the state system.

I think that this is a marvellous idea but suspect that part of Labour's drive to implement their plan is purely and simply through the politics of envy.

**Julia Sands, Lytham St Annes**

### Shame on the internet trolls

I listened to the broadcast made by the Princess of Wales, about her treatment for cancer.

She spoke with such courage, and has no doubt given hope to many others who are suffering.

We should all accept her decision to stay out of the spotlight for now while she is being treated for the cancer. I sincerely hope that she makes a full recovery and that the public will give her the privacy she deserves.

Those who have been spreading rumours and conspiracy theories over the past few weeks should be ashamed of themselves.

**Tom Ford, London SW1**

### Heaven is on Earth when you look for it

A couple of weeks ago I was on an island in the western Visayas region of the Philippines. There is a Balete tree there which has

stood (and is still growing) for 1,300 years according to botanists who have studied it.

Amazing to think of all the history that has unfolded since it first sprouted from the earth.

In the same town is Mount Kanlaon, an active volcano that has been spitting out rocks since dinosaurs walked the earth; a truly magnificent sight as the sun rose and glistened on its peak and a squadron of swallows flew by and added their benediction. I am often in awe at the wonders of creation, it restores something in the heart to be immersed in it.

But there was more glory in that town to be seen as I moved from creation to redemption. I went for coffee at Joring's Café. Now in her 70s, the owner has her life story written on the wall of the café. A rebellious teenager, married at 16 and abandoned with two children by 21, she had a tough journey ahead of her. In 1976, with only 27 pesos (50p) and the support of loving, pious parents she started making coffee for the traders and shoppers at the local market, with her children helping to serve and do the dishes.

Through many hardships, and a renewed faith and trust in God, she was able to survive and thrive, as has her whole family. Her grandchildren are college graduates now while she finished schooling part way through high school. But there is more to her success in that she is also an example for the young, encouraging them to obey their parents and keep their values and faith intact, to not make the same mistakes as her; and even to those who do she offers hope through change of heart, faith and diligence in work.

If we have eyes to see it, Heaven and Earth really are full of His Glory.

**Stephen Clark, Manila**



The 1,300-year-old balet tree

## In Brief

### Children's vocabulary shrinking as they ditch books for screens

The vocabulary of children is shrinking because they are abandoning books for screens, according to *Countdown* lexicographer Susie Dent.

Ms Dent, who is also a professional etymologist, author and TV personality with a degree in modern languages from Oxford University, often wins plaudits online for posting obscure words on Twitter.

The avid reader spoke to Vicki Perrin for an episode of *The Queen's Reading Room* podcast, which was established in 2021 by the current Queen.

In the interview she expressed "real concern" that the prevalence of digital screens was having an adverse impact on children's grasp of English, and there was clear evidence of a narrowing of vocabulary among younger children

### Spotted that... did you miss it?

Ever wondered why you always fumble a catch or mishit a moving ball? It's not that you are no good at sport – more that the speed you view moving images is slower than others.

Trinity College Dublin conducted experiments to show that the speed of visual perception varies widely, meaning some people can "see" more information every second than others.

Scientists used a "flicker test", which flashes a light at increasing speeds until it is blinking so quickly it appears completely still.

When they asked participants at what point the light had stopped flickering, some said they saw a steady light at just 35 blinks per second, while others still saw flashing at more than 60 flickers per second.

The study, published in the journal *Plos One*, suggests some people have an innate advantage in certain settings where response time is crucial, such as ball sports.

### Six days a week post to stay

Royal Mail will maintain its six-day-a-week service for first class letters under new proposals for reform. Regulator Ofcom had suggested it could reduce the number of delivery days from six to five or even three per week, as it struggles with heavy losses.

But Royal Mail has suggested a better plan would be for second class letters to be delivered only every other weekday. Parcels would still be delivered seven days a week.

# Mercy on the ocean wave as medics take life-changing skills to Africa

## British surgeon on board Mercy Ship performs life-changing surgery for Amadou, 4

Surgery performed by a British consultant on board a hospital ship has helped a four-year-old boy transform his life.

Amadou, from Senegal, was struggling to walk or move due to rickets. Every step was painful for him. His carer, Mariatou, said watching his condition was heartbreaking. Amadou desperately needed surgery.

After learning of Mercy Ships – a charity that runs the two largest civilian hospital ships in the world – Amadou was introduced to British orthopaedic consultant Dr Rachel Buckingham, who operated on him soon afterwards to straighten his leg.

Dr Buckingham – a surgeon at an NHS hospital in Oxford and Mercy Ships volunteer – said: "Amadou's left leg was very weak – it curved outwards and his knee bent at an uncomfortable angle.

"I could see he had rickets – a condition often caused by malnutrition and not enough Vitamin D.

"I don't see conditions like this in the UK because children are treated before deformities become severe. But in West Africa, there are far fewer specialised surgeons."

Amadou has a new life following the operation, said Dr Buckingham.

She added: "After surgery I saw him smile as he looked down to see his now straight leg healing in a plaster cast. It took him time to learn to walk again, but once he did, nothing could stop him. Now he can run, play and go to school with his friends."

Mercy Ships operates hospital ships that deliver free, safe surgeries and life-changing healthcare to women, men and children in sub-Saharan Africa. An international faith-based charity, Mercy Ships has partnered with African nations and local organisations over the past three decades, to provide training to local healthcare professionals and support the construction of medical infrastructure.

Mercy Ships runs the world's largest charity hospital ships, delivering free, world-class surgical care to people facing real need in



sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr Buckingham first boarded a Mercy Ship in 2019. Although it was her first experience volunteering with the charity, Dr Buckingham was propelled by a long legacy of service. Her grandmother became a doctor 100 years previously – at a time when some UK universities wouldn't qualify women as physicians.

She said: "My grandmother was a doctor and a trailblazer. In the 1920s she went off as an unmarried woman to India. It was she, who was my inspiration. Hearing what she did, including her work with leprosy patients, made me decide, aged 10, that I wanted to study medicine. And I did not want to do anything else from then on!"

Dr Buckingham has also helped to train and mentor the next generation of surgical specialists on board the hospital ships in sub-Saharan Africa, making an impact for decades to come.

"Mercy Ships is a breath of fresh air. It is so professional. People come from all over the world who are properly trained and vetted, and you see an incredible can-do attitude to work together to change lives," she added.

On Easter Sunday, Dr Buckingham shared about her experience working on board a Mercy Ship on BBC Radio 4.

*"After surgery I saw him smile as he looked down to see his now straight leg healing in a plaster cast. It took him time to learn to walk again, but once he did, nothing could stop him."*



Above, Amadou prepares for his operation. The little boy's leg was severely deformed by rickets, and every step he took caused him pain.

Below, having fun after his operation. He can now live a normal life, thanks to the work of Dr Buckingham and the team on Mercy Ships

Left, Dr Buckingham: "Mercy Ships is a breath of fresh air. It is so professional and caring."



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# A blessed Easter

Pope Francis waves to a crowd estimated at in excess of 60,000 on Easter Sunday



## Cindy Wooden

Pope Francis used his Easter message to the faithful crowded into St Peter's Square to be like the women who discovered Jesus had risen from the dead – and to run to others to tell them the Good News.

Easter, he said, should fill Christians with such joy “that they cannot help sharing it with others.”

“The resurrection of Jesus is not just wonderful news or the happy ending of a story, but something that changes our lives completely and forever,” the pope added before leading a recitation of the *Regina Coeli* prayer.

Beginning by wishing visitors in St. Peter's Square a Happy Easter,

the pope said the joy of the resurrection is beyond any other joy because “it is the victory of life over death, hope over despondency.”

“Jesus broke through the darkness of the tomb and lives forever. His presence can fill anything with light,” the pope said. “With him, every day becomes a step in an eternal journey, every ‘today’ can hope for a ‘tomorrow,’ every end a new beginning, every instant is projected beyond the limits of time, toward eternity.”

Pope Francis prayed that the peace and hope that flow from the Resurrection would “reach those places where there is greatest need: the people exhausted by war, by

hunger, by every form of oppression.”

The Risen Lord told the women and tells Christians today, “Do not be afraid,” he said. “And if Jesus, the conqueror of sin, fear and death, tells us not to fear, then let us not be afraid, let us not settle into a hopeless life, let us not give up the joy of Easter!”

The women's joy came from encountering the Risen Jesus and sharing the news with others, he said. “So, let us hasten to seek him in the Eucharist, in his forgiveness, in prayer and in lived charity.”

“Joy increases when it is shared,” he said. “Let us share the joy of Risen One.”

## Pope preaches patience, even during war and conflicts

Contemplating Christ's passion should inspire Christians to be more patient in the face of their own suffering and trials, Pope Francis said.

“There is no better witness to the love of Christ than meeting a patient Christian,” Pope Francis said during his general audience at the vatican for Holy Week.

“We must be honest: We are often lacking in patience,” he said. “In daily life, we are all impatient.”

Just days after raising concerns about his health when he skipped his homily at Palm Sunday Mass,

Pope Francis read his speech without visible signs of difficulty and added off-the-cuff remarks.

In his catechesis, the pope said that the virtue of patience is an “essential vitamin” needed to combat the human instinct to “become impatient and respond to evil with evil.”

Quoting St. Augustine, Pope Francis said that patience entails “knowing how to endure evils.”

The pope then pointed to two men seated in the front row of the audience hall, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who had both lost

daughters in violent conflicts; the pope praised them for choosing friendship instead of focusing on “the enmity of war.”

Patience is more than a value that helps one lead a good life, the pope said; it is a countercultural Christian calling.

“If Christ is patient, Christians are called to be patient,” he said, countering today's fast-paced culture and a widespread mentality of wanting “everything and now.”

“Let us not forget that haste and impatience are enemies of spiritual

life,” Pope Francis said. “God is love, and he who loves does not tire; God is patient, God knows how to wait.”

Pope Francis urged Christians to ask the Holy Spirit for the “meek power of patience” and told them to contemplate Christ on the cross to learn from his patience.

“It is precisely in the Passion that there emerges the patience of Christ, who with gentleness and meekness accepts being arrested, beaten and unjustly condemned,” he said. “This is the patience of Jesus.”

The pope encouraged Christians

to pray before the crucified Christ and to ask for the grace to put into practice “an act of mercy as well-known as it is neglected: patiently enduring bothersome people.”

Christians should look at people who may annoy them “with compassion, with God's gaze, knowing how to distinguish their faces from their mistakes,” he said.

Pope Francis ended by praying for peace in Ukraine after intense bombings of civilian areas, as well as in Israel and Palestine: “That the Lord may give peace to all.”



A smiling Pope greets the faithful, as he prepares for the Regina Coeli prayer (right)



## We remember Holy Land's brave Christians

Pope Francis told Catholics in the Holy Land that this year's Easter celebrations "are overshadowed by the Passion and, as yet, so little by the Resurrection."

He told the region's Catholics that he was remembering all of them in his prayers: "I embrace those most affected by the senseless tragedy of war: the children robbed of their future, those who grieve and are in pain, and all who find themselves prey to anguish and dismay."

The Hamas attack on Israel in early October and Israel's retaliation on Gaza have led to death and suffering for Christians in Gaza, but also have seriously restricted the

number of pilgrims to the Holy Land, which impacts the livelihood of many Christian families. In addition, heightened Israeli security measures have meant that many Palestinian cannot cross the border to work.

"I would like each of you to feel my paternal affection, for I am conscious of your sufferings and your struggles, particularly in the course of these recent months," the pope added. "Easter, the heart of our faith, is all the more significant for you who celebrate this feast in the very places where our Lord lived, died and rose again," he said.

"The history of salvation, and in-

deed its geography, would not exist apart from the land in which you have dwelt for centuries."

Pope Francis said he knew "Christians want to remain in the Holy Land," and he thanked them "for your testimony of faith, thank you for the charity that exists among you, thank you for your ability to hope against all hope."

He also prayed that the region's Catholics would be able to "sense the love of Catholics across the world!"

"You are not alone," he told them. "We will never leave you alone but will demonstrate our solidarity with you by prayer and practical charity."

In his message Pope Francis quot-

ed from a letter St. Paul VI had written on 25th March, 1974, on the needs of Catholics and the Catholic Church in the Holy Land: "The continuing tensions in the Middle East, and the lack of concrete progress toward peace, represent a constant and dire threat not only to the peace and security of those peoples – and indeed of the entire world – but also to values supremely dear, for different reasons, to much of mankind."

Down through the centuries, local Christians have protected the "the places of our salvation," the sites associated with Jesus' life, ministry and resurrection, he said. But also, the Christian community has

"borne enduring witness, through its own sufferings, to the mystery of the Lord's Passion."

"By your ability to rise anew and press forward, you have proclaimed, and continue to proclaim, that the crucified Lord rose from the dead," the pope told them.

"In these bleak times, when it seems that the dark clouds of Good Friday hover over your land, and all too many parts of our world are scarred by the pointless folly of war – which is always and for everyone a bitter defeat – you are lamps shining in the night, seeds of goodness in a land rent asunder by conflict," Pope Francis said.

## Holy Father shows humility of Christ as he washes prisoners' feet

**Cindy Wooden**

The pope celebrated the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper at a women's prison near Rome, washing the feet of 12 inmates.

The prisoners, who hailed from Italy, Bulgaria, Nigeria, Ukraine, Peru, Venezuela and Bosnia-Herzegovina, were in the Rebibbia prison and classed as medium-security prisoners.

It is now a tradition of the Holy Father's, to enter a prison on this day, but this was the first time he had washed the feet only of women.

Keeping with his practice at the facilities, he gave only a brief homily, speaking without notes.

By washing his disciples' feet, Jesus humbles himself, the pope said. "With this gesture, he makes us understand what he had said, 'I came not to be served but to serve.' He teaches us the path of service."

The evening Gospel reading also included the line, "The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over."

Pope Francis told the women that Judas was incapable of love, and so "money, selfishness lead

him to this horrible thing" of betraying Jesus.

But, the pope said, "Jesus forgives everything. Jesus always forgives. He only asks that we ask pardon."

Quoting a "wise, old woman," Pope Francis said, "Jesus never tires of forgiving, but we tire of asking forgiveness."

"Today, let's ask the Lord for the grace not to tire," he said. "All of us have small failures, big failures, but the Lord awaits us always with open arms and never tires of forgiving."

Before he washed the women's feet, he encouraged the women to pray that "the Lord will make all of us grow in the vocation of service."

Archbishop Diego Giovanni Ravelli, the papal master of liturgical ceremonies, was the main celebrant at the altar. Fr Andrea Carosella, the prison chaplain that the women themselves invited the pope. "For them, the pope's visit is a sign of his great attention to the prison reality. Tears flowed when he began washing their feet; his visit is a sign of the mercy and love of God."



## ROME AT EASTER

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

# Pope prays at home as thousands flock to Colosseum

Carol Glatz

Pope Francis skipped the traditional Good Friday night-time Way of the Cross service at Rome's Colosseum, staying home to pray as 25,000 braved cold and damp weather to join in the moving service.

The pope had been expected to attend, but a last-minute change of heart saw him postpone, "to conserve his health ahead of the Saturday vigil mass and Easter Sunday."

Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, papal vicar for Rome, filled in for the pope, offering the final blessing at the end of the ceremony.

Each year, the pope chooses a different person or group of people to write the series of prayers and reflections that are read aloud for each of the 14 stations, which commemorate Christ's condemnation, his carrying the cross to Golgotha, his crucifixion and his burial.

This year the commentaries and prayers were personally written by Pope Francis and were meant, during this Year of Prayer, to "accompany" Jesus on his own journey of prayer during his passion.

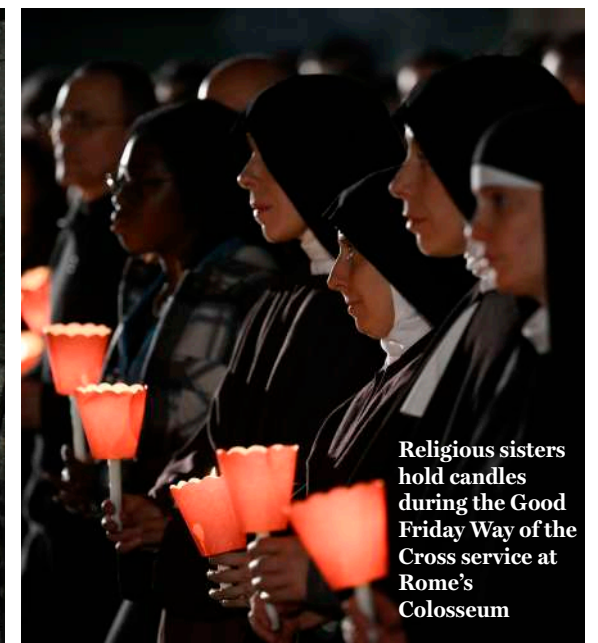
"Of us, you asked only one thing: to remain with you and to keep awake. You did not ask something impossible, but simply closeness. We now take this time to be with you. We want to spend it in closeness to you," the pope wrote in his introduction to the solemn torch-lit service in the Colosseum.

"How many times, though, have I strayed far from you! How many times, like the disciples, rather than keeping awake, have I instead fallen asleep! How many times have I failed to find the time or the desire to pray, whether from weariness, distraction or dullness of mind and heart! Lord Jesus, say once more to me and to us, your Church: 'Get up and pray,'" the pope wrote.

