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Asylum barge is a stain on Britain's reputation

**Bibby Stockholm met
by protesters as it
arrives into Portland**

**Illegal Migration Bill
drags us into the
'gutter of hate' – JRS**

Michael Winterbottom

An accommodation barge that will house asylum seekers has docked in Portland in Dorset, where it was met by a barrage of criticism from local campaigners and migrant advocates – including the Church.

Critics see the barge as an adjunct of the Government's new Illegal Migration Bill, a 'floating prison' that condemns those who have come to the UK seeking a better life to conditions akin to a detention camp.

Its presence is a visible reminder of the Government's failure to construct a meaningful asylum policy that does not just treat migrants as human beings, but rather as a problem to be demonised.

The Illegal Migration Bill was

dubbed "immoral and cruel" as it was poised to become law.

Sarah Teather, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service UK, said: "The Illegal Migration Bill drags any sense of the UK's moral leadership on the world stage headlong into a gutter of hate.

"In it, we have abandoned the principle of refugee protection, and denied that we have a duty to anyone else in the world.

"We haven't even done this to achieve any useful end, but revelled in sheer performative cruelty."

A spokesperson for migrant charity Care4Calais labelled the barge – the *Bibby Stockholm* – as a "stain on Britain's reputation as a safe haven for the oppressed."

They added: "For generations this country has led the world in providing refuge for people forced to flee their homes and in life-threatening situations. You can see their presence everywhere you look, whether it is ancient French Huguenot families, Jews who fled the Nazis, Ugandan Asians, Hong Kong citizens or those who fled the war in Ukraine. That legacy is being shredded by

this Government, bit by bit."

The Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, Bishop Paul McAleenan, said the arrival of the asylum accommodation barge will not deter the Church from calling on the UK to "love the stranger", as he repeated his plea for the expansion of safe routes for those forced to flee their homes.

Bishop Paul said: "This legislation – and the asylum barge – stand at odds with the teaching of the Church on welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating refugees.

"Refugees are human beings made in the image and likeness of God, not a political problem to be solved. We must never make recognition of people's dignity dependent upon where they come from or how they reach our country. The biblical call to love the stranger is unequivocal and indiscriminate.

"As a Church, we will continue to welcome those seeking sanctuary here and call for the expansion of safe routes.

"We urge our government to redouble its efforts to tackle factors

such as conflict, persecution, and climate change that force people to flee their homes."

Bibby Stockholm was met by protesters as it was pulled into Portland Port on Tuesday. It will house 500 migrants under Rishi Sunak's bid to 'stop the boats' crossing the Channel – though critics have said the barge is little better than a floating prison "similar to the 'Portsmouth hulks' used to house French prisoners during the Napoleonic wars."

The barge's arrival came after a night of drama in Westminster during which the Tory frontbench saw off changes being sought by peers to the Illegal Migration Bill, including modern slavery protections and child detention limits.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who has been a strident critic of the Bill, also dropped his demand for a statement on tackling the refugee problem and human trafficking to the UK, after a similar proposal was rejected by MPs.

The cessation of the stand-off between the Lords and MPs paves the way for the Bill to receive royal assent.

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Pope Francis popped in to a summer camp for children of Holy See employees this week – and was rewarded with a giant medallion hailing him as a 'hero' by one of the group. See pg 14

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World opinion is demanding the immediate release of Bishop Rolando José Álvarez.

World's bishops unite to plead for release of courageous bishop

Bishop Declan Lang, Chair of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Department for International Affairs, has joined other clerics around the world in calling for the immediate release of Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando José Álvarez.

The bishop – a long-time critic of the authoritarian rule of President Daniel Ortega – was arrested before Christmas and tried at the start of the year. After a brief trial during which he was denied proper legal representation, Álvarez was found guilty of 'undermining national integrity and propagation of false news through information and communication technologies to the detriment of the State and Nicaraguan society,' and held in custody pending an official sentence.

On 9th February he was subsequently offered the chance to leave the country and live in exile in the United States, joining 222 other political prisoners released into US custody, but refused the offer. As a result he was declared a traitor, stripped of his citizenship, and sentenced to 26 years in prison.

Recent talks over his release have broken down, with the Nicaraguan Government saying the cleric will remain in jail.

Bishop Lang said the Nicaraguan was setting an extraordinary example to his people, and praised his courage and desire to uphold human dignity.

He renewed calls for his release "Let us renew our prayers for his safety and freedom.