Different groups of people representing different segments of the Church and society passed a bare wooden cross from one group to the next in succession. Those chosen to lead the Way of the Cross included minors living in foster homes, people with disabilities, migrants, catechists, priests and cloistered nuns.

Instead of the traditional station for "Jesus falls for the third time," the pope created a meditation for

25,000 attended the annual event at the Colosseum, which was led by Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, papal vicar for Rome, below



Religious sisters hold candles during the Good Friday Way of the Cross service at Rome's Colosseum

the 11th Station dedicated to "Jesus' cry of abandonment," reflecting on Jesus' "unexpected" prayer of "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"At the height of your passion, you experience the distance of the Father; you no longer even call him 'Father,' but 'God,' almost as if you can no longer glimpse his face. Why?" the meditation said.

"So that you can plunge into the abyss of our pain. You did this for my sake, so that when I see only darkness, when I experience the collapse of my certainties and the wreckage of my life, I will no longer feel alone, but realise that you are there beside me," it said.

The prayers included asking Jesus to "help me recognise you and love you": in the unborn and abandoned children; in young people in pain; in the elderly who have been forgotten; in prisoners; and in those who are exploited and ignored.

For the eighth Station, "Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem," the pope highlighted those who remained with Jesus to the end along the way of the cross.

"Those ordinary people who are great in your eyes, yet small in the eyes of the world. There are the women, in whom you inspired hope: they have no voice, yet they make their presence felt," the meditation said.

"Help us to recognise the dignity of those women who remained faithful and stood by you in your passion, and those who in our own day are exploited and endure injustice and indignity," it said.

The pope's reflection asked peo-

*"Help us to recognise the dignity of those women who remained faithful and stood by you in your passion, and those who in our own day are exploited and endure injustice and indignity,*

ple to consider: "When I am faced with the tragedies of today's world, is my heart frozen or does it melt? How do I react when I see the madness of war, the faces of children no longer able to smile and of mothers who see them hungry and underfed, and have no more tears to shed?"

"Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem;

you weep over the hardness of our hearts," it said, asking people pray to Jesus to "melt my hardened heart."

For the 12th Station, "Jesus dies, commending himself to the Father and the good thief to paradise," the pope underlined "the amazing power of prayer" that led a criminal to Heaven.

"God of the impossible, you turn a thief into a saint," it said, because "if you remember me, my evil will no longer be an endpoint but a new beginning."

The concluding reflection at the 14th Station asked the faithful to think about "what new gift will I give Jesus this Easter? A little more time to spend with him? A little more love for others?"

"It will truly be Easter if only I give something of myself to the One who gave his life for me. For it is in

giving that we receive, and we find our lives whenever we lose them, our possessions whenever we give them away," it said.

Earlier in the day in St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis presided over the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, which commemorates Christ's passion and death on the cross.

The homily was delivered by Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household, who said, God's power is the power of his humble, defenseless love.

He reflected on how Jesus overturned the worldly ideas people had of God and revealed his true face.

"The Father reveals the true face of his omnipotence in his Son who kneels before the disciples to wash their feet; in him who is reduced to the most radical powerlessness on the cross and continues to love and forgive, without condemning anyone," Cardinal Cantalamessa said.

"The omnipotence of God is the omnipotence of defenseless love," he said. "What a lesson for us who, more or less consciously, always want to show off. What a lesson for the powerful of the earth!"





Three semitrucks full of flowers and plants – doused with holy water by a bishop before beginning their journey from the Netherlands – arrived in St. Peter's Square on 30th March to brighten the scene for Easter Sunday.

Since 1985 Dutch flower growers have created the garden of blooms, bud-laden bushes and flowering trees that frame the popes' celebrations of Easter in St. Peter's Square.

After Easter the flowers, shrubs and trees are planted in the Vatican Gardens and in the gardens at the papal residence in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

Working with the gardening team from the Vatican City State governors' office, Dutch florists and two dozen volunteers – including Dutch citizens living in Rome – gather in the square in the early morning quiet of Holy Saturday to empty the trucks and arrange the flowers.

## 2005 conclave plot to stop Ratzinger revealed in new book on popes

Pope Francis has revealed for the first time how he was the victim of a cynical plot by a faction of cardinals at the conclave that voted Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as pope.

The future Pope Benedict XVI was Francis's choice, he told the author of a new book, *El Sucesor* (*The Successor*), at the conclave.

Pope Francis told Spanish journalist Javier Martínez-Brocal, of *ABC*, that he voted for Cardinal Ratzinger in 2005 because after the "dynamic, very active pontificate" of St. John Paul, "a pope was needed that would maintain a healthy balance, a transitional pope."

*El Sucesor* is a book-length interview with Martínez-Brocal focused on Pope Francis' relationship with Pope Benedict. Discussing the conclave which elected his predecessor, Pope Francis said he was "used" by other cardinals attempting to block Cardinal Ratzinger's election. He was widely reported to have come out second on the final ballot.

Pope Francis said that a group of cardinals deployed put forward his name "to block Ratzinger's election

and then negotiate for a different, third candidate." He said he had received 40 of the 115 votes from among the cardinal-electors in the Sistine Chapel – "enough to stop the candidacy of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, because if they would have kept voting for me he would not have been able to reach the two-thirds needed to be elected pope."

"They still did not agree on who would be their choice, but were on the verge of throwing out a name," he said.

Once he learned of the strategy after the second or third ballot cast, Pope Francis said he told Colombian Cardinal Darío Castrillón Hoyos to not "joke with my candidacy" and that he would not accept being pope if he were elected. "And from there Benedict was elected," he said.

Pope Francis said the cardinals who had put him up for election later told him they did not want a "foreign" pope. Although he did not explain what the comment meant, the term "foreign" was used in media reports after the 1978 election of St. John Paul II, the first non-Italian

pope since 1523. Although Pope Francis was born and raised in Argentina he is ethnically Italian.

Pope Francis said that Cardinal Ratzinger "was my candidate" in the conclave and that he came out of the conclave feeling pleased.

"If they had elected someone like me, who makes a big mess, he would not have been able to do anything," he said. "Benedict XVI was a man who went with the new style, and it wasn't easy for him. He found a lot of resistance inside the Vatican."

Asked what he thought the Holy Spirit was saying to the Catholic Church through the election of Pope Benedict, the pope said the Spirit was saying,

"Here I am in charge. There is no room for manoeuvring."

Pope Francis told the journalist that while cardinals are sworn not to reveal what happens in a conclave, "popes are allowed to tell."

The book was released in Spanish on 3rd April; no publication date for an English-language translation for the book has yet been announced.

## Vatican announces new publication on human dignity and gender ideology to be released next week

The Vatican press office announced that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith's declaration on human dignity, said to include a faith-based critique of "gender ideologies" and surrogacy, will be released on Monday, 8th April.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the dicastery, and Monsignor Armando Matteo, secretary of the doctrinal section of the dicastery, along with Dr Paola Scarcella, a professor of medicine and director of catechesis for persons with disabilities with the Community of Sant'Egidio, made the announcement at a press conference on Wednesday.

In an interview with the Spanish news agency EFE in January, Cardinal Fernández had said, "We are preparing a very important document on human dignity which includes not only social issues, but

also a strong critique of moral issues such as sex change, surrogacy, gender ideologies, etc."

The social issues would include anything that impacts human dignity, such as immigration, poverty, war and environmental degradation.

"As Christians, we must not tire of insisting on the primacy of the human person and the defense of his or her dignity beyond every circumstance," Pope Francis told members of the doctrinal dicastery in late January.

The pope said he hoped the new document "will help us, as a Church and family working together, to always be close to all those who, without fanfare, in concrete daily life, fight and personally pay the price for defending the rights of those who do not count."

**Nicaragua's faithful hit by  
Easter crackdown – see pg 18**

# Latest crackdown in Nicaragua sees ban on Easter processions

David Agren, OSV News

Catholics hoping to celebrate Holy Week in Nicaragua were left devastated after the ruling Sandinista regime announced a last-minute ban on public exhibitions of faith, including processions and re-enactments of the passion of Christ.

It was the latest in a series of prohibitions and control orders over religious activities in what's becoming an increasingly totalitarian country.

Processions were forced to stay within church atriums and sanctuaries as police and paramilitaries monitored activities outside and even were captured filming events.

Some 30 police officers corralled attendees at the Managua cathedral on Good Friday, independent news outlet Confidential reported, ensuring that nothing occurred outside of church property.

Martha Patricia Molina, a Nicaraguan lawyer in exile who documents Church repression, calculated some 4,000 police were deployed during Holy Week and an estimated 4,800 processions were cancelled. She posted a video on X of three students being arrested for simply carrying the image of a saint.

"Palm Sunday with police and paramilitaries inside and outside of parishes. They're filming and photographing laity. A Sunday under extreme siege," she posted.

"Jesus was also a victim of mobs, who violently seized him with clubs and swords," Fr Edwing Román, an exiled Nicaraguan priest, commented the same day.

Holy Week marked the second consecutive year the regime has prohibited processions and limited



Men carry a statue of Christ as they take part in a Good Friday procession in the courtyards of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Managua, Nicaragua. Photo: Maynor Valenzuela, Reuters

activities to church premises. A source in Nicaragua told news agencies that priests are finding themselves increasing spied upon, and now are careful to watch their words during Mass.

The regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, has cracked down on all of forms of dissent, and portraying the Catholic Church as an enemy for its attempts at finding a political solution to 2018 protests calling for Ortega's overthrow, and subsequent work with the families of political prisoners.

Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who regularly denounced the regime's excesses, was imprisoned for 500 days and exiled to the Vatican in January along with another prelate, Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna, and 17 other churchmen.

The regime has subsequently moderated its public discourse toward the Church, according to observers, after blasting church leaders as "terrorists" and "coup mongers," going so far as to label the Pope as a troublemaker.

Religious orders have been closed down, as have a number of schools

run by the Church.

Evangelical pastors have also come under persecution in Nicaragua. Eleven pastors affiliated with Nicaraguan Mountain Gateway ministries were convicted on money laundering charges, the organisation said.

The pastors received sentences of between 12 and 15 years in prison and each was fined \$80 million. Three US missionaries also were charged, but were not in Nicaragua at the time of the other pastors' arrests in December 2023, Nicaraguan Mountain Gateway said.

## Norway labelled barbaric after lifting abortion limit to 18 weeks

A proposed bill in Norway that would extend the limit women have to terminate their pregnancy to 18 weeks is a "barbaric" step away from Norway's Christian and humanistic heritage, said Bishop Bernt Eidsvig of Oslo.

In an interview posted on the Oslo Diocese's website, he said that because abortion is based on the principle "life can be taken away without justification, we are already in trouble."

"Some even believe that there should be no limit to abortion – that children should be able to be removed at the moment of birth. Society is thus no longer humane, but barbaric," he said.

According to Norway's Ministry of Health and Care, a special commission was set up by the Government in 2022 to

assess the provisions of the Abortion Act – the legislation passed in 1975 that allowed women to obtain an abortion up to the 12th week of pregnancy.

In December, the commission submitted its recommendations to the Government and proposed 'a new abortion law that will safeguard pregnant women's self-determination and access to safe abortions, and at the same time ensure respect for unborn life.'

However, despite its assurance to respect unborn life, the commission recommended the Government extend the limit for an abortion to 18 weeks. In the UK it is 24 weeks.

Bishop Eidsvig said the proposal places Norway on the path "of moving back to the morality of a pre-Christian era."

## Trump moves into Bibles with own branded copy of St James's

Former President Donald Trump has moved into the Bible publishing market – with his own branded Bibles, of course.

Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, recently announced plans to sell \$60 'God Bless the USA Bible,' in partnership with country singer Lee Greenwood.

The Bible contains a King James Version translation – one primarily used by Protestants – as well as handwritten lyrics to Greenwood's *God Bless the USA* ballad, and founding documents including the Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

The Bible's website states it is 'the only Bible endorsed by President Trump!' with Trump, in a social media video, saying, "We must make America pray again."

The announcement was met with criticism on social media even

among conservative or Trump-friendly commentators, with talk radio host Erik Erickson expressing concern it reflects the "transactional" Christianity of "prosperity gospel ministers."

Catholics Leah Libresco Sargeant thought the Trump Bible announcement "most disrespectful to Christians," while Robert P. George, McCormick of Princeton University, suggested responding with humour, outlining what would go into a Robert George Hillbilly Philosophy Professor Bible.

Darren Dochuk, a University of Notre Dame professor of history who studies the intersections of religion and politics, said "Trump's Bible strategy represents a long-standing tradition among politicians to sell religion for political gain." Trump applied the strategy in "an unusually flagrant manner."

## In Brief

### Protesters disrupt Easter vigil Mass

Three protesters from a group called 'Extinction Rebellion' (XR) NYC Palestine Solidarity were arrested after disrupting the Easter Vigil at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

The men, named as John Rozendaal, Gregory Schwedock and Matthew Menzies – have been charged under New York state law with disruption of a religious service.

Videos provided show the men displaying a banner reading 'Silence = Death' as the Liturgy of the Word was in progress; a separate group stood during one of the Mass readings, with one female protester singing *Dona Nobis Pacem*. The group was ejected from the cathedral by staff.

### Court to hear case to ban abortion pill

The US Supreme Court has heard oral arguments in a case brought by a pro-life group looking to stop the use of mifepristone, a pill commonly used for abortion in the USA.

It is the first major case involving abortion since the country's highest court overturned its previous abortion precedent, *Roe vs Wade*, in 2022.

Pro-life opponents of mifepristone filed suit over loosened restrictions by the Food and Drug Administration on the drug, which included making it available by mail, arguing the Government had violated its own safety standards in doing so.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that more than half of the abortions performed in the US are chemical or medical, rather than surgical.

### Russia sanctions clergy over Ukraine

Russia's Government has sanctioned three Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops living in Canada for their support for Ukraine.

The move is in retaliation for sanctions Canada has put on various Russian officials and oligarchs for the war.

Among those listed are Metropolitan Archbishop Lawrence Huculak of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Bishop Bryan Bayda of the Eparchy of Toronto; and Bishop David Motiuk of the Eparchy of Edmonton.

Bishop Motiuk said, "Am I sanctioned for praying for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere throughout the world? If so, I am also guilty."

# Russia's Church rejects Vatican plans to allow same-sex blessings

**Jonathan Luxmoore**

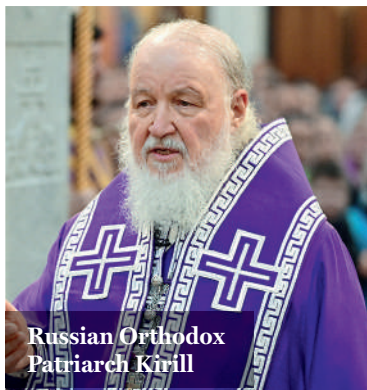
In its first detailed analysis of the Vatican's declaration *Fiducia Supplicans*, Russia's Orthodox Church has accused Pope Francis of "rejecting the Christian moral ideal" by allowing the blessing of same-sex couples.

"While affirming the inviolable understanding of marriage as a union of man and woman ... the entire section of the document devoted to these blessings is in radical conflict with Christian moral teaching," the Russian Church said.

"Although *Fiducia Supplicans*' is an internal document of the Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church considers it has a duty to respond to radical innovations that reject the divinely revealed norms of Christian morality," it said. "While accepting with maternal love every individual sinner who asks for her blessing, the Church cannot bless same-sex couples in any form, since this would mean consenting to a union sinful in nature."

The report, by the Church's Synodal Biblical Commission, comes three months after the publication of *Fiducia Supplicans*, which said Catholic clergy could now give blessings "outside of a liturgical framework" to couples in "irregular" and "unsettled" situations.

It said the Vatican's declaration had changed the Catholic Church's previously "unambiguous position" on same-sex couples, gaining a "positive response" from sexual minorities and the "liberal wing of the Catholic Church," but causing "deep disappointment" among "traditional Catholics."



Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill

It added that the document had sought to move away from "merely denying, rejecting and excluding," but had failed to clarify its terminology, while remaining "completely silent about the sacrament of repentance" and "indirectly legitimising what, in essence, is illegitimate."

"God's love for man cannot serve as a basis for blessing couples in sinful cohabitation," the Russians said.

"This declaration says nothing about ... renouncing a sinful lifestyle or pastoral assistance to the believer in overcoming sin. ... One can conclude from it that a sinful lifestyle does not pose an obstacle to communion with God," the Orthodox Church added.

*Fiducia Supplicans* was published by the Dicastery for Doctrine of the Faith and signed by its Argentine prefect, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández. He said Catholic priests should be permitted to give "pastoral" and "spontaneous" blessings to same-sex and unmarried couples, without "validating their status or changing in any way the church's perennial teaching on marriage."

However, the proposed blessings

have been rejected by numerous Catholic bishops' conferences and dioceses worldwide, while Egypt's historic Coptic Church, the Middle East's largest Christian denomination, announced it was suspending dialogue with Catholics over the issue, "after consulting with sister-churches from the Orthodox family."

Theologians from the world's 14 other main Orthodox churches, together making up around 220 million Christians, also are believed to be studying *Fiducia Supplicans*, including those of Serbia and Greece, which have condemned legislation on same-sex unions.

The Russian Church "directly and unequivocally" rejected homosexuality, as "sinful damage to human nature," and "categorically" denied recognition to "forms of cohabitation outside the previously given definition of marriage."

However, its claims to be defending traditional Christian values have been widely derided in view of its support for the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

## Finland in mourning after deadly school gun attack

Finland was left shocked this week after a boy was killed and two girls seriously wounded in a shooting at a school in Vantaa, north of the capital, Helsinki.

All three victims were 12. The main suspect for the attack, who fled the scene but was later detained by police, was also aged 12.

One of the wounded girls has dual Finnish-Kosovan nationality.

A day of mourning across the

country was marked on Wednesday as a mark of respect for the victims.

According to Finnish TV channel MTV Uutiset, the boy calmly walked into school wearing a mask and headphones before opening fire.

Police have not confirmed a reason for the deadly assault but reports on social media said the boy had reportedly been the victim of bullying. They are also investigating where he got the gun from.

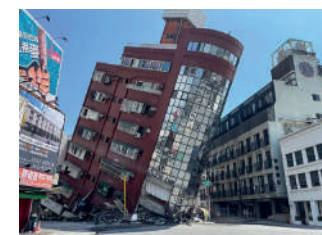
## Taiwan rocked by huge 'quake

Taiwan was struck by its most powerful earthquake in 25 years on Wednesday, with some geologists reporting it was 7.4 in magnitude.

The BBC's correspondent in Taiwan, Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, said the quake was "very intense" in the capital, Taipei, but it had escaped with little more than superficial damage. However, the epicentre of the quake, the eastern coast region of Hualien, had been badly affected, with huge landslides causing millions of tons of earth to come crashing down into valleys and the sea.

Wingfield-Hayes reported: "The east coast of Taiwan is very rugged and parts are very remote, so it is difficult at this stage to assess how bad the damage is."

"However, videos shared on



social media show some huge landslides, and there is growing concern that some people may have been caught up in them."

At least nine people have died and over 800 are injured, while rescuers are searching for more than 100 people trapped in a tunnel in the Jinwen and Qingshui tunnels along the road close to Hualien.

The quake initially set off tsunami warnings on the island.



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

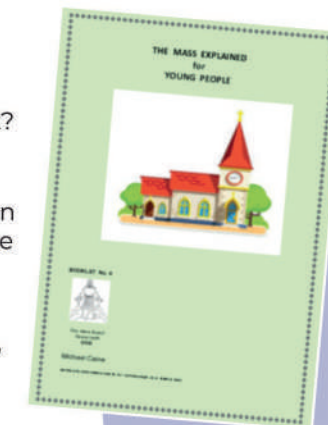
and many, many more...

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Once there you can print off a copy of this **FREE** booklet (right), *The Mass Explained for Young People*. It has clear, concise answers to all the questions above - and many more

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# The President of ‘cafeteria Catholics’

**Cardinal says he accepts that Joe Biden isn’t the ‘perfect Catholic president’ that perhaps the Church wants... ‘he picks and chooses which parts of the faith to follow’**

## Kate Scanlon

While President Joe Biden is “very sincere” about his Catholic faith, “there are things that he chooses to ignore,” Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory said in an interview on Easter Sunday – and that’s something some in the Church have decided to accept.

During a discussion on Easter on *Face the Nation* on CBS News, host Ed O’Keefe said, “Cardinal, I appreciate that there’s a reluctance to speak about any one specific Catholic, especially one that you’ve worshipped with. But in the case of the president, do you get a sense that his regular attendance and adherence to the faith resonates with American Catholics?”

“I would say that he’s very sincere about his faith,” Cardinal Gregory replied. “But like a number of Catholics, he picks and chooses dimensions of the faith to highlight while ignoring or even contradicting other parts.

[There is a phrase that we have used in the past – a ‘cafeteria Catholic’: You choose that which is attractive, and dismiss that which is challenging.”

Pressed by O’Keefe if there was “something on the menu (Biden is) not ordering,” Gregory replied, “Well, I would say there are things, especially in terms of the [pro] life issues, there are things that he

chooses to ignore, or he uses the current situation as a political pawn rather than saying, ‘Look, my Church believes this. I’m a good Catholic, I would like to believe this.’ Rather than to twist and turn some dimensions of the faith as a political advantage.”

Biden, who is the nation’s second Catholic president and who regularly attends Mass, faces criticism from some Catholics and clergy for his public position on abortion, including his call for Congress to pass the Women’s Health Protection Act, legislation that would prohibit restrictions on abortion prior to viability.

The Catholic Church opposes abortion, outlining its teaching in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that human life “must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.” Because abortion takes the life of an already conceived child, it is “gravely contrary to the moral law.”

At the same time, Catholic leaders have called for policies and actions to support women and families facing unplanned pregnancies. The US bishops have called on Catholic parishes to join the ‘Walking with Mums in Need’ initiative and have advocated for changes to the US child tax credit so that mothers could retroactively apply the credit to the tax year they



US President Joe Biden deep in prayer at the US National Prayer Breakfast, held each year on Capitol Hill

were pregnant prior to giving birth.

Episcopal Bishop Mariann Budde of Washington, also a panelist in the discussion, argued that it is “possible to be a practitioner of the faith as a public leader, and not require everyone that you lead in your country to be guided by all of the precepts of your faith.”

But Cardinal Gregory replied affirmatively when O’Keefe asked him if Biden “should be more explicit in his own personal belief” on the topic.

“He does attend Church regularly with great devotion,” Cardinal Gregory said. “But he also steps aside (on) some of the hot-button issues, or uses the hot-button issues as a political tool.

“Which it’s not, it’s not the way, I think, we would want our faith to be

used. The issues of life begin at the very beginning. And they conclude at natural death. And you can’t, you can’t pick and choose. You’re either one who respects life in all of its dimensions. Or you have to step aside and say, ‘I’m not pro-life.’”

The pair also discussed the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on American spiritual life, fostering interfaith dialogue, and how they counsel their flocks in difficult times. O’Keefe asked the pair what they say to the faithful when “it seems the world is on fire.”

Cardinal Gregory said, “The Easter mystery is dependent on the experience of Good Friday.”

“The reason that Easter becomes so pivotal is that it has overcome the hatred, the violence, that Jesus suffered, and (he) rose above it.”

Budde said Jesus’ example is, “I will go where the pain is, and I will be with you there.”

O’Keefe also asked Cardinal Gregory how Pope Francis is doing after suggesting he appeared to be “struggling this week with some of his Holy Week obligations.”

“Well, I think for a man who’s 87, he has good days and bad days. And ... if I’m given the grace to reach that age, I suspect I will have good days and bad days,” Cardinal Gregory said, adding, “he’s exhibiting the health issues that a man of his age would have.”

“What we do, unfortunately, is that we focus on one dimension: ‘Oh, he’s had a bad day,’” the cardinal said. “Well, let me sign up for a bad day every once in a while because they do happen.”

## Christians fuming after White House ban on ‘religious’ Easter egg art

A proclamation from the USA’s second Catholic president on International Transgender Day of Visibility has caused consternation among some faithful, as the March 31 date for the day’s annual observance coincided this year with Easter.

The confusion came after President Biden issued his annual message for the transgender observance, which he said “honor(s) the extraordinary courage and contributions of transgender Americans and reaffirm(s) our Nation’s commitment to forming a more perfect Union.”

At the same time, the White House was hosting young people in its traditional Easter egg art contest, at which they were asked to “refrain from designs with religious symbols and overtly religious themes, as well as partisan political statements; hateful and discriminatory material, and any questionable content.”

The president’s proclamation and the contest rules, combined to spark outrage on social media. As one critic pointed out, “telling children NOT to design Easter eggs on a religious theme seems to insult the same religious festival you are trying to celebrate. That the order came on the same day the Catholic president was saluting transgender day makes you wonder if he has his priorities right.”



The White House displays a trans flag, on Easter Sunday



President Biden at the White House Easter egg competition

# Head of Ukrainian Church welcomes pope's plea for full prisoner exchange

**Gina Christian**

The head of the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has offered his gratitude following Pope Francis' plea for an "all for all" prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine.

On Easter Sunday, Pope Francis issued the *Urbi et Orbi* (To the city and to the world) blessing, continuing a papal tradition introduced in the 13th century.

In his message accompanying the blessing (which is associated with a plenary indulgence), the pope said the "doors of life" opened by "Jesus alone" are "continually ... shut with the wars spreading throughout the world."

"In calling for respect for the principles of international law, I express my hope for a general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine: all for the sake of all!" said Pope Francis.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk released a video message later that day in which he said "the words of the Easter greeting of the Holy Father Francis had a special response in the Ukrainian heart."

"I express special thanks to the Pope on behalf of the families of our prisoners of war for the call for the Easter exchange of 'all for all,'" said Major Archbishop Shevchuk. "We hope that the powerful of this world will hear your words, and Ukrainian and Russian families will wait for their dearest ones to come home."

Last month, Kyrylo Budanov,



Smoke and flames are seen near a high-voltage line at a site of a Russian airstrike, outside Kharkiv, Ukraine. Church leaders, including Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak, have condemned the attacks just before Easter on Ukraine's energy grid as "war crimes." Photo: Sofia Gatilova, Reuters

head of Ukraine's Defense Ministry's Intelligence Directorate, told reporters on hand for one prisoner exchange that 3,235 Ukrainian fighters have so far been brought home.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 – determined to be a genocide in two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights – an unknown number of Ukrainian

soldiers, likely numbering in the thousands, have been captured by Russia, with a large number subjected to torture in violation of international humanitarian law.

On March 26, the United Nations' Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine released a report detailing a sharp increase in "credible allegations of executions of captured Ukrainian POWs" in Russian custody.

Torture, beatings, electric shocks

and denial of adequate food and medical attention were routinely experienced by Ukrainian POWs, over half of whom "were subjected to sexual violence," the UN said.

Ukrainian camps for an estimated thousands of Russian POWs have been documented as adhering to international law, providing regular meals, hygienic care, free time, contact with loved ones by phone and even optional assembly-line work for small sums

of pay.

Archbishop Shevchuk also thanked the Vatican's top diplomats for supporting Ukraine's sovereignty.

"We thank Vatican Secretary of State (Cardinal) Pietro Parolin for his statement that aggressor Russia must be the first to stop attacking, attacking, killing Ukrainians so that negotiations on a peaceful and diplomatic settlement of this war can begin," Shevchuk said. "After all, we understand (that) when Russia stops attacking us, there will be no war, and when Ukraine stops defending itself, there will be no Ukrainian people and their state."

He also commended Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Liverpoolian Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, who in a recent interview with *America* magazine that the Vatican, "still supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

"We do not endorse that the boundaries of countries should be changed by force. So that remains our position," Archbishop Gallagher added.

"We consider that a just position, and that is our position toward Ukraine."

"The apostolic capital respects the sovereignty, independence and inviolability of Ukraine's borders," said Major Archbishop Shevchuk. "For Ukrainians, these words spoken to the heart of the international community are extremely important."

## Eastern Ukraine sees crackdown on religious freedom

**Gina Christian**

Russian occupation forces in Ukraine continue to crack down on Catholics, with one militant group sealing off Ukrainian Greek Catholic churches in Ukraine's Donetsk region.

The Kyiv-based Institute for Religious Freedom reported that since the beginning of the year, Russian militants calling themselves 'Cossacks' have seized UGCC churches and adjacent property, while stopping "believers of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from entering churches for prayers and worship."

Faithful have appealed to local officials of the unrecognised DPR, or 'Donetsk People's Republic,' a self-proclaimed entity that – along with the also unrecognised Luhansk People's Republic – has formed part of Russia's ongoing occupation of Ukraine since 2014.

Russian occupation officials in Donetsk have so far not responded to the requests for restored access, leaving Greek Catholics "deprived of the opportunity to visit their churches and perform divine services," the IRF said.

Priests who had served the sealed

churches "were expelled from the occupied territories," the institute noted.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church advised it now has no clergy left in Ukraine's Russian-occupied regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, said Felix Corley of Forum 18, a news service that partners with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in defending freedom of religion, thought and conscience.

South of Donetsk, two Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were seized from their church in Berdyansk in November 2022, one of whom now appears to have been illegally transferred to Russia, according to a human rights activist.

Redemptorist Father Ivan Levitsky is likely being held in an investigation prison in Russia's Rostov region, according to Yevhen Zakharov of the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group.

Fr Levitsky's fellow Redemptorist Father Bohdan Geleta, who served with him at the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Berdyansk, is reported to be held in a separate investigation prison in Russian-occupied Crimea. Fr Geleta is

known to suffer from acute diabetes.

Shortly after Frs Levitsky and Geleta were captured, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said he had received "the sad news that our priests are being tortured without mercy."

Both priests had refused to leave their parishioners following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, which continued attacks launched in 2014 against Ukraine.

In December 2022, Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-installed head of the occupied Zaporizhzhia's military-civil administration, declared that the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was banned and its property was to be transferred to his administration.

Also outlawed were the Knights of Columbus and Caritas, the Church's humanitarian arm worldwide.

The order accused UGCC communities of "active participation ... in Zaporizhzhia in activities (of) extremist organisations and propaganda of neo-Nazi ideas."

The document said that the Knights of Columbus were "associated with the

intelligence services of the United States and the Vatican."

Two joint reports from the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights have determined Russia's invasion constitutes genocide, with Ukraine reporting more than 128,551 war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine since February 2022.

Over the last two years, Russian forces "have been responsible for damaging or destroying at least 660 churches and other religious structures, including at least 206 belonging to Protestants," said Russian history expert Mark Elliott.

"The lack of religious freedom in Russia is now being spread to Ukraine," said fellow panelist Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia during the center's presentation.

"In Russia, religious institutions are able to function if they support Putin and the government," said Archbishop Gudziak.

"In the occupied territories those that don't support actively the occupying regime are destined for annihilation."

# Canada decision ‘blatant devaluing of persons with disabilities,’ says activist

**Gina Christian reports from Canada where there is growing concern over how the nation’s assisted suicide law is extending its reach into new areas, despite alleged safeguards**

A decision by a judge in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in favour of a young woman seeking medically assisted suicide over her father’s objections amounts to “the blatant devaluing of persons with disabilities,” a Canadian activist has told Catholic news agency OSV News.

On 25th March 25, Justice Colin Feasby ruled that the 27-year-old – whose name has been withheld by the courts, and who was identified by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation only as M.V. – could pursue her plan to end her life through Canada’s law on “medical assistance in dying,” or MAID.

Enacted in 2016, MAID exempts from criminal charges doctors and nurse practitioners who either directly administer or prescribe medication to cause a person’s death at their own request. The law includes protocols for ensuring a patient requesting MAID is fully informed and freely consents.

M.V., who lives with her father – identified by the CBC as W.V. – was approved for MAID in December and was scheduled to end her life at home on 1st February. According to a report by the CBC, she did not file any court documents explaining on what grounds she came to qualify for MAID.

Her father received a temporary

junction the day before her MAID appointment, arguing that his daughter “suffers from autism and possibly other undiagnosed maladies that do not satisfy the eligibility criteria for MAID.”

In February, Canada’s government deferred until 2027 on making euthanasia available to those whose sole condition is mental illness; however, the text of Bill C-62 did not specify if autism qualified as such a condition.

Feasby said in his 34-page ruling that M.V.’s “dignity and right to self-determination” took precedence over the “profound grief” her father would experience at her death.

With the judge also issuing a 30-day stay of his decision, the woman’s father will have the chance to take his case to the Alberta Court of Appeal.

Calgary-based Amanda Achtman, who works to end MAID, told OSV News that discrimination against those with autism and other disabilities is at the heart of the ruling.

“If this young woman did not have autism, she would not be eligible for euthanasia in Canada,” said Achtman, founder of the Dying to Meet You project, through which she aims to change the cultural conversation around suffering and death by writing,



Then-Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould of Canada speaks about the Government’s “medical assistance in dying” bill, or MAID, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario, in June 2016. When she announced plans to legalise medically assisted dying nearly a decade ago for people with a terminal illness, she told reporters, “For some, medical assistance in dying will be troubling. For others, this legislation will not go far enough.” The law was expanded in 2021 to cover people with incurable, but not terminal, conditions, and in 2027 it may be expanded to those whose sole condition is mental illness. Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters

speaking and creating short films featuring individuals who find reasons to live amid serious illness.

The judge’s decision sends “a message to everyone with autism” that “in a moment of weakness, a person with autism who is struggling with suicidal ideation may be killed rather than helped,” Achtman said.

“It is intrinsic to the eugenic mindset that ending someone’s life could be in their best interest,” she said. “The father fighting for his daughter’s life loves her more than the judge ruling that she can be euthanised on the basis of having autism and ADHD.”

Achtman said the ruling was foreshadowed in a 2013 decision by the Ontario Crown Attorney’s

Office, over an anonymous letter sent to a family asking them to either move or euthanise their son, who had autism; the letter did not qualify as a hate crime, the court decided.

“This kind of social euthanasia, whereby people are ejected from the human community, is what precedes legal euthanasia and then propels its normalisation,” she said.

Canada’s 2021 ‘Track 2’ expansion of MAID to those whose with serious and incurable illness or disability – but whose deaths are not reasonably foreseeable – only accelerated that trend, said Achtman.

“The majority of Canadians euthanised in this track have some form of neurological condition such

as Parkinson’s, ALS, MS, or dementia,” she said, adding, “Autism, too, is a neurological condition.”

Those who are “neurodivergent” have “countless ways” to “lead flourishing lives and enrich our communities,” said Achtman.