"Bishop Álvarez's imprisonment is a manifestly unjust response to his tireless and courageous work upholding human dignity. We are deeply grateful to everyone across the world who is endeavouring to secure his release.

"We pray too for all the people of Nicaragua, especially those in the Church who are being targeted because of their service to others or their commitment to justice and peace."

The English bishop was joined by his counterpart in the United States, Bishop David J Malloy of Rockford, who chairs the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace. He said: "We received news last week of yet another breakdown in negotiations to free Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua – unjustly sentenced to 26 years in prison and stripped of his citizenship in February. I urge the United States and the international community to continue praying for the bishop and advocating for his release.

"I particularly commend the recent Interamerican Court of Human Rights' ruling mandating the immediate release of Bishop Alva-

rez. The consensus from the international community is clear: the continued incarceration of Bishop Álvarez is unjust and must end as soon as possible.

"May Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of Nicaragua and the United States, illumine the hearts of all decisionmakers, and may her maternal mantle protect the Church in Nicaragua."

The Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe has also this week called for Bishop Álvarez release, calling his continued imprisonment "shameful".

The US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian Nichols, has also called for his unconditional release and that of Fr Fernando Zamora Silva, who has also been jailed for speaking out against the Government.

"We call for the unconditional release of Bishop Álvarez, Fr Zamora, and all those who have been unjustly detained for exercising their constitutional and human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. We condemn the repression against religious communities by the Ortega-Murillo regime," Nichols tweeted.



"Bishop Álvarez's imprisonment is a manifestly unjust response to his tireless and courageous work upholding human dignity."

Bishop Declan Lang

Bishop says freeing mum is compassionate but concerns remain over ‘pills by post’

The Church’s lead on life issues has called for clarity over the abortion law and a tightening up of the rules around the use of telemedicines for terminations after a woman originally jailed for illegally obtaining abortion tablets was freed on appeal.

Carla Foster, 45, was between 32 and 34 weeks pregnant when she got hold of medications to induce an abortion during the Covid lockdown, without any proper checks by the abortion provider.

She was handed a 28-month extended sentence last month, with Mr Justice Pepperall on Stoke-on-Trent Court telling her she would serve half her term in custody and the remainder on licence after her release.

But at the Court of Appeal in London on Tuesday, three judges reduced her prison sentence.

Dame Victoria Sharp, sitting with Lord Justice Holroyde and Mrs Justice Lambert, said Foster’s sentence would be reduced to 14 months and that it should be suspended.

She said: “This is a very sad case, not least because of the length of the gestation when the offence was committed.

“It is a case that calls for compassion, not punishment. No useful purpose is served by detaining Ms Foster in custody.”

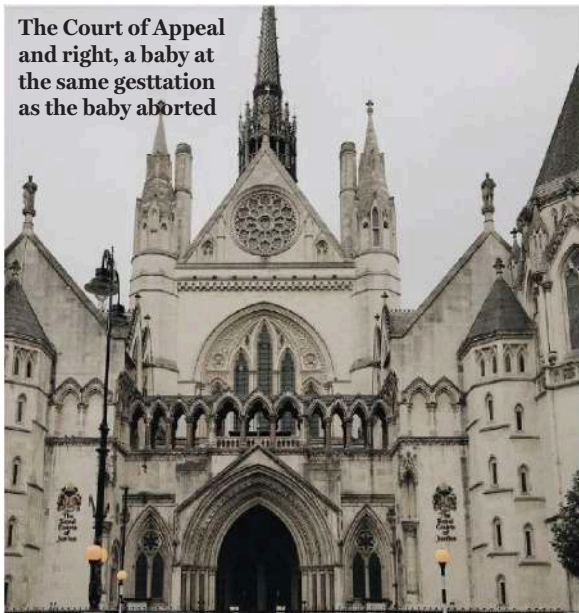
Dame Victoria added that there was “exceptionally strong mitigation” in Foster’s case.

Foster appeared for the hearing via video-link from Foston Hall Prison.

Her barrister, Barry White, said there was a lack of “vital” reports into Foster’s mental health at the time of the offence and that “the obvious impact of the pandemic added to Ms Foster’s already anxious state of mind”.

The Court of Appeal was told that the prison in which Foster has spent 35 days has refused to allow her any form of communication with her three children, one of whom is autistic.

Mr White also said Foster had voluntarily brought her actions to



The Court of Appeal and right, a baby at the same gestation as the baby aborted



the attention of the police, adding: “Had she not done that, it is highly unlikely that she would have ever been prosecuted.”

Foster was initially charged with child destruction and pleaded not guilty, before admitting an alternative charge of administering drugs or using instruments to procure abortion.

Mr White said she was given 20 per cent credit for her guilty plea to the second charge but could have been given the standard one third.

Robert Price, for the Crown Prosecution Service, said the original sentence was not “manifestly excessive”.

He added: “The judge correctly made allowances for mitigating factors in this unusually sensitive case.”

As well as the 14-month suspended prison sentence, Foster will also have to complete up to 50 days of activity.

Commenting on the ruling, Bishop John Sherrington, Lead Bishop for Life Issues for the Bishops’ Conference, said the case was indeed a very sad one, but asked everyone to remember that a baby lost its life as a result of the abortion.

He added: “I reiterate the consistent teaching of the Church, that

both the mother and the unborn child should be afforded the protection of the law and that abortion is always a tragedy for all concerned.

“It is important that the law which protects the life of the unborn child is upheld.

“In this case I welcome the court’s decision to show mercy and com-

passion so that Carla Foster is reunited with her children and her family life can continue.”

“However, I raise again the Church’s concern that telemedicine (pills by post), which allows the home termination of pregnancies of up to 10 weeks, is dangerous for the health of women.”

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said “This case highlights why we are calling for the reinstatement of in-person appointments before abortions take place, to ensure that the gestation of babies can accurately be assessed.”

“We are also calling for a full inquiry into the abortion provider, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, for sending out abortion pills to a woman whose baby, Lily, was 22 weeks beyond the legal limit for at-home abortions.”

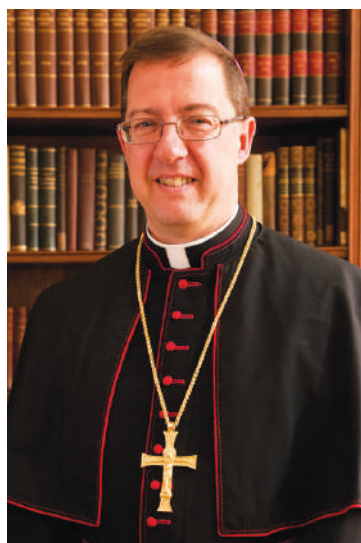
“The Government must firmly reject changing legislation to make abortion legal right up to birth, as is proposed by abortion campaigners, led by BPAS, who are using this tragic case to call for the removal of more abortion safeguards and to build momentum for their campaign to introduce abortion up to birth across the United Kingdom.”

“At at least 32 weeks or around 8 months gestation, Baby Lily was a fully formed human child.

“Remember, if her mother had been given an in-person appointment by BPAS, she would still be alive.”

“I welcome the court’s decision to show mercy and compassion so that Carla Foster is reunited with her children and her family ... however, I raise again the Church’s concern that telemedicine (pills by post), which allows the home termination of pregnancies of up to 10 weeks, is dangerous for the health of women.”

Bishop John Sherrington



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IN BRIEF**Thatcher praised Blair over 9/11**

Margaret Thatcher praised Tony Blair over his support for Washington following the September 11 attacks, according to newly released government files. "You will have found, as I did, that just as one international crisis subsides, another soon threatens," she wrote in a handwritten note, dated 4th April 2002. "I greatly admire the resolve you are showing", she continued, adding that Blair had "ensured that Britain is known as a staunch defender of liberty, and as a loyal ally of America".

UK trade pact questioned

The benefits of the UK joining the Indo-Pacific trade bloc have been questioned after Kemi Badenoch the business and trade secretary, signed up to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in New Zealand. Official estimates suggest the deal will add just £1.8bn a year to the economy after 10 years, representing less than 1 per cent of UK GDP, while making the UK open to palm oil sourced unethically from Malaysia.

Dementia drugs 'will go to rich first'

"Groundbreaking" new dementia drugs are likely to be "the preserve of the rich", said *The Observer*. NHS patients will be subject to a "massive postcode lottery" when the drugs are launched in the UK.

Hilary Evans, chief executive of Alzheimer's Research UK, said the licensed treatment will be available only to "small pockets of the UK", amid fears only those with access to private health will be able to afford them.

SNP demands end to two-child benefit cap as its harm revealed

The two-child benefit cap has affected more than 80,000 children in Scotland in the last year, research commissioned by the SNP has found, as the party renewed its calls for its abolition.

Analysis by the House of Commons Library also determined that an additional 20,000 children in Scotland were placed into poverty as a result of the benefits cap.