“Designating any demographic as particularly eligible for a premature death is utterly dehumanizing, and makes all of our lives and the lives of those we love more precarious,” she said. “If this 27-year-old woman were not neurodivergent, no physician or nurse could legally end her life. Track 2 MAID, as it’s called in Canada, is modern eugenics being masqueraded as ‘autonomy’ for persons with disabilities.”

## The Year of Prayer: Don’t wait for guidance; just do it

**Elizabeth Scalia**

Recently, for the ‘Year of Prayer,’ I committed to memory a version of the Breastplate of St. Patrick. It is a powerful confession of belief that includes a rather comprehensive request for supernatural protections. It also beautifully seeks out the permeating presence of Jesus.

Memorisation was slow, but I now take enormous sustenance in reciting the prayer’s opening lines each morning:

*“Arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the  
invocation of the Trinity,  
Through belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
of the Creator of creation...”*

Someone asked me where she could learn more about the proclaimed ‘Year of Prayer,’ and I found an article linking to the Vatican’s online resource, called ‘Teach us to Pray.’

Sharing it, I added, “you can try this, but really the best way to learn about prayer is to practise it in all of its modalities – scriptural, contemplative, liturgical, devotional, even rote-memorised prayer. Prayer teaches itself, if you let it.”

Practicing prayer as a Benedictine Oblate (I started as a bumbler and am still very much a beginner), I know this simple idea to be quite true. For many, prayer seems a mystery, and in some ways it is, of course. But prayer is also merely dialogue whose simplicity can resemble all the manner of conversations we have throughout our days, large and small, pleasant or sarcastic or even heated.

The thing to understand about prayer is that it always originates from God. Those little nudges to turn Godward that we feel throughout the day – to make a

plea, or cast one’s thanks, or just to bask for a moment in stillness and “know” that God is God – are actually God reaching out, because he loves us and misses us and actually does want our engagement.

As the catechism puts it, ‘In prayer, the faithful God’s initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God reveals himself and reveals us to ourselves, prayer becomes a reciprocal call, a covenant drama.’

But how to respond when the urge to pray comes and we understand that we’re being invited into that mystery?

Well, while it is very true that our prayers needn’t be formed by words at all because the Holy Spirit ‘intercedes for us through wordless groans,’ (Rom 8:26). Here we discover the value of the often-denigrated Catholic practice of memorised prayers. When we have

no idea where to begin, Jesus himself has given us the perfect entry into dialogue with the ‘Our Father.’ When we want to offer praise beyond “thank you, God” (which is enough, really) we have the doxology we call the ‘Glory Be.’ When we need to recall our roots, or want a mother’s consolation, the Hail Mary, the Memorare or the Angelus always serve.

Litanies and the psalms are also excellent entries into prayer that can go surprisingly deep. Litanies, with their repetitions of praise or supplication, are a pulse to prayer, becoming meditative as we are drawn more deeply into encounter.

The psalms, which are perfect expressions of the human condition, give us words we sometimes think we ought not say, thus permitting us to bring all of ourselves – including our darkest instincts which, though we hide

them from ourselves, are never hidden from God.

So, to learn prayer, it is good to simply begin. The key to prayer making a true difference in one’s life (or in one’s day, one’s hour or a fraught minute) is the listening.

‘Listen’ is the very first word of the Rule of St. Benedict; for me, it has come to encompass the totality of Benedictine spirituality – the routine of ‘*ora et labora*’ (prayer and work), the willingness to give hospitality, the ‘*conversio*’ (conversion of manners) that slowly and permanently shapes how we become present to others in myriad ways, including in silence.

“Listen carefully, my child, to the master’s instructions and attend to them with the ear of your heart,” begins the Rule. As St. Benedict himself – or anyone who practises prayer – will tell you, everything flows from there.

## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

# The powerful words of Mass

Many years ago I was told about that little action used to introduce prayers and Catholic religious services that started me getting to know the Mass. We all recognise it when we use our hand to reach our forehead, then our chest, then our left shoulder and finally our right shoulder. We call it Blessing ourselves. This can be done by just blessing ourselves, or by saying that little prayer as we do so, which is:

*In the name of the Father  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

At school, we were told that when we do this it's to remind us of the Blessed Trinity and that Jesus died on the Cross. What was never told in my school was the extra meaning when that little prayer was used.

It's like when the police wanted to enter a building; they would shout out 'Open up in the name of the law'. This was their way of declaring that what they were doing was approved by the law.

At the start of any prayer or service in the Catholic Church, it's saying that what we are about to do is all in the name of the Blessed Trinity. What a very profound way of starting to pray and at the start of any religious service.

I found that it's the same with all the prayers in the Mass and whoever is responsible for them

must have been cloaked in the Holy Spirit, as they are all profound, wonderful and meaningful.

Mass is made up of two liturgies, a liturgy being defined as religious services made up of words prayers and actions. These are:

The Liturgy of the WORD.

The Liturgy of the EUCHARIST.

These are preceded by a small Introductory rite and a very small part at the end of the Mass called the concluding rite

The Introductory rite is all about the people at Mass admitting that they are sinners and asking God to forgive their sins. The prayers used in this are so meaningful. Just think about what you are saying, which is asking God in a wonderful way to forgive you and then praising him.

We then have the 'The Liturgy of the Word'. In this, we hear readings from the Bible, which are revelations from God and his Son via writings from Prophets and some of the Apostles of Jesus.

They tell us many simple and wonderful ways of making sure we obey God's commandments.

It ends with us asking God to hear some of our petitions, which we call the Bidding Prayers.

Now we have the second major part of the Mass, The Liturgy of the Eucharist. In this, we hear very simple, but meaningful prayers

used by the priest to prepare bread and wine for use in the consecration.

This is exciting as we are about to have bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to receive in Holy Communion. Just before this happens, we are probably excited and want to shout out 'hurray', and a prayer used lets us do this: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts ....."

Now we hear the sacred prayers used in the consecration. The bread and wine become the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We are so thankful that God has provided his Son for us to eat and drink in Holy Communion that the priest offers up to God in thanksgiving, a perfect sacrifice of the same blessed sacrament, the body and blood of Christ.

When we listen to the prayers in this liturgy, mainly the Eucharistic Prayer, they are so meaningful and inspirational right up to what is called the 'Doxology' at the end.

Now we get ready to receive Holy Communion and start this part of the Mass by saying the prayer that Christ gave us, the Our Father.

During this part of Mass we say wonderful prayers asking God to give us peace in our lives: "Lord I am not worthy, that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my (servant) soul shall be healed".



Then when the priest holds up the consecrated host and shows it to the people saying "Behold the Lamb of God ..." these are words used by St. John the Baptist to describe Jesus.

After Communion, the priest performs the Concluding Rite, which is a final prayer.

He blesses us and tells us that the

Mass has ended.

The prayers used in the Mass have been carefully worded, and when taken from another source, have been carefully selected.

If you mean what you say and say what you mean where the prayers are concerned, you'll find participating in the Mass so inspiring and enjoyable.

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

# Hey you, stop being so critical!



CHRIS MCDONNELL

Words are funny things. We all use them, with varying degrees of success, to communicate with each other. Sometimes when we use them in a careless or slipshod manner, their meaning becomes confused, and misunderstandings easily occur.

One such word is 'critical'.

Unfortunately, the tone of the word is often one-directional. It implies that something is wrong, not up to standard and so in its expression can be a cause of pain to others.

But it is a much broader word than that. Being critical can, in fact, be a sign of sincere friendship, a friendship secure enough to cope with honesty, with a suggested adjustment in language made in good faith, made with good reason. Such an exchange is in fact a sound measure of a real friendship.

Critical comment within the Church isn't always taken that way. Too often in the past and, regrettably still in current times, it has been presumed that critical comments are a sign of disaffection.

Yet that is not necessarily so.

Within a family there is usually a freedom to speak, knowing that understanding is there. The negative reaction of the Church only gives rise to further problems.

The prophet is always assumed to be the one who in some way foretells the future. Maybe we should re-adjust our view and accept the prophet as one who is critical of the present circumstances, of how we got here and where we might be heading.

The sadness is that we do not always listen to our prophets, that they are ignored and the vibrancy of their message falls by the wayside. Later we realise our mistake as hastily discarded words are read again and their true beauty and truth realised.

When the word 'critical' is followed by the word 'care', then we realise there is an urgent need for attention. The implication is that an emergency has been declared. Likewise with Government declarations of security levels, 'critical' is the most serious of

terrorist alerts.

Some would suggest that there are aspects of Church practice that have reached the critical care phase. That may be so, but as we address them we need remember that the Lord promised his presence would be with us always.

Still we have to listen and act in consequence. It is possible for an institution to silence the critical view in a heavy-handed manner as happens in totalitarian regimes. Physical repression and prohibition can severely limit free speech, however courageous and well-intentioned it might be. The alternative route involves a silent disregard for critical opinions. The regime continues to act in a pre-determined manner, regardless of comment.

The 'listening Church' offers an open door, a place of familiar security where differing views may be expressed and a common understanding reached. That, after all, was the reason for calling the Council of Jerusalem where agreement was reached after

discussion.

In the world of physics, the words 'critical mass' speak of the point where nuclear reaction is about to begin. It has to be handled extremely cautiously. Carefully controlled, in a nuclear power station it provides the source of electricity; allowed to continue without control, then we have the obscenity of nuclear weapons.

Within the Church, critical conversations must be allowed to continue, with understanding and appreciation of differing points of view. Without criticism, there can be no improvement. Critical comment can be constructive if the intention of making it is sincere. Likewise, the one who is on the receiving end must also have an open attitude. Conversations conducted with a high-pitched voice rarely produce equitable agreement.

We would do well to remember this need to be sensitive when, week by week, we are deluged with controversy, for we live in difficult and rapidly changing times. The

Church is not a secluded space, unaffected by the secular society. In fact, the mission of the Church is to influence the times that we are presently experiencing.

That time-honoured phrase responding to the stranger asking for directions, of 'if I was going there, I wouldn't start from here', begs the question. We are here, we have come from where our people started and where we are heading depends on our skills as explorers.

The poet T S Eliot wrote these memorable words in *East Coker*, the second of the *Four Quartets*. 'We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.'

That, in a few pointed words, sums up our Christian journey. Our exploration, our critical listening to the prophets our own time, as well as those of the scriptures, enables us to live each present step, finally knowing where we have come from for the first time.

# The pilgrims Christ met on the road to Emmaus were lost and in need of faith

Have you ever thought of life as a journey, and yourself as a pilgrim on that journey?

The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a story about two pilgrims on a journey of discovery (Gospel of Luke 24:13-35).

When these two disciples set out on their journey, they talked about their doubts and confusion concerning Jesus who was put to an ignominious death. They were devastated by what had happened.

Along the journey, as they were pondering these things, they were joined by a mysterious stranger who was Jesus in disguise. He engaged them in conversation about the Messiah and the scriptures, and opened their minds to understand that the one they doubted had to undergo everything that happened to him.

They were so taken by the mysterious stranger's explanations that they invited him into their home for a meal. It was during this act of hospitality that they recognised him in "the breaking of the bread."

We are like the two disciples in this scripture. We are on a journey, not a linear journey of ease, but a sometimes painful journey of ups-and-downs, doubts and obstacles, joys and woes much like the two disciples who were tempted to give up. That was until the risen Christ came into their lives, and renewed their waning faith.

There are valuable lessons to be learnt from this journey of discovery on the road to Emmaus.

The two pilgrims learnt the importance of familiarity with the scriptures, the word of God, in their lives. The Lord continues to speak to us through the Scriptures just as



The risen Lord appears on the road to Emmaus, Way of Light by Giovanni Dragoni, San Callisto Catacombs in Rome.

© Zatlatic

Truth, and the Life. Try to be an example of his way, his truth, and his life to others.

You never walk alone. No matter how dark life gets, no matter what you're going through, you're in good hands. Jesus has your back and he walks beside you and before you. He is your forever friend, and will never let you down. Put your trust in him.

The story of these two disciples who encountered the risen Christ

*"Hospitality opened the doors of Heaven's gates to these two disciples. In welcoming the stranger, which is expected of every Christian, the two disciples welcomed Christ."*

on the road to Emmaus is also our story.

Pilgrimage is a favourite theme of St. Luke's entire gospel. At the beginning, Jesus began his ministry by instructing his disciples along the road (Luke 9:51). On the road to Emmaus, as we have seen, this journey reached its climax when the two pilgrims finally got it, when they found what they were looking for, and understood the meaning of their pilgrimage.

The whole of God's intricate plan for people of faith, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, has been worked out in the life of Jesus who opens our eyes.

he spoke to the two men in St. Luke's gospel. Over and over again, the Lord blesses those who listen to his word, internally, and practice it.

Reading the scriptures, especially the New Testament, every day should be a normal way of life for every Christian. It does not have to take long. Can you spare 10 or 15 minutes meditating on his word in the morning or in the evening?

Jesus was revealed to the two disciples in "the breaking of the

bread." The early Christians referred to the Eucharist as the breaking of the bread for, in the Eucharist, Jesus becomes our spiritual food. We welcome him into our lives by receiving him in the Eucharist, and following him.

Hospitality opened the doors of Heaven's gates to these two disciples. In welcoming the stranger, which is expected of every Christian (Matthew 25: 35), the two disciples welcomed Christ.

Always be hospitable to others. Welcome them into your home, be kind to them, and share your food and drink with them. Be a good neighbour.

The two disciples rushed back to tell the other disciples about their experience. They witnessed or shared the good news of the gospel with others. The gospel is good news, and should be shared with those you meet in thought, word, and deed. Jesus is the Way, the

## The Lord's Prayer helps us pray like we mean it

When you pray, the Lord says, go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret (Matthew 6 : 6).

In other words, when you pray in private, pray like you mean it for prayer is not about rattling off words for the sake of words. It's about speaking from the heart, and meaning what you say.

The Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, was given to us by Jesus 2,000 years ago to help us to

pray. It never goes out of date for it is immortal. It's the ultimate example of how to pray, so when you pray it, pray it like you mean it.

Following is a meditation on this perennial prayer (Matthew 6 : 9-13 ) which I hope you will find helpful:

*I cannot say "Our" — if my religion has no room for other people and their needs.*

*I cannot say "Father" — if I do not acknowledge everyone as my*

brother and sister.

*I cannot say "Who art in Heaven" — If all my interests and pursuits are earthly things.*

*I cannot say "Hallowed be Thy Name" — if I do not fight prejudice in His name.*

*I cannot say "Thy kingdom come" — if I am unwilling to accept the reign of God.*

*I cannot say "Thy will be done" — if I negate His guidance by insisting on my own will.*

*I cannot say "on earth as it is*

*in Heaven" — if I do not put His word into practice.*

*I cannot say "Give us this day our daily bread" — if I do not feed the hungry.*

*I cannot say "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" — if I harbour a grudge against anyone.*

*I cannot say "Lead us not into temptation" — if I do not avoid the occasions of sin.*

*I cannot say "Deliver us from evil" — if I do not fight against*

the evils of the world.

*I cannot say "Amen" — if I do not agree, heart and soul.*

*"The Our Father was given to us by Jesus to help us to pray. It never goes out of date for it is immortal. It's the ultimate example of how to pray..."*



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Thomas's doubt proves the Lord meets us wherever we are

7th April 2024 – 2nd Sunday of Easter (B)

## Divine Mercy Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 4:32-35

Total sharing, among the first Christians

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

## Responsorial: from Psalm 118

*R./: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love is everlasting*

*Let the house of Israel say,  
His mercy endures forever.  
Let the house of Aaron say,  
His mercy endures forever.  
Let those who fear the Lord say,  
His mercy endures forever. (R./)*

*I was hard pressed and was falling,  
but the Lord helped me.  
My strength and my courage is the Lord,  
and he has been my saviour.  
The joyful shout of victory  
in the tents of the just. (R./)*

*The stone which the builders  
rejected  
has become the cornerstone.  
By the Lord has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.  
This is the day the Lord has made;  
let us be glad and rejoice in it.  
(R./)*

## 2nd Reading: 1 John 5:1-6

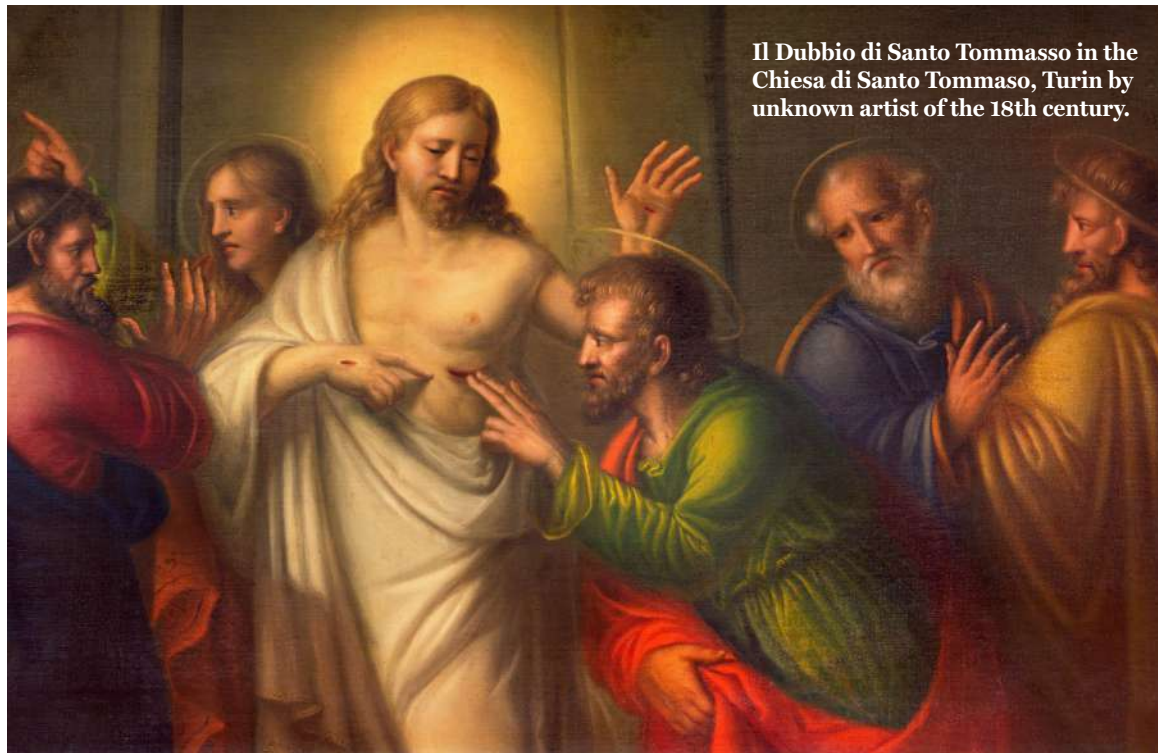
By this we know that we love the children of God

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?