The news comes as Sir Keir Starmer faces pressure to commit to scrapping the two-child benefit cap if Labour win power.

Sir Keir's stance on the policy has prompted disquiet from some in his party.

The Catholic Church has consistently argued that the cap does real damage to families and should be axed.

The research for the SNP used the policy simulation tool UKMOD to estimate the effect of the policy since 2017.

If the policy was to be removed, about 30,000 fewer people would be in poverty in Scotland, including 20,000 children.

In Scotland, during the 2022/23 financial year, a total of 80,936 children live in households where the two-child cap has reduced benefits.

It has been applied to a total of 32,616 children.

Since 2017, when the cap came into force, the cap has cost families in Scotland £341.3 million.

The research also showed families have seen the real terms value of benefits fall well behind inflation –



with working-age benefits rising a cumulative 15.4% over the six years since the policy was introduced.

CPI inflation was 24.5% over the same period.

SNP MP Kirsten Oswald said: "The cruel, Tory, two-child cap has been one of the leading causes of poverty in the UK – and if Keir Starmer continues to impose it, the pro-Brexit Labour Party will be directly responsible for pushing thousands of Scottish children into poverty."

"There must be an immediate U-turn.

"The SNP strongly opposes this shameful and punitive policy, which is undermining the Scottish Government's efforts to reduce poverty in Scotland, and is plunging working families, disabled people and carers into destitution."

She continued: "The SNP Government has taken more than 90,000 children out of poverty with progressive policies like the Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grant – but for every step we take forward, damaging Westminster policies like the two-child cap are dragging us back again."

"With the pro-Brexit Labour Party becoming indistinguishable from the Tories, it's clear Westminster is incapable of delivering the change Scotland needs."

Meanwhile, Scottish Green MSP Ross Greer argued for more powers on welfare to be devolved to Scotland.

He said: "Keir Starmer's Labour wants to double down on the cruelty and chaos of the Tories."

"Whoever wins the next general election, real change will only come

if power is taken away from Westminster and put in the hands of Scotland's Parliament.

"We would certainly abolish the two-child cap without delay.

"This is an urgent test for every Labour MSP.

"Will they stand with us to protect the most vulnerable by calling for these powers to be devolved to Scotland?"

Scottish Labour MSP Paul O'Kane said the SNP were attempting to distract from their own failures.

"The two-child cap is a heinous policy that exacerbates poverty and has caused misery for countless families in Scotland and across the UK," he said.

"Scottish Labour's policy has not changed – we opposed the two-child cap when it was introduced and we continue to believe this damaging Tory policy should be scrapped.

"This is a cynical attempt at deflection from an SNP government that has failed to drive down child poverty, close Scotland's scandalous attainment gap or create a functioning social security system.

"The next Labour government will review the entire Universal Credit system to make it fit for purpose, and it will tackle poverty at its root by boosting wages and building a fairer economy."

The DWP has estimated the cost of ending the two-child policy across the UK would have been about £5 billion between 2019 and 2023.

Farage Coutts row re-opens after new evidence leaked

The row caused when bank-to-the-wealthy Coutts closed down Nigel Farage's bank accounts has re-opened after it emerged that it had decided the political campaigner was not the sort of

person the bank wanted to be associated with.

A leaked 30-page report says he is a "grifter" whose views "do not align with our values", according to an internal document obtained by the

former Ukip leader. The document says Farage is seen as 'xenophobic and racist', claims that he was a 'fascist' in his schooldays, and says he had made remarks that are 'distasteful and appear increasingly

out of touch with wider society'.

Previously, Coutts had told the BBC that Farage's accounts were closed only because they fell below the financial threshold of £1m required by the lender.

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Premier League to start with nearly half of clubs backed by betting firms

Prominent display of gambling logos around football 'hugely disappointing'

Michael Winterbottom

Gambling company logos will be carried on the shirts of nine Premier League clubs for the forthcoming season in a move branded "hugely disappointing" by gambling awareness charities.

One said it "beggars belief that top-tier clubs are still taking money from companies that exploit vulnerable fans", after analysing the new kits for the 2023/24 season.

Seven clubs will have gambling companies as their main shirt sponsor - Aston Villa, Bournemouth, Brentford, Burnley, Everton, Fulham, and West Ham - while Crystal Palace and Wolves will carry logos on the shirt sleeves.

Christian Action Research and Education (Care), which looked at the new season kits, said "constant exposure to gambling marketing is far from harmless" for people struggling with addiction.



gluing with addiction.

The issue has gained royal interest, with the parents of Jack Ritchie, who died from suicide in 2017 aged 24 after becoming addicted to gambling, saying the Prince of Wales had "made clear" to them in a conversation that he is "not happy" with gambling companies sponsoring football shirts.

His remarks came as he presented Liz and Charles Ritchie with MBEs at Windsor Castle in June for their work setting up the charity Gambling with Lives in 2018.

Mr Ritchie said William was "not happy" that Aston Villa, the club the prince supports, had a shirt sponsorship deal with gambling platform BK8.

Premier League clubs collectively agreed in April to withdraw gambling sponsorship from the front of match shirts but the decision will only come into effect at the end of the 2025/26 season.

After that time, clubs will still be able to feature gambling brands on shirt sleeves.

Ross Hendry, chief executive of Care, said: "It is hugely disappointing to see so many Premier League clubs still making sponsorship deals with gambling companies.

"Problem gambling is a huge concern and research shows people who bet on sports are particularly vulnerable.

"Many clubs in the Premier League have moved away from partnerships with big betting in recent years.

"Like tobacco advertising in sport in years gone by, gambling adverts are increasingly seen as unacceptable.

"They promote an industry that depends entirely on customer loss for its success, with a track record of putting profits before people."

He said urgency is needed in moving towards a ban.

Mr Hendry added: "This commitment to end shirt-front sponsorship falls short of a complete ban and will not take effect for several years.

"Given the impetus for this move is protecting vulnerable fans, it is hard to understand why the Premier League is dragging its heels.

"Gambling industry wealth is no substitute for fan welfare."

In April, under plans to tackle addiction in the biggest shake-up of the industry's regulations in 15 years, it was announced that gambling companies are to be forced to step up checks on punters "to better protect even those unable to afford small losses".

Government plans also include maximum stakes for online slot machines of between £2 and £15 for all customers subject to consultation and a new statutory levy that will see gambling companies required to fund more ground-breaking research, education and treatment.

Campaigners had called for a ban on gambling ads and sponsorship but the 'White Paper for the digital age' stopped short of that.

Abuse commissioner calls for court reform

Domestic Abuse Commissioner Nicole Jacobs has called for victims involved in Family Court litigation to be given easier access to legal aid.

It is among a series of recommendations in a report which highlights the "traumatising experience of the Family Court" for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

Ms Jacobs says evidence shows victims are being "re-traumatised" by private family law children proceedings - disputes with fathers over children - and plans "whole-sale change".

The report says many parents are navigating a "complex legal system" by themselves and Ms Jacobs wants the Government to remove the means test for legal aid for victims and survivors of domestic abuse involved in disputes with ex-partners and ex-husbands.

"I have heard from hundreds of victims and survivors," she said in a statement released to coincide with the publication of the report, called The Family Court and domestic abuse: achieving cultural change.

"They tell me how they have been re-traumatised by private family law children proceedings and left fearing for their children's safety.

"It is imperative that the Family Court embodies a culture of safety and protection from harm, where

children's needs and the impact of domestic abuse are central considerations, and that all victims and survivors of domestic abuse consistently feel listened to and respected.

"This is currently not the case.

"Public faith in the Family Court is essential: victims of domestic abuse must feel able to approach the court system with confidence that the safeguarding within the Domestic Abuse Act will be upheld to the highest level."

Ms Jacobs wants reform to be "accelerated" and says she is planning a "pioneering monitoring and reporting mechanism" which aims to gain a "much-needed insight".

"The Family Court operates behind a veil of secrecy and compared to the criminal courts, enforces strict rules that stop proceedings being discussed outside its walls," added a spokeswoman.

"The report sets out new plans for a pioneering national oversight mechanism which will, for the first time, uncover proceedings; observing and gathering information in relation to cases in the Family Court involving domestic abuse. This will be key to rebuilding public confidence in the system."

Family Court victims and survivors of domestic abuse found their experience "traumatising".



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COMMENT**Russia playing a cruel starvation card in a bid to force the world to back down**

When Russia invaded Ukraine, one of the very few pieces of good news to pierce the gloom caused by this brutal act was the deal to keep grain shipments moving out of the Black Sea ports.

Turkey and the UN, mindful of fears about global food security given Ukraine's central importance to the grain trade, brokered the deal last summer.

However, this week, hours before the 12-month agreement was due to expire, Russia has refused to extend it.