Il Dubbio di Santo Tommaso in the Chiesa di Santo Tommaso, Turin by unknown artist of the 18th century.

## Gospel: John 20:19-31. The presence of the risen Jesus banishes fear and brings peace to his friends

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet

have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

## Unlocking our doors

Most houses are well alarmed nowadays; the computerised alarm has become as basic an item as table and chairs. We also need to have good strong locks; long gone, at least in the cities and towns, are the days when you could just leave the key in the door, and let neighbours ramble in casually for a chat and a cup of tea.

We are more fearful about our security than we used to be, and this fear and anxiety has led us to take more precautions to protect ourselves.

Fear of what others can do to us tends to close us in on ourselves, not just in the physical sense of getting stronger locks, but also in other senses. We tend to be somewhat withdrawn around people whom we perceive to be critical. We are slow to open up to someone we think will judge us. We hesitate to share ideas and plans we might have with those who are known not to suffer fools gladly. Fear of others can often hold us back and stunt our growth.

In the gospel we find the disciples locking themselves into a room because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Even after an excited Mary Magdalene came

to them from the empty tomb announcing that she had seen the Lord, this was not enough to overcome their fear. What had been done to Jesus could be done to them. . . which led to their hiding in self-imposed confinement. The turning point came when the risen Lord himself appeared to them behind their closed doors and helped them over their fear. He did this by breathing the Holy Spirit into them, filling them new energy and hope, freeing them from fear and releasing them to share in his mission. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you," he said. In the power of the Spirit they came to them and went out from their self-imposed prison, to bear witness to the risen Lord. This is the picture of the disciples that Luke gives us in today's reading from Acts. He describes a community of believers, the church, witnessing to the resurrection both in word and by the quality of their living.

We can all find ourselves in the situation of those first disciples, locked in their hiding place. Any combination of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" can water down our commitment to following the Lord. Like the disciples in today's gospel, we can be tempted to give up on our faith journey. The will to self-preservation can prevent us from doing what we are capable of doing with the Lord's help. The wounds we carry from earlier, failed initiatives make us hesitate to try again. Even when someone seems full of enthusiasm and hope like a Mary Magdalene, we shrug it off.

We let them get on with it, while we hold back and stay safe.

The gospel today suggests a way out of our self-imposed confinement. If Magdalene makes no impact on us, the Lord will find another way to enter our lives and to fill us with new life and energy for his service. No locked doors, nor even locked hearts, can keep him out. He finds a way to enter the space where we have chosen to retreat and he empowers us to resist what is holding us back. He does require some openness on our part; at the least some desire on our part to become what he is calling us to be. The risen Lord never ceases to recreate us and to renew us in his love. Easter is the season to celebrate the good news.

Just as the disciples were unmoved by the hopeful enthusiasm of Mary Magdalene who had seen the Lord, so Thomas was unmoved by the witness of the disciples who told him they too had seen the Lord.

Thomas, it seems, was an even harder nut to crack than the other disciples. He is one of those people who insist on certain conditions being met before he makes a move, "Unless I see, I can't believe." As he had done with the other disciples, the Lord takes Thomas on his own terms. He accommodates himself to Thomas' conditions and says, "Put your finger here."

The gospel today implies that the Lord meets us wherever we are. He takes us seriously in all our fears and doubts. The Lord is prepared to stand with us on our own ground, whatever that ground is, and from there he will speak to us a word suited to our personal state of mind and heart. We don't have to get ourselves to some particular place in order for the Lord to engage with us. He takes himself to where we are, wherever it is a place of fear or of doubt.

We might pray this Easter season for the openness to receive the Lord's coming into the concrete circumstances of our own lives, so that we too might say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

We might also pray that, like the Lord, we would receive others where they are, rather than where we would like them to be.

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# Jesus's body was whole at the Resurrection but glorified and incorruptible

**Q. As we celebrate Easter, my question concerns the risen Lord. Did the resurrected Jesus have a human body?**

A. It is a fundamental truth of Christianity that Jesus rose from the dead in his physical body. Christians believe that the Jesus who appeared to more than 500 witnesses after Easter (1 Cor. 15:6) was not a ghost but was actually there – walking, talking, even eating.

When Jesus showed himself to the disciples in the Upper Room on Easter Sunday night, they were at first terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. But he said to them: "Why are you troubled? ... Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have" (Lk. 24:38-39).

Seeing them still amazed, Jesus asked them: "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of baked fish, which he then ate in front of them (Lk 24:41-42). A week later, still bearing the wounds of the crucifixion, Jesus appeared to Thomas and said: "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side" (Jn. 20:27).

At the same time, it needs to be said that Christ's post-resurrection body was somewhat different than his physical body on earth, since it was now glorified – incorruptible and free of suffering, a promise of what our own bodies will be like in Heaven.

He could enter closed rooms, for example, even though the door was locked (Jn. 20:19), and he was able to disappear, as he did when he vanished from the sight of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:31); and, of course, he was able to ascend into Heaven (Acts 1:9).

**Q. In one of the resurrection accounts, Jesus appears to the apostles after his resurrection and tells them to lower their nets into the sea, where they catch 153 fish. Our visiting priest said in his homily that the number 153 related to the number of regional territories in that era. But then I read others' explanation, 153 was the number of species of fish known at the time. I'm confused. Which is it? And does it matter?**

A. I am tempted to side with the second part of your question: "Does it matter?" I confess that it's never been an issue that has kept me awake at night. But on the other hand, if John chose to use this



precise number in his inspired writing, some allegorical significance may well have been intended.

Two theories proposed by scriptural scholars over the years are the ones you mentioned, that 153 stands for the species of fish in the Sea of Galilee at the time, or that the number indicates the known population groups of that day.

St. Jerome, who died around 420, first popularised the 'species of fish' view, and that is the one still favoured by most commentators.

Either way, though, I think the general meaning is the same: that the mission and message of Jesus, and the salvation he was offering, were meant not just for the Jews of his day but for all people of every generation.

**Q. What prayers does one say in silence when you first enter your seat in church? And what about after Communion? I have developed my own, but am wondering if I have been missing something for all these years.**

A. There is no official prayer a Catholic says when first entering a church, so I think it is just right that you have developed your own.

What I do is to ask God to quiet my heart and make me more aware of his presence, his power and his peace. Then I thank him for the blessings of the day and speak to him about those for whom I have promised to pray.

I have always believed that we should converse with God as we would with any friend and that our own words serve us best.

As for praying after Communion, I try to spend some minutes in

church after Mass to thank God for the gift of the Eucharist. In those moments of quiet, I often use the Prayer Before a Crucifix, which begins, "Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus."

Others use the *Anima Christi* prayer, which dates back to the early 14th century and starts, "Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me."

Lately I have become aware of a simple prayer from the 20th-century saint, St Padre Pio. It seems perfect for those precious moments when the eucharistic presence is nestled in our hearts and reads: "My past, O Lord, I entrust to your mercy. My present, to your love. My future, to your providence."

**Q. My mother passed away some time ago, and I wonder whether she is now in God's eternal embrace. How can I be sure? She was a good mother and she dearly loved the Church, but we have been taught that everyone has some imperfections and, upon death, must be sent to purgatory before they can enjoy Heaven. I would rest more easily if I knew that my mother were not suffering any longer.**

A. The Church does not teach that everyone who dies must necessarily pass through purgatory before reaching heaven. As a matter of fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says specifically that the punishment due for venial sins can be meted out 'either here on earth, or after death'. It goes on to say that 'fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.'

Even for those who must undergo some punishment after death – which, I would think, includes most of us – we have no idea as to just what purgatory involves or how long it lasts. (It could even be instantaneous.)

So even though you cannot have infallible certitude that your mother is already in heaven, she may well be. Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in Heaven". As your mother, in your words, was a good mother and loved the Church dearly, she obviously tried to do what the Lord asked of her.

But I would play it safe and keep praying for her nonetheless; praying for the dead is a sacred and long-held practice that even

predates the church – in the Old Testament (2 Mc 12:46) Judas Maccabeus 'made atonement for the dead' that they might be delivered from their sin. Trust in the mercy and goodness of God, who is all tenderness and compassion.

**Q. I have always had a great fear of confession and am so scared that I just say the first thing I could think of to get it over with. As a result, I have never really made a good confession. I am now 70 and have asked God to forgive me, but I wonder if that's enough. Can Jesus forgive me for this?**

A. The sacrament of penance 'requires each penitent to confess to a priest all mortal sins ... after a diligent examination of conscience.' The Church's Code of Canon Law indicates that this integral confession of sins by number and kind constitutes 'the only ordinary means by which a member of the faithful conscious of grave sin is reconciled with God and the Church' (Canon 960).

But that same canon allows that 'physical or moral impossibility' can excuse one from confession of this type. In their pastoral wisdom, confessors have typically applied this to someone with a very scrupulous conscience, for whom a detailed and comprehensive listing of sins would be so troubling as to be practically impossible.

I can see your own situation as being similar: The deep and immediate anxiety that you experience upon entering the confessional might allow a priest to dispense you from what is known as the 'integrity of confession.'

Why not visit with a priest and explain your situation? He might decide that it would be sufficient for you to indicate in a general way your sorrow for any sins and then receive absolution.

Yes, I understand that a certain sense of guilt and shame for sin is a healthy part of penance, but the experience is meant fundamentally to be one in which the penitent can rejoice in the Lord's presence and relax in the assurance of his mercy.

The fact that this has not been so for you tells me that a different approach is warranted, and the Church's compassionate guidelines envision this.

Most importantly, remember that God is compassionate, good and kind. May you experience this God-given freedom today. **Unfortunately, this column cannot accept readers' questions**

St Mary's University, Twickenham

# An atheist's path to the Catholic faith

EDUCATION AND FAITH

## Dr Kim Salmons

I have a confession to make – I am not a Catholic. I was brought up in a staunchly atheist household. My parents told me – repeatedly – that all religion was bad, and the worst was Catholicism.

But despite my parents' fundamentalist position, I found Religious Education at school fascinating. But I struggled to understand why some people had an innate sense of faith. What gave them access to such comfort, security and knowing? Why had they been chosen to have 'faith' when I hadn't?

My RE teacher, who – believe it or not – was named Mrs Godbewithyou, took an interest in me. I asked her how to be a believer (a question that filled me with mild terror because if I did find God, how would I tell my parents?). She said that faith was like sitting on the edge of a swimming pool and you just had to let yourself gently fall in.

In my mind the metaphor was – and remains – vivid. Should I dive in head first? Should I ease myself into the shallow end, hoping the water wouldn't be too cold? The image disrupted my understanding of how to find faith, not least because I felt uncomfortable in a bathing suit.

At the same time rumours in my friendship group went round that a teenager at school who had been in trouble for dealing drugs, had had a vision, was touched by God and was now reformed and a believer. But the mythical oasis of faith continued to elude me.

For most of my early adult life religion didn't play much part. My marriage was in a registry office to a man who was also an atheist, and when my children were born I refused to be a hypocrite and attend church on a Sunday just to get them into the best schools. But the local church did start to play a larger part in my family life. Both my daughters went to ballet in the hall; my eldest joined a Christian youth group and came home singing 'My God is a great big God and he holds me in his hands'.

As a child I had been shamed into thinking that religion was something slightly dirty. My short membership of the Guides ended when I knew my parents would object to my swearing allegiance to God. But I encouraged my daughters to go to church and find out for themselves what they did or didn't believe.

In 2005 when my children were four and eight, I took voluntary



Kim Salmons pictured at the "triple book launch" with St Mary's Vice Chancellor, Anthony McClaran, and colleagues Prof Peter Tyler, Prof Stephen Bullivant and Prof Jacob Phillips.

redundancy and decided to study. I looked around for a local university which would fit in with the school pick-up and found a small place called St Mary's University College (later, St. Mary's University) in Twickenham.

I applied through Clearing and was accepted to do a degree in Professional & Creative Writing and English Literature.

The religious status of St Mary's was not something I had considered. I admired the lovely chapel and it was a novelty to realise that priests weren't all like

Father Ted. I was also secretly pleased that I had found myself in the lair of my parents' enemy. 'Don't let them convert you', they'd say.

I completed my degree and moved to a secular university to take my Masters. But I missed the sense of community that I had found at St Mary's and decided to return to do my PhD. Over the next few years I worked as a visiting lecturer and eventually took on a full-time role.

St Mary's started to feel like home. When my beloved brother

became ill with leukaemia, I spent my lunchtimes in quiet contemplation in the Chapel (not quite prayer because that would make me a hypocrite) and I started going to Mass, fighting imposter syndrome and careful not to offend anyone by my presence because I was not one of 'them'. I didn't know when to stand or sit. I didn't know if on Ash Wednesday I could go to the altar to have the sign of the cross smudged on my forehead. But what I soon discovered was that I was welcome. I learnt that the word Catholic means universal and being Catholic was not an exclusive members club. Catholics did not judge me for not believing.

My interest in Catholicism intersected with my research expertise. My PhD was on Joseph Conrad, a Catholic Pole who settled in England in the late 1800s and wrote in his third language, English. Conrad scholars are generally secular. But when I became Head of Department for Theology & Liberal Arts, I learnt more about Catholicism and realised that Conrad's fiction could be read through a Catholic lens. Although he arguably rejected institutionalised religion, his identity as a Catholic remained despite his settling in a Protestant and, at the time, somewhat anti-Catholic country.

Conrad's short story *Amy Foster* considered partly autobiographical, tells the fate of Yanko Goorall, a trafficked migrant from the Eastern Carpathians who is shipwrecked on the shores of a small Kent community. The 'irreconcilable differences' between Yanko and the villagers and more devastatingly,

between him and Amy, the girl he marries, leads to tragedy. In a recent paper I have argued that the 'irreconcilable differences' are not racial but religious and articulate the anti-Catholic fervour of the mid-19th century found in normative Protestant fiction.

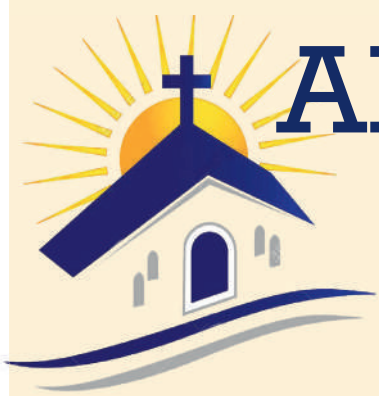
I continue to research Catholicism in Conrad's work and I continue to go to Mass sometimes. But I still have not found faith. However, what I have found is an acceptance of my position. The conflict I felt about being interested in Catholicism but not having faith was reconciled when Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira & Great Britain came to visit St Mary's. He took Mass in the University Chapel and afterwards came to speak to me. He was interested in why I had not taken Communion. We spoke about my lack of faith, but how Mass gave me a sense of peace and community, a feeling of wellbeing and contemplation. He replied simply, 'then that is enough'.

In the modern world, there is a desire to push religion to the margins of institutions to create what is often regarded as a neutral, secular worldview.

As a non-Catholic, I can say that a Catholic university has been a great "gift" for me – it offers an extra dimension to intellectual life. I know many other non-Catholics who work at St. Mary's who feel the same way. I hope that I have reciprocated by contributing to its development too. And indeed it is. **Dr Kim Salmons is an Associate Professor, Modern Literature, Head of School, Liberal & Creative Arts, at St Mary's University, Twickenham**



Dr. Kim Salmons presenting the launch of *Lucifer of Cagliari, Concerning Athanasius: Why No One Must Judge or Condemn a Man in His Absence*, translated by Kim's colleague, Fr Ashley Beck,



# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



John Coleby with Archbishop John

## Archbishop leads celebrations of Caritas Southwark's year

The social action arm of the Archdiocese of Southwark, Caritas Southwark, celebrated its first year with a Mass at St George's Cathedral.

Archbishop John Wilson established Caritas Southwark to work in partnership with archdiocesan parishes, schools and existing charities, to build a society based on justice, love and dignity for all.

In his homily, Archbishop John spoke of his vision of the Catholic Church and social action, challenging all in the archdiocese to think about what kind of people we are and what we want to achieve.

Describing his vision for Caritas, he said: "We are loved by Jesus Christ and want to share his love with others using words and actions that make love real. Integral to this is an authentic 'option for the poor,' to accompany and support people in need."

The Caritas network brings together many projects, activities and initiatives already in existence across the archdiocese whose purpose is to contribute to the common good which enhances the lives of all.

A key aspect of Caritas is to support the various groups to be more connected and learn from each other, by sharing best practice and practical advice. As part of the one year celebrations, a conference was held in Amigo Hall at St George's Cathedral, bringing together parishes from South London and Kent, as well as schools.

Bonus Pastor Secondary School spoke at the event, highlighting their inspiring work to tackle youth violence. Raymond Friel, CEO of Caritas Social Action Network also delivered a keynote speech on social action. Summing up the need to work for the

others of our society, irrespective of their background, Archbishop John said: "We are committed to the common good, to the well-being of all members of our society, where the good of each serves the good of all."

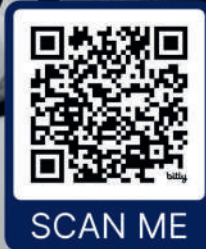
"This is so important in a culture that often prioritises individualism. But we have a different vision. Christ shows a way to human flourishing together through service and self-giving. We believe in the dignity and worth of every human being."

John Coleby, the director of Caritas Southwark, said: "Our projects show how we are making the boundless love of God a reality. By responding to the challenges of food security, the safety of young people, the support of the elderly and for migrants and refugees, we are showing there is a way to put God's love into action in a practical way."

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## Fr Mark thanked as he takes on new role, and prayers for Fr Gaston

### Bishop Philip Egan

Fr Mark Hogan has stepped down as the Episcopal Vicar for Evangelisation at the diocese of Portsmouth.

We are all really grateful to him for all his amazing work. Fr Mark has been responsible for calling, inspiring and leading the Vicariate for Evangelisation: Bamenda, Caritas Diocese of Portsmouth, formation for mission (catechetics and adult formation) and also dialogue and proclamation, including interreligious dialogue, Christian unity and the Dialogue with Cultural Sectors initiative.

He is also a member of the Bishops Council, the Council of Priests and of the Board of Trustees, and on the latter he chairs the Trustee Vicariate for Evangelisation Committee. It has been a huge responsibility and I express many thanks to him.

In his place, I have appointed Fr. Gaston Afah, parish priest of Reading English Martyrs. Please pray for him in this new role.

Meanwhile, I have asked Fr. Mark to take on a new role as Episcopal Vicar for Parish Mission Development. The Episcopal Vicar for Parish Mission Development will

support parish priests in the 'new' parishes to become more missional in their focus and ministry. He will work with pastoral areas and parishes to offer support, guidance and wisdom in assisting the parishes implement the diocesan 10-year mission-plan, signposting them to resources, opportunities and support.

He will also work with five or six parishes where the parish priest has a passion to lead in a missional way, hosting monthly online 'parish priest cohorts,' arranging termly in-person gatherings, meeting annually with each priest in their local context to help review the year and plan for the following year, and with the various parish leadership teams. He will continue to be an occasional member of the Bishop's Council and a member of the Council of Priests.

Please pray for him in this new role and for God's blessing upon his work.



Fr Mark



and Fr Gaston

# World-class composer pops in to hear lesson on melodica



Popular and prolific composer and choral conductor, John Rutter CBE paid a visit to a Leeds Catholic primary school to listen to the children's progress on a most unusual musical instrument.

Pupils at St Benedict's Catholic Primary School in Garforth have been learning the melodica – unusual because of its small stature of only 40cm long, is accessible to even the tiniest fingers. Sound is produced by depressing the keys while blowing down a flexible tube.

These small, portable and inexpensive instruments teach the children both breath control and keyboard skills, giving them a foundation to move on to either wind instruments or piano.

The school is in the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust (BKCAT) which, since 2021, has enrolled all 15 of its schools in the Diocese of Leeds's Keyboard Studies Programme. The programme provides high-quality tuition in a family of related keyboard instruments, including accordion, piano, organ – and melodica – to school pupils,

choristers and adult learners across Yorkshire.

John Rutter was welcomed to St Benedict's School by Head Teacher, John Woolley, and his staff, as well as by BKAT Chair Helen Utting and Director of Primary Standards, Rob Barraclough. In a teaching session led by Diocese of Leeds Music's distinguished accordion player, Valerie Barr, the melodica class impressed the composer with a rendition of his 'Gaelic Blessing'.

John answered the children's questions, including revealing that on one of his own school reports, a teacher had written 'John sings well – when he sings quietly' and that his favourite composition was always 'the next one!'

Accompanying John Rutter on his visit to St Benedict's was Keyboard Studies Programme Director, David Pipe. As Leeds Cathedral Organist and Artistic Director of the Leeds International Organ Festival, he shares John Rutter's advocacy of high-quality music education for all young people, regardless of their background.

Right, John Rutter with headteacher John Woolley and Valerie Barr during a melodica sessions  
Photo credit: Francis Drafz



## Birmingham delighted to accept two new seminarians

The archdiocese of Birmingham has announced its joy after Archbishop Bernard Longley accepted Douglas Grantham and Filip Gronkiewicz as seminarians for the archdiocese. The pair will begin their formation this autumn with a propædeutic year at the Royal English College of St Alban, Valladolid (Spain), from September. Please keep them and all our seminarians in your prayers.

Pictured above, from left, are Filip, Archbishop Bernard Longley and Douglas at Archbishop's House

Plymouth CAST, one of the largest Catholic Multi Academy Trusts in the country, is seeking to appoint an experienced headteacher as its new

## Executive Headteacher



Salary: L17-24 and appropriate pension scheme  
Based: St Nicholas Catholic Primary School, Exeter & St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Exmouth  
Start date: 1st September 2024



Plymouth CAST is a Multi-Academy Trust comprising 34 schools plus a nursery situated within the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth with whom there is a close working relationship.

This is an exciting time to join a forward thinking and committed team, to both embed as well as shape working practices for the future. As headteacher you will need diplomacy, openness, approachability, and a personable style of leadership, as well as the ability to converse confidently with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.

### Essential requirements

- Practising Catholic with a strong understanding of the structures and values of the Church
- Qualified to degree level relevant to the post and/or equivalent through professional experience. PGCE (or equivalent) – Qualified to Teach in the UK
- Recent, substantive and successful headship experience
- The ability to manage change through bringing innovative ideas to traditional approaches to teaching and learning
- Understanding and/or experience of managing finances and ensuring financial sustainability
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills – an attentive listener and team builder.

**PLUS A wide knowledge of current and proposed education policy and the legal framework within which schools must operate, particularly in relation to safeguarding, when part of a Multi Academy Trust.**

*If you feel that you have the necessary skills and competencies, and the passion to make a difference to our children and young people, we would love to hear from you!*  
Download the application form at [https://www.plymouthcast.org.uk/web/current\\_vacancies/485131](https://www.plymouthcast.org.uk/web/current_vacancies/485131)



# Newcastle in joint display of support for abuse victims

Last month saw the joint hosting of the 'LOUDfence' Event at St Mary's Cathedral and Newcastle Cathedral in Newcastle.

The LOUDfence movement is an international initiative that aims to raise awareness and show support for victims and survivors of abuse. Its powerful symbolism involves tying brightly coloured ribbons to fences as a visible sign of solidarity. These ribbons represent both compassion and determination to break the silence surrounding abuse.

At St Mary's Cathedral, the LOUDfence was on display both inside and outside the cathedral. Visitors were greeted by a vibrant array of ribbons fluttering in the wind. Each ribbon represented a

survivor, a supporter, or someone who refuses to remain silent. The cathedral featured a display of creative work titled 'Jagged Edges'. Artwork together with poetry and music was developed by survivors of church-related abuse. Together they served as a poignant reminder of the resilience and strength of those who have endured trauma.

A thought-provoking display of shoes was also created on the altar at the cathedral in recognition of all the children, laity and clergy that have been victims of abuse.

To show further support for victims and survivors of abuse there will be a 'Survivors Mass' celebrated by Bishop Stephen on Tuesday, 30th April 2024 at 12.05pm.



The ribbons and shoes mark the Church's commitment to defeat abuse and support survivors



# St Joseph's life recalled at Bishop Alan's 80th birthday celebration

Bishop Emeritus of East Anglia Alan Hopes celebrated his 80th birthday at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich on 19th March, the Feast of St Joseph.

The celebration Mass saw a significant gathering of the diocesan community to honour not just a personal milestone, but a life dedicated to service and faith.

The Mass, presided over by Bishop Alan, was attended by Bishop Peter Collins, alongside clergy, religious, and laypeople from across the diocese.

In his welcoming remarks, Bishop Alan drew a parallel between his life and that of St Joseph, acknowledging the blessings and challenges that come with age and leadership. "As I begin my 8th decade, I feel that I have much in common with St Joseph," he said.

"So that's quite a good thing to celebrate on this day. However, unlike St Joseph, who had to cope with so many challenges and an unknown future in his old age, I've been granted time to enjoy the true delights of a happy retirement."

He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate this significant moment, saying: "Bishop Peter, I'm so grateful to you for giving this old man an opportunity to continue to celebrate my significant birthday with you all here today in the cathedral."

He continued: "I'm offering Mass today for you, Bishop Peter, and for all the priests and clergy, and the people and religious of the diocese, in thanksgiving to God for His many blessings."

At the end of Mass, Bishop Peter offered his heartfelt birthday

wishes. He said: "Dear Bishop Alan, on behalf of the diocesan family, those here present and those who are praying across every parish for you today, we wish you a very happy birthday. Your birthday, of course, fell on St Patrick's Day. An anomaly, really, for most quintessential Englishmen."

"But we are delighted that you are with us on this glorious feast of Joseph. Your fourscore years bear abundant testimony to the glory of your own personal faith. And there is such ample evidence of the fruitfulness of your ministry as an Anglican and as a Catholic."

The celebration continued after Mass, as clergy and parishioners shared a meal in honour of both Bishop Alan's birthday and the Feast of St Joseph.



# Iceland's stunning landscape has wow factor on school trip

Pupils from St Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy in Buxton had a trip of a lifetime when they visited Iceland to see its stunning landscape of waterfalls, glaciers and a volcanic beach.

Children in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 from the school spent four nights there as part of a joint science and geography trip, during which they saw the Solheimajokull Glacier, Reynisfjara Black volcanic beach and the small town of Vik.

They enjoyed a Wonders of Reykjanes Peninsular Day, with a tour guide, which included a visit to a Geothermal Park and a stop at the quake 2008 exhibition and a sightseeing tour of Reykjavik.

Students and staff stayed in Hveragerdi, a small village known as the world's hot springs capital.

Student Leo Smith said: "My favourite part was the secret lagoon, which is a geothermal pool. It was lovely and it was nice and warm. Iceland is a really beautiful place and the landscape is

impressive. You can learn so much more about the environment when you visit places like that, it's totally different to learning about it in a classroom."

Student Molly Townsend said: "I enjoyed swimming in the lagoon and visiting the black sand beach because it was different to any beach I have seen in England. The waves were huge."

Student Francesca Stobbs said: "My favourite part of the trip was the secret lagoon and the waterfalls. They were really pretty. We had to climb up about 500 steps to get to the top and go back down but it was worth it."

Lesley Musgrove, trips and visits co-ordinator at the school, said: "This was my fourth visit to Iceland with school and it never. There is a glacier that we visit each year which is retreating. The first time I went it ended beside the car park now 8 years later it is a 15-minute walk away, and it makes you realise just how fragile our earth is."



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GARDENING

## Forget what you've been told: you can grow fruit in your garden

### Five reasons not to grow fruit – and why they're wrong

When it comes to growing our own food, the natural starting point for most of us is a vegetable garden. Yet by stopping there – which is something I am guilty of – means we are missing out on a lot.

Growing fruit is just as important as growing vegetables because it gives us control over what is in our food and where it comes from.

But homegrown fruit also provides incredible flavours and a larger selection of varieties than what is typically found in the supermarket. And by growing fruit organically, we are reducing the demand for conventionally grown fruit...and that supports the environment.

For some, adding fruit to the garden can be intimidating. Yet by using sound gardening practices, growing a wide variety of delicious fruit from healthy trees and shrubs is possible in your own garden or even a deck or patio. In speaking with many food-gardeners not currently growing fruit, a few objections kept surfacing.

In no particular order, here are the some of the most popular reasons for *not* starting.

#### Not enough room to grow fruit

Well yes if you're growing a standard tree but with so many options today for miniature, dwarf, and semi-dwarf, as well as the fact that almost any tree can be grown in a container, the as lack of space argument is no longer valid. No, you might not be able to have an orchard, but there's no reason why you can't have multiple containers of fruit bearing trees and shrubs. From a single strawberry pot, to container grown figs and even trees, all can thrive in a container. Or, select varieties bred for small spaces and containers.

#### Pest and disease issues are too common

One of the most often raised concerns when growing fruit trees and berry plants is their potential susceptibility to pests and diseases. Like any healthy garden and landscape, keeping a clean planting site is key. Pruning and destroying diseased limbs, removing mummified fruit, (especially in late fall/winter) to avoid re-contamination of diseases and spores, avoid planting in poorly drained sites, and don't overwater to prevent root-rot and water moulds.

And yes, some fruit trees, like apples are hosts to their fair share of pests. However, there are numerous effective conventional and organic controls. In addition, many of the



"Homegrown fruit also provides incredible flavours and a larger selection of varieties than what is typically found in the grocery store. And by growing fruit organically, we are reducing the demand for conventionally grown fruit...and that supports the environment"

perceived problems are only cosmetic. Personally, I'd prefer a blemished apple that's perfectly fine to eat, vs. one that has been sprayed with a pesticide just to prevent a little cosmetic damage.

#### Too time consuming

The biggest issue referenced here usually pertains to the time invested in a pest prevention regime if you choose to do so. Using best practices to choose and site your plants properly from the start will go a long way to

preventing many of the most time-consuming issues. Like the rest of the trees and shrubs in your garden, know before you buy. A good local nursery specialising in fruit can be a huge help here. Some of the best resources for selecting high quality plants appropriately suited for where you live are online and mail order resources. Other important duties involve early pruning to train you trees for size and shape, and of course the all important harvesting. Yet let us all be reminded that time invested in harvesting is perhaps the greatest benefit of growing fruit.

#### Too Messy

The importance of maintaining a clean environment for aesthetics and to reduce pest and disease issues later will indeed require time. But on the assumption you are not growing a large orchard, presumably this task is easily managed along with your other weekend chores. Being vigilant with picking off young fruit early also eliminates excess fruit drop later.

#### Lack of success in the past

To borrow the phrase: "past results are not an indication of future performance", should be applied here if your success in the past is lacking. The same principles that apply to the rest of the plants in your landscape apply to fruit trees and shrubs too. With all the resources available today, as well as newer, more resistant varieties, and your options and chances for success are greater than ever.



## HEALTH

# Cancer: what it is, what to look out for, and what to expect if it is diagnosed

With the shock news that both the Princess of Wales and King Charles have cancer, Gavin Metcalf looks at the diseases and treatments they, and the one-in-two of the wider society who will develop cancer in their lifetimes, can expect

The Princess of Wales released a moving video message on 22nd March to address speculation about her health. In it, the future Queen disclosed that she'd been diagnosed with cancer following tests conducted after she underwent major abdominal surgery at a clinic in London in January.

Catherine explained that she was undergoing "preventative chemotherapy" – but emphasised that her surgery had been successful, and that she was "well" and "getting stronger every day".

The message was the second announcement of a royal family cancer diagnosis in recent weeks. On 5th February, Buckingham Palace published a statement that King Charles III had been diagnosed with an undisclosed form of cancer, unrelated to the treatment he had been receiving for an enlarged prostate.

The statement said that he had begun "regular treatments". The king postponed all public-facing duties during his treatment, but reportedly continued with his "constitutional role as head of state, including completing paperwork and holding private meetings".

Cancer is the leading cause of death worldwide. One-in-two people will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime – so the condition will affect almost every family. However, many cancers can be cured if, as appears to be the case with the king, the condition is detected early and treated effectively.

## What is cancer?

Our bodies are made up of more than 100 billion cells, and cancer typically starts with changes in a small group of cells – or even a single one.

We have different cell types depending upon where in the body they are and the function that the cell has. The size, amount and function of each of these cells is normally tightly regulated by genes – groups of codes held within our DNA – that instruct cells how to grow and divide.

However, changes (mutations) to DNA can alter the way cells grow and multiply – often forming a lump, or solid tumour. Cancers can also develop in blood cells, such as white blood cell cancer which is known as leukaemia. This type of cancer does not form solid tumours; instead, the cancer builds up in the blood or sometimes the marrow in the core of bones, where blood cells are produced.

In all, there are more than 200 types of cancer, but all start with mutations in the DNA contained within each and every cell.

## What exactly are mutations?

Think of your DNA as a big recipe book, and your genes as individual recipes for making



"But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease..."

different dishes. Mutations are smudges or missing words from this recipe that can result in key ingredients not being added into the mix.

Regardless of the type of cancer or the cells from which it develops, mutations in our genes can result in a cell no longer understanding its instructions.

These mutations can happen by chance when dividing, but can also be the result of lifestyle choices such as smoking, drinking and inactivity.

Research has found that in order for a normal cell to turn into a cancerous cell, anywhere from one to ten different mutations are normally required.

## How is cancer treated?

Treatment options for cancer depend on a variety of factors, including where your cancer is, how large it is, and whether it has spread to other parts of the body. The main treatments for cancer include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy.

Chemotherapy uses drugs to target and kill cells that are rapidly dividing in our bodies. This

approach is effective at targeting fast-growing cells in various cancers – but also has negative side effects. It also targets healthy cells that rapidly divide, such as hair and the cells lining our digestive system.

This can lead to commonly reported side-effects such as hair loss, nausea and diarrhoea.

Chemotherapy can be used both preventatively – as in the case of the princess – and therapeutically.

Preventative chemotherapy, also known as adjuvant chemotherapy, is given after surgery or other primary treatments to eliminate any remaining cancer cells in the body. It aims to reduce the risk of the cancer returning (known as recurrence).

Therapeutic chemotherapy is used as a treatment option for cancer that has spread or is well established, such as advanced-stage cancers.

Surgery involves the physical removal of cancerous tissues as well as nearby lymph nodes – small glands which act as filters in your body that cancers can spread through – to eliminate the tumour. Surgery is often used to remove localised cancers that haven't spread throughout the body.

Radiotherapy uses high-energy radiation beams that are able to target specific areas where tumour cells are located to destroy or shrink the tumour. Radiotherapy can be applied externally or internally.

Chemotherapy, surgery, and radiotherapy are

often combined in cancer treatment to improve outcomes for patients.

Thanks to developments in cancer research over the last 50 years, survival rates have improved greatly – although the rate of improvement has slowed recently. Cancer survival depends on various factors such as age – people under 40 have a greater chance of survival – overall health and fitness, as well as family history.

## What you should do

Particular changes in your body or warning symptoms could indicate the presence of cancer. These include, but are not limited to:

- Unexplained weight loss;
- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest;
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits;
- Persistent cough or coughing up blood;
- Difficulty swallowing;
- Persistent pain;
- Noticing lumps, such as in a breast or testicle.

The symptoms may not necessarily be the result of cancer. But it is important to get checked by a doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary or have had persistent symptoms that don't ease.

Early detection and treatment can significantly improve outcomes for many types of cancer.

**Gavin Metcalf is a cancer biologist and lecturer in biomedical science, Anglia Ruskin University**

## FOOD

# Let the bees add a naturally sweet touch to your pasta

## HONEY-ROASTED CHERRY TOMATO PASTA WITH KALE AND LEMON SAUCE

As we all know, bees are one of the most crucial components of our food ecosystem.

Aside from the honey they help to produce, they are responsible for more than a third of the foods we enjoy each and every day.

Without them, so many of our core ingredients would cease to exist, such as the tomatoes, kale, lemon, and garlic in this delicious pasta recipe.

By purchasing and incorporating honey into meals such as this one, you are directly supporting the beekeepers that care for the honey bees, helping make the production of much of our food supply possible

Makes 4 servings

### INGREDIENTS

1 lb. - cherry or grape tomatoes, halved  
 1/4 cup + 2 tbs - olive oil, divided  
 2 tbs - honey  
 4 tsp. - salt, divided  
 Freshly ground pepper, to taste  
 1 lb. - spaghetti  
 2 cloves - garlic, minced  
 1 bunch - kale, washed and stems removed  
 Zest and juice of 2 lemons  
 1/2 cup - grated parmesan, + extra for serving  
 1/4 cup - walnuts, toasted and chopped  
 Salt and pepper, to taste

### METHOD

- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Toss the tomatoes with 2 tbs of the olive oil and the honey and sprinkle with 1 tsp. of the salt and freshly ground pepper. Roast for approx. 10 minutes until the tomatoes



soften and begin to caramelize.

■ While the tomatoes are cooking, bring a large pot of water to a boil with 3 tsp. of salt. Add the spaghetti and cook for approx. 10 minutes to al dente.

■ Remove the tomatoes from the oven and quickly toss with the garlic.

■ Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the pasta water. Immediately toss the pasta with the rest

of the olive oil, kale, lemon juice and zest. Next, add some of the tomato mixture and the parmesan. Add some of the pasta water as needed to coat the pasta and create a light sauce. Add salt and pepper to taste.

■ Serve immediately with the walnuts and additional parmesan.

TIP - You can use spinach instead of kale if you like and replace any pasta shape you like for the spaghetti.

## How to revamp and refresh your lifestyle this spring

There's something so invigorating and refreshing about springtime. The new season can bring out your best, motivating you to implement changes to your daily routine that will put a smile on your face, boost your energy levels and make many of your ordinary tasks seem easier.

If you're looking for new ideas for this spring's refresh, check out these tips from Colette Heimowitz, vice president of Nutrition and Education at Simply Good Foods Company.

### Make over your meals

Take advantage of the longer days and warmer weather by grilling your steaks, poultry, fish, and veggies outdoors! An impromptu barbecue may be just what you need to make weeknight meals special, even if it's just you and your family enjoying it.

As you let go of heavier comfort food from the colder months, try lightening up your meals with fresh salads and healthful soups. Feeling stuck and need some inspiration to help keep your weekly meal plans exciting? Atkins has an array of low-carb recipes to help inspire your spring menus.

### Put a spring in your snacks

It's time to upgrade your pantry and add a few new snacking options. The new Atkins Crunchy Protein Cookies are the perfect bite-sized, portable treats to crush your sweet tooth, any day, anytime. With eight grams of protein and less than one gram of sugar, these are the perfect treats to bring with you on-the-go, or to enjoy at home on a rainy spring day. While you're



at it, consider revamping your refrigerator options with tasty, in-season fruits and veggies. Check out your local farmers market to find the fresh options at their peak.

You can elevate your fresh produce in a variety of ways: dip veggies in ranch dressing or hummus, sprinkle berries on cottage cheese, or

layer bell pepper slices with your favourite cheese and a few olives.

### Get moving outside—or anywhere

Now that the weather is getting warmer and daylight is stretching out longer, it's time to get out and get moving again. If you're new to

"Spring cleaning may sound boring, but the results are well worth it as it'll boost your mood and energy..."

exercise or haven't been active in a while, start slowly. Take the dog for a walk, go to the park with your kids, skip the lift in favour of the stairs or park a little further from your destination.

Find an exercise routine that excites and inspires you. Try out a new exercise class, start a walking club with friends or even try a new sport like tennis or pickleball.

### Clean your space

Spring cleaning may sound boring, but the results are well worth it as it'll boost your mood and energy. Having a clean space can be just as important for leading a healthy lifestyle as eating right or getting some exercise. Start small and choose one drawer, one closet, or one room at a time. Put on your favourite music or podcast and get to work!

When you've finished cleaning, you can let in a little fresh air, light some spring-scented candles and kick off the season in your newly clean and cosy home.

You can find more healthy lifestyle tips, recipes and low-carb products for your spring refresh at [Atkins.com](http://Atkins.com).

## LIFESTYLE

# Discover five affordable ways to make the most of summer

Summer is just around the corner! Now we've said goodbye to winter and spring is officially with us, it's the perfect time to plan a trip or two and spend quality time together as a family. However, family holidays can get pretty pricey. With booking hotel rooms, flights and more, a summer trip can put a strain on your wallet.

This summer, you can make the most of the sunny season while sticking to your budget using these five tips.

## 1. Book early

Don't wait! One of the best ways to make the most of your summer and save is to plan ahead and book early. This is especially true when planning air travel.

According to the CheapAir.com Annual Airfare Study, a fare will change 49 times on average from the day the trip first goes on sale. If you want affordable, flexible flights, aim to book your trip 2.5 to 7.5 months in advance.

In addition to flights, accommodations, concerts and activities like summer camp can sell out months in advance. To make sure your family doesn't miss out on the fun, book ahead. Booking early not only secures your spot, but you can also get some discounts.

## 2. Look for deals

Watch for promotions and special offers on activities, attractions and events. Check an organisation or company's websites and social media accounts to make your summer outings more budget-friendly.

Another way to save is to see if any of your existing accounts or services have member perks. For example, T-Mobile customers on qualifying plans now have Magenta Status, which unlocks VIP treatment with premium one-of-a-kind deals and experiences across nationally loved brands.

## 3. Explore the great outdoors

Nature offers endless entertainment for free or on the cheap. For day trips, head to a nearby



park for a hike and picnic or catch some waves at the beach. If you're seeking longer excursions, plan a family camping trip. If you don't have the right gear, don't feel pressured to spend lots of money. Ask family and friends to borrow tents, sleeping bags, coolers, lanterns and camp cookware. As long as you pack your snacks, sunscreen and sense of adventure, you can make lasting memories in nature without draining your bank account.

Cut down on the expense of eating out by packing a small barbecue for tasty fun meals in the great outdoors.

## 4. Hit the road

Pack the car and get ready for a good old-fashioned road trip! A family road trip can be an exciting and budget-friendly vacation where

the journey there can be just as fun as the destination.

Plan a weeklong trip to a historic site, a natural wonder or a city you've never visited. No matter where you choose to go, preparation is key. Load up the car with snacks, games, movies and all your device chargers. Don't forget to stop along the way. You may be surprised at the hidden gems you discover on the way to your destination. If you'd like to keep the miles off your car, don't stress! Renting a car with extra amenities is an affordable way to make a road trip comfortable and convenient.

## 5. Plan a staycation

Sometimes, the best summer memories are made right at home. Staycations surged in popularity during the pandemic, and an

international study found that the travel trend is unlikely to flag anytime soon. A trip where you stick close to home with loved ones can't be beat for affordability and convenience.

Need some staycation ideas? Turn your living room into a day spa, host a game night, camp in your backyard or plan a scavenger hunt. The only limit is your imagination. If you want to look a little farther afield, use your staycation to explore your city! During the summer, your town or city may host celebrations and festivals your family can enjoy. Find out if local museums, theme parks and community centres offer discounts to children, students and families.

With a little creativity, planning and a willingness to think outside the box, you can make the most of summer without putting a strain on your finances.

## FINANCE

## Advancing your skills to stand out in today's job market

### Andréa Backman,

You've probably heard a lot about 'the skills gap' – the disparity between the skills an employer expects their employees to have and an employee's actual skills – and perhaps you even feel that you lack certain skills to advance in your own career.

The skills in demand by the workforce continue to evolve rapidly. The 2023 LinkedIn Workplace Learning report indicates the skillsets for jobs are likely only going to continue increasing. Specifically, the report claimed skill sets for jobs have already changed by around 25% since 2015. By 2027, this number is expected to double.

The question is: how can working adults continue to acquire the skills they need to support their career goals?

Returning to the classroom can be an intimidating proposition. Between work, family and other obligations, studying again may present many challenges to working adults. Fortunately, there are several ways you can make today's technology, your life experience, your job and flexible educational opportunities work for you.

If you are thinking about furthering your education and skills to help advance in your career, here are some questions to consider:

■ What is your goal? Decide what type of education will help you achieve your goal: Do you need a specific course?

■ Would a certificate suffice? Would a certain credential further your career? What type of course is most achievable, and where will you

get the most support?

■ What type of course is best for working adults? If you plan to work full time while earning a degree or credential, look for an online or hybrid course with flexibility that offers support for working adults.

Ask your employer for the time and flexibility you need to complete an education course.

■ Are you eligible for credit for prior learning (CPL)? If you have prior work or learning experience, research whether you are eligible for credit for prior learning. This could help give you a head start and make it quicker to get to the finish line.

■ Will your employer support you? Many

employers offer tuition assistance courses. Consider talking to your employer about what may be available to you and how furthering your education may help you advance in the organisation.

Amid a rising expectation of skill levels for employees, it can be important to seek out continuing education opportunities—both inside and outside of a traditional classroom.

Take advantage of flexible and affordable options to achieve your education goals. Utilising some of the unique approaches listed above, such as online or hybrid learning and tuition assistance courses, can make advancing your skills less intimidating and more attainable. **For more tips to thrive in an ever-changing jobs market, check out the Hire-Ed podcast: <https://hire-ed.podbean.com/>**

# A sleepy village manor house, fit for a Queen (and a King)

How Henry VIII's grandmother used a palace in Northamptonshire to build the mighty Tudor dynasty

HISTORY

**Rachel Delman & Keely Hayes-Davies**

Today, you would be hard-pressed to find any visible evidence that Collyweston village in Northamptonshire was once home to a palace presided over by Henry VIII's grandmother, Lady Margaret Beaufort.

As a royal power base, the palace was an epicentre of Tudor power and propaganda in the 16th century and was a key stopping point for royal visits. This included two royal tours in 1503 and 1541, which were crucial to the making (and remaking) of the Tudor dynasty.

Margaret Beaufort acquired Collyweston manor after her son Henry VII ascended to the English throne following the battle of Bosworth in 1485. There, she set upon expanding the manor house into a palace befitting her status as king's mother.

Beaufort's presence at Collyweston formed part of a strategic plan, devised by mother and son, to exert royal influence both locally and nationally. Collyweston was in the heart of the country at a time when most of the royal palaces were clustered in and around London. The neighbouring county of Lincolnshire became the epicentre of Beaufort's influence.

In the early years of the Tudor dynasty, Beaufort's presence in the area was particularly important as Henry VII had spent much of his youth in exile in Brittany. His mother's longstanding connections to the local area therefore helped proclaim his legitimacy.

The site was also close to the Great North Road (now partly occupied by the A1), making it an ideal stopping point for royal parties travelling between London and the north.

## Beaufort gets building

While nothing remains above ground and no drawings of the palace survive, Beaufort's extensive works to the palace over several years are preserved in numerous volumes of household and building accounts.

By the early 16th century, the palace was framed around three courtyards and boasted a chapel, great hall, rooms for Margaret and her household, a jewel tower and library. Perched on the crest of a hill, the palace offered spectacular views over the Welland valley. The land falling westwards from the residence included a deer park of approximately 108 acres, along with ponds, gardens, orchards, summer houses and walkways.

Between 1502 and 1503, Beaufort commissioned significant building works, including repainting the chapel, new walkways through the grounds and a new accommodation block overlooking the deer park. This flurry of work anticipated the arrival of the first of two Tudor tours, known as progresses, which were to stop at Collyweston.

Progresses played a vital role in presenting the king (and his wider family) to his people, publicly displaying him as the people's sovereign. They gave the king and his retinue an opportunity to hunt, engage with the localities and hear the grievances of the local elites and their people.

The 1503 progress notably celebrated the marriage of Beaufort's granddaughter (Henry VIII's sister, Margaret Tudor) to James IV of Scotland. For the fledgling Tudor dynasty, the event was a triumph, creating a political



Lady Margaret Beaufort. The ultimate Tudor political schemer, she established Collyweston as a seat of power, away from London but within England's heartlands

alliance in the form of a peace treaty between England and Scotland.

Beaufort recorded the event in a prayer book gifted to her by her mother, Margaret Beauchamp, along with other key dates relating to the dynasty's successes. The wedding party stayed at Collyweston for two weeks, where they enjoyed feasting, hunting, entertainment and services in Beaufort's repainted chapel.

## Fit for a king

In 1541, approximately 32 years after his grandmother's death, Henry VIII returned to

Collyweston with his fifth wife, Catherine Howard, during their progress to York.

To travel as far as York was unusual. But Henry intended to secure the region after the Pilgrimage of Grace (a popular revolt that began in Yorkshire in October 1536) in much the same way his father had done in 1486, when he had taken a large force north to secure his reign after the Wars of the Roses.

Catherine also embarked on her ill-fated affair with her husband's friend, the courtier Thomas Culpeper, during the progress and met with him secretly throughout.

Henry VIII and Catherine stayed at Collyweston palace – the Queen in rooms known to Margaret Beaufort and once occupied by Henry's mother – on 5th August, on the journey from London to York, and from 15th October to 17th on their return. They had departed from Westminster with their summer court of around 400 to 500 people and a group of 4,000 to 5,000 horsemen – a group larger than most Tudor towns.

The company was heavily armed, including at least 1,000 soldiers. The king and queen travelled in style, accompanied by an estimated 400 courtiers, officials, musicians and servants.

Elaborate tents and the richest tapestries, plates and clothes were brought from London to furnish the royal court on the move. Collyweston would once again have been a hub of activity during the progress, albeit with a different purpose and tone from 1503.

The sleepy appearance of Collyweston village today belies its significance as a stage on which key events relating to the Tudor dynasty were played out. While the site has fallen into relative obscurity, for the Tudors, it was very much on the map as a place of security in the face of uncertainty. **Rachel Delman is a Heritage Partnerships Co-ordinator, University of Oxford** **Keely Hayes-Davies is a PhD Candidate, Early Modern History, University of York**



Original doorway of the palace. Today little remains of Collyweston Manor, despite its significance during the Tudor period

# Milei risks losing his grip on power as he rewrites Argentina's fascist past

WORLD AFFAIRS

**Cara Levey**

“Milei, you scumbag, you are the dictatorship.” This was among the defiant shouts that rang out across downtown Buenos Aires on Sunday, 24th March as some 400,000 Argentinians filled the Plaza de Mayo, the iconic square that has borne witness to pivotal moments in Argentina's history.

People flock to Buenos Aires – and other cities across Argentina – on this date each year for an annual march to commemorate the victims of the country's last military dictatorship. Between 1976 and 1983, an estimated 30,000 people were killed, imprisoned, tortured or forcibly disappeared in a state-led campaign that still haunts the country.

But this year the march felt a little different. Activists showed their palpable outrage at President Javier Milei's administration for seeking to downplay the brutal legacy of the dictatorship.

And on 21st March, Milei's defence minister, Luis Petri, reportedly met with the wives of military officers convicted of crimes against humanity. The meeting occurred amid rumours of pardons for human rights abuses that had been committed under the dictatorship.

Many human rights have been rolled back, too. Activists have faced threats, funding for the country's commemorative sites has been withdrawn and their staff laid off, and workers in the Secretariat of Human Rights have been sacked. Human rights, which have been hard won over decades in Argentina, are in danger.

## Political violence

Milei is a self-professed anarcho-capitalist. His policies are at best, nebulous, and at worst, dangerously chaotic. Since he was elected in November 2023, Milei has made clear plans for sweeping liberal economic reforms, cuts to funding for public services, and has opposed equal marriage and legal abortion.

Milei's human rights policy is worrying. A number of active and retired military personnel have been appointed to various Government positions, including chief of staff and to the Ministry of Defence. However, there would be worse to come in the run up to this year's 24th March commemorations – an outright assault on human rights.

Demonstrators block a road during a protest against Argentine President Javier Milei's reforms, in Buenos Aires. There is growing unrest over Milei's policies  
Photo: Agustin Marcarian, Reuters



In early March, Sabrina Bölke, a member of HIJOS (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence), was attacked and sexually assaulted in her home. HIJOS is an Argentinian organisation founded in 1995 to represent the children of people who had been murdered, disappeared or imprisoned by the country's military dictatorship.

Before leaving, her attackers wrote 'VVLC [viva la libertad, carajo] ñoqui' on one of the walls. This is Milei's catchphrase and loosely translates as 'Long live freedom, dammit'. *Ñoqui* (gnocchi) is a derogatory term for state workers, equivalent to 'jobsworth' in English.

This is a lesson in what happens when radical 'outsiders' like Milei (or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the US) come in from the shadows. They not only tolerate political violence, but actively encourage it. Lacking

*“The day of commemoration brought one more disturbing turn of events. The Government released a video straight out of the denialist playbook, presenting a false, alternative portrayal of the military dictatorship's crimes”*

political experience, their leadership is founded on creating an 'us v them' mentality which emboldens their supporters.

## Revising history

The day of commemoration brought one more disturbing turn of events. The Government released a video straight out of the denialist playbook, presenting a false, alternative portrayal of the military dictatorship's crimes.

The video advocates for a 'complete memory' that shifts the focus to those killed by armed left-wing organisations in the 1960s and 1970s and calls for the end of the pursuit of justice for military perpetrators. It stars Juan Bautista Yofre, the ex-chief of the Secretariat of Intelligence, and María Fernanda, the daughter of Captain Humberto Viola, who was killed in 1974 by the revolutionary left.

The video resurrects the 'two

demons' trope. This is a theory that equates systematic state terrorism with the violence committed by the revolutionary left. It justifies the disappearances as the result of a conflict between two warring factions.

It's a viewpoint that had, in recent years, lost much credibility. In 2006, the prologue to the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons' truth commission report, which was originally published in 1983 to detail the extent of forced disappearance across Argentina, was rewritten specifically to remove allusions to this myth.

Such rejection of historical facts is not surprising. During his presidential campaign debates, Milei disputed the number that had disappeared at the hands of the dictatorship.

His vice president, Victoria Villarruel, the niece of a member of the armed forces under judicial investigation, has gone even further. She has called for an end to human rights trials and has pushed for the closure of the memory museum on the grounds of what was once the notorious former Navy Mechanics School and which became a clandestine detention

centre during the dictatorship.

## What happens next?

Milei and Villarruel may struggle to block human rights trials completely, certainly not without a stand-off with the Argentine courts. The opposition of congress to Milei's 'omnibus law' (the collective name for his package of liberal reforms) in February 2024 is a reminder that he will undoubtedly face legislative roadblocks.

The Argentine Court of Appeal, which is responsible for ruling on human rights cases, has also been clear that it will prevent perpetrators of human rights abuses benefitting from house arrest. However, we will probably see a gradual undermining of judicial processes via the release of defendants and the replacement of judges, accompanied by an emboldening of those who deny state terrorism.

It is still early days in Milei's tenure. But human rights activists and international observers should be concerned about the future of human rights in Argentina.

**Cara Levey is a Senior Lecturer in Latin American Studies, University College Cork**

# Courtesy, joy and the Kingdom of God

SPORT

## Fr Vlad Felzmann

The courteous 'Namaste' – 'I bow to you' – has stayed a familiar word among courteous people ever since, due to Covid restrictions, physical contact was frowned upon, and giving someone the elbow, or a knuckle to knuckle punch, seemed, though humorous, disrespectful and inappropriate.

Courtesy – with its synonyms, polite, well mannered, civil, respectful, deferential, well behaved, well bred, gentlemanly, chivalrous, gallant, ladylike, genteel, cultivated, gracious, obliging, kind, considerate, pleasant, cordial, genial and affable, showing politeness in attitude and behaviour towards others – shows humanity at its civilised best.

Ten years ago, in his 2014 World Cup video message to organisers, athletes and fans, Pope Francis employed Brazilian soccer slang to underscore what is necessary for soccer to cultivate a 'culture of encounter'. He said: "We must overcome individualism, selfishness, all forms of racism, of intolerance and of the instrumentalisation of the human person. It is not only in football that being *fominha* – a selfish player who keeps the ball and doesn't pass it, a ball hog – is an obstacle to positive results for the team. Because, in life, when we are fominhas, ignoring those who surround us, the entire society is damaged."

Although courtesy and respect are two words that often go together, they are not synonymous.

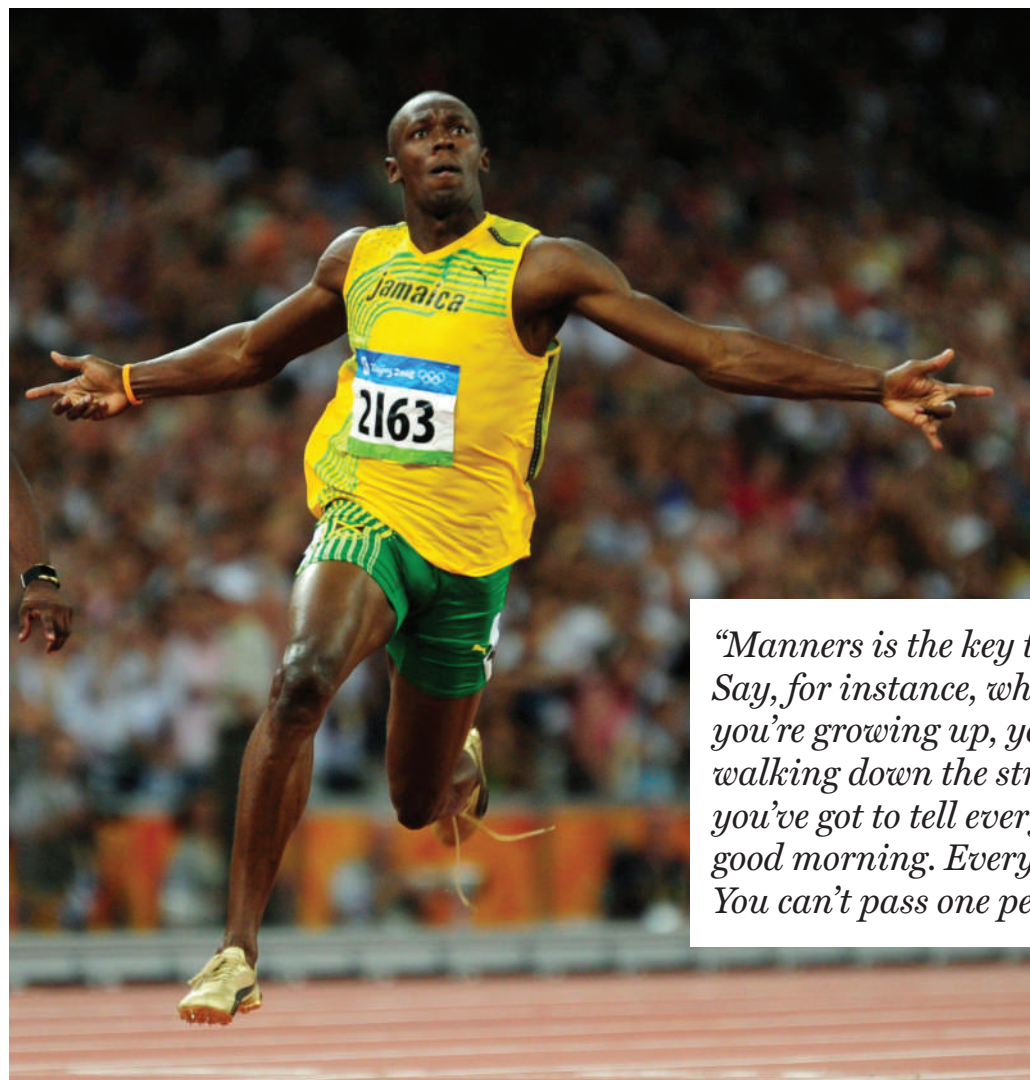
We all prefer individuals who are both respectful and courteous to others. From childhood itself, in decent families, children are taught to be courteous and respectful of others. But these two are different things. Courtesy is being polite to others. Respect, though expressed through courtesy, can be defined as admiration for someone because of their qualities or achievements.

Roger Federer, arguably the greatest tennis player of all time, once said "I fear no one but respect everyone."

### 'What you do to the least of mine, you do to me'

Personally, I try to be courteous even with people I do not respect. Staying on moral high ground is *ubuntu* – good for both in that relationship. It provides me with a stress-reducing foothold – and an entertaining view – on life.

Erastus Wiman (1834-1904), best known as a developer in the New York City borough of Staten Island, a founder of whiskey



*"Manners is the key thing. Say, for instance, when you're growing up, you're walking down the street, you've got to tell everybody good morning. Everybody. You can't pass one person."*

producer Canadian Club, and owner of the New York Mets baseball team, said: "Nothing is ever lost by courtesy. It is the cheapest of pleasures, costs nothing, and conveys much. It pleases him who gives and receives and thus like mercy, is twice blessed."

Remembering the words of Jesus Christ, "What you do to the least of mine, you do to me" (Mt. 25:40), I try to recognise God's presence in everyone and treat them accordingly. That's not always easy in an angry crowd on a narrow pavement or a tight-packed tube.

"Manners is the key thing. Say, for instance, when you're growing up, you're walking down the street, you've got to tell everybody good morning. Everybody. You can't pass one person." A point made by Usain Bolt – remember him? – a Jamaican former sprinter, widely considered to be the greatest sprinter of all time. He is still, ever since 2009, the world record holder in the 100 metres, 200 metres and 4 × 100 metres relay.

Mind you, that may have been fine in Jamaica but, as Crocodile Dundee found out, impossible in a city like New York or, as I have discovered, Oxford Street, London.

### Practice the courtesy of good sportsmanship

Tennis has its rules on etiquette that can be found in The United States Tennis Association (USTA)'s

'Friend at Court' under 'The Code'. The introduction states: "Tennis is a unique sport, one that is often played without supervision, referees or officials. As a tennis player, it is important that you know and follow the rules and practice the courtesy of good sportsmanship on court."

It also asks players to "please take time to view and print the USTA Pacific Northwest Sportsmanship and Discipline Rules, Regulations and Guidelines."

Golf also has a reputation for courtesy with its guidelines on etiquette before a game, including punctuality. During the game, players must stay silent and still while an opponent is at work, while after a game, "It's often traditional to stay and have a drink with the

guys you play with after the round. You can have a shower or not, but drinking will only occur after everyone's arrived."

Football – with its all too often racist experiences – is, alas, not in courtesy's Premier League.

On the whole, though not perfect, rugby is better. Teams tend to shake hands instead of a fist-wave after a game. Most teams show respect for the opposition, not celebrating tries as if a life has been saved, and then behave soberly at the end of the game. Having spent 80 minutes knocking seven lumps out of each other, both sides extend a hand straight away.

Straight after the final whistle, the Springboks go to shake hands with the referee and then the opposition. The All Blacks do the very same. The Japanese have a



great reputation for courtesy. As soon as a game has ended, they walk, line abreast, to face the stand, and then bow in unison.

### Reminding people of friends, neighbours and colleagues who enrich life

You learn a lot about the character of players during and at the end of the game. All this prancing, back clapping, whooping and self-congratulation is – to my ancient eye – pathetic. As soon as you hear the final whistle, why not shake hands with the ref, shake hands with the opposition, and if you have won, celebrate modestly?

Donald Bradman (1908-2001), ever with elaborate courtesy, replied personally to all his correspondents even into his 90s. Sir Donald George Bradman, AC, nicknamed 'The Don', was an Australian international cricketer, widely acknowledged as the greatest batsman of all time. Bradman's career Test batting average of 99.94 has been cited as the greatest achievement by any sportsman in any major sport.

"The only way to prove that you're a good sport is to lose. Baseball reveals character; golf exposes it," declared Ernest, 'Mr Cub/Mr Sunshine' Banks (1931 – 2015), an American professional baseball player who starred in Major League Baseball (MLB) from 1953 to 1971. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1977, and named to the Major League Baseball All-Century Team in 1999.

Rather than never making eye-contact – as so many do – when I walk along the pavement, I try to look into the face of a passerby and offer a smile, a raised eyebrow or even a bow of my head – and maybe, even a 'hello!'

Herbert 'Herb' Paul Brooks Jr. (1937-2003), an American ice hockey player and coach, reminded us that, "you're only as good as your values." His most notable achievement came in 1980 when, as head coach of the US Olympic hockey team at Lake Placid, they beat the USSR, the favourites, in the final.

Although the global picture is currently grim and depressing, I try to bring joy and fun into my neighborhood – and remind folk that they have friends, neighbours and colleagues that enrich their lives.

As Christians, we are charged with bringing the Kingdom of God into the world. A sure sign of that kingdom is courtesy.

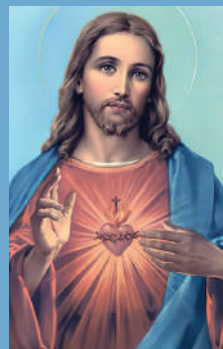
**"I fear no one but I respect everyone," said tennis great Roger Federer**

PRAYERS /THANKSGIVING

**POWERFUL NOVENA**

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, adored, glorified and loved, today and every day, throughout the whole world, now and forever. Amen.  
Say 6 times a day for 9 days.

IMAJ



FAVOURS RECEIVED

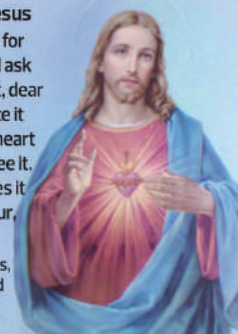


With Grateful Thanks to Our Lady, St Joseph and St Michael.

(CD)

PRAYERS/THANKSGIVING

Oh, Sacred Heart of Jesus  
In the past I have asked for many favours, this time I ask for this special one. Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken heart where your Father will see it. Then, in His merciful eyes it will become your favour, not mine. Amen.  
Say prayer for three days, promise publication and favour will be granted.  
Never known to fail



**THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER**

Dear Heart of Jesus.  
In the past I have asked for many favours, this time I ask you for a very special one. (mention favour).  
Take it dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will become your favour not mine, Amen  
Say prayer for three days.



PRAYERS /THANKSGIVING

Grateful thanks to St Jude for favours granted

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*In Memoriam*

**Vivien Kloszek**  
Died 18 April 2018

Six years since she passed away. It still seems like yesterday she was with us. Everyday is filled with memories, all from a happier time. A life well lived.  
Anthony and Ernie



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**LITURGICAL CALENDARS**

**Ordinary Form**

Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar  
Sunday Year B, Weekday Cycle II  
Sunday, April 7: Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday  
Acts 4:32-35; Ps. 118: 2-4, 15-18, 22-24 r.1; 1 Jn. 5:1-6; Jn. 20: 19-31

Monday, April 8: The Annunciation of the Lord  
Isa. 7:10-14, 8:10; Ps. 40:7-11 r. 8,9; Heb. 10:4-10; Lk. 1:26-38

Tuesday, April 9: Acts 4:32-37; Ps. 93:1-2,5; Jn.3:7-15

Wednesday, April 10: Acts 5:17-26; Ps.34:2-9; Jn.3:16-21

Thursday, April 11: St Stanislaus, Bishop, Martyr  
Acts 5:27-33; Ps. 34:2,9,17-20; Jn.3:31-36

Friday, April 12: Acts 5:34-42; Ps. 27:1,4,13-14; Jn. 6:1-15

Saturday, April 13: St Martin I, Pope, Martyr  
Acts 6:1-7; Ps.33:1-2,4-5,18-19; Jn. 6: 16-21

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Remembering your loved ones...

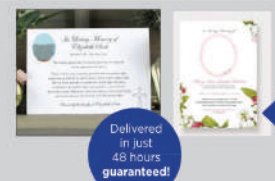
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- Funeral Mass cards



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Best Value,  
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The Annunciation is celebrated on 5th April. According to the Gospel of Luke, the announcement was by the archangel Gabriel to Mary that she would conceive and bear a son through a virgin birth and become the mother of Jesus Christ, the Christian Messiah and Son of God, marking the Incarnation. Gabriel told Mary to name her son Jesus.