The impact this will have on grain supplies and world food prices is obvious, with developing countries, especially in Africa, likely to be hardest hit, as they are the main market for Ukraine's grain. But the effects will be felt everywhere. On the markets, wheat, corn and soybean prices all rose on the news.

While prices remain below the levels reached in May last year before the initiative was put in place, a failure to negotiate a new deal could see those prices soar in the coming months. So far, the agreement has allowed 32 million tons of commodities to be exported from Odessa and two other Black Sea ports to 45 countries worldwide.

Russia is the world's largest wheat supplier and it is likely to use its position and strength as a weapon to threaten and put further pressure on Western supporters of Ukraine already grappling with burgeoning inflation caused by rising energy and food costs.

Experts fear that Moscow will increase export taxes to raise grain prices further and help finance its military campaign.

The irony is that the same countries providing Ukraine with the weapons to resist Russia are helping to fill the Kremlin's coffers by buying its energy and food, either directly or indirectly.

Doubtless, the UN will press Moscow to agree to a new deal but what price will Vladimir Putin demand?

"While prices remain below levels reached last year, a failure to negotiate a new deal could see those prices soar in the coming months..."

Europe has to get used to a much warmer future

POLITICS

Emma Hill & Ben Vivian**European heat wave: what's causing it and is climate change to blame?**

Europe is currently in the midst of a heat wave. Italy, in particular, is expected to face blistering heat, with temperatures projected to reach 40C to 45C. There's even a chance that this week will see the current European temperature record of 48.8C, set in Sicily in 2021, could be surpassed.

Searing temperatures have spread to other countries in southern and eastern Europe, including southern France, Spain, Poland and Greece. The heat will complicate the travel plans of those heading to popular holiday destinations across the region.

Heat waves, which are defined as prolonged periods of exceptionally hot weather in a specific location, can be extremely dangerous. Europe has experienced its fair share of devastating heat waves in the past.

In 2003, a heat wave swept across Europe, claiming the lives of over 70,000 people. Then, in 2022, another heatwave hit Europe, resulting in the deaths of almost 62,000 people.

The current heat wave is being caused by an anticyclone named Cerberus after the three-headed monster-dog that guards the gates of the underworld in Greek mythology. An anticyclone – or high-pressure system – is a normal meteorological phenomenon in which sinking air from the upper atmosphere brings about a period of dry and settled weather with limited cloud formation and little wind.

High-pressure systems tend to be slow moving, which is why they persist for days, or even weeks at a time. They often become semi-permanent features over large areas of land. When high pressure systems form over hot land, in regions like the Sahara, the stability of the system generates even hotter temperatures because the already warm air is heated even more.

Eventually, the anticyclone will weaken or break down and the heat wave will come to an end. The Italian Meteorological Society predicts the Cerberus heatwave will persist for around two weeks.

While people struggle on with the heat, the oft-asked question is,

A boy cools off at Fontana della Barcaccia at the Spanish Steps in Rome, during a heat wave which saw Italy record temperatures above 40 deg C for over a week



what role is climate change playing in this crisis?

High pressure systems, like the one currently affecting Europe, have been expanding northwards in recent years. It's difficult to ascribe a single event, such as a heat wave, directly to climate change. But as temperatures continue to warm, we are seeing changes in atmospheric circulation patterns that can lead to increased occurrences of extreme temperatures and drought in Europe.

Research by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirms this trend. Its data shows an increase in the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events since the 1950s. A separate analysis of European heat waves revealed an increasing severity of such events over the past two decades.

In the summer of 2022, southern Europe experienced higher temperatures than usual for that time of the year. Spain, France and Italy saw daily maximum temperatures exceed 40°C. The EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service attributed these unusually

hot conditions to climate change and suggested that such events are likely to become more frequent, intense and last longer in the future – indicating a concerning trend that may continue this year.

The dangers of extreme heat

Heat waves and extreme temperatures impact human health in a number of ways. These conditions can cause heatstroke, leading to symptoms like headaches and dizziness. Dehydration resulting from the heat can also affect respiratory and cardiovascular performance.

There have already been reports of heat-related health incidents in Europe during the on going heat wave. An Italian road worker died, and there have been numerous cases of heatstroke reported across Spain and Italy.

The Italian Ministry of Health has advised residents and visitors in affected areas to take precautions like staying out of the sun during the hottest part of the day, remaining hydrated and to avoid alcohol consumption.

But the effects of heat waves go

beyond individual health. They have broader social and economic consequences too. Extreme heat can damage road surfaces and even cause railway tracks to buckle.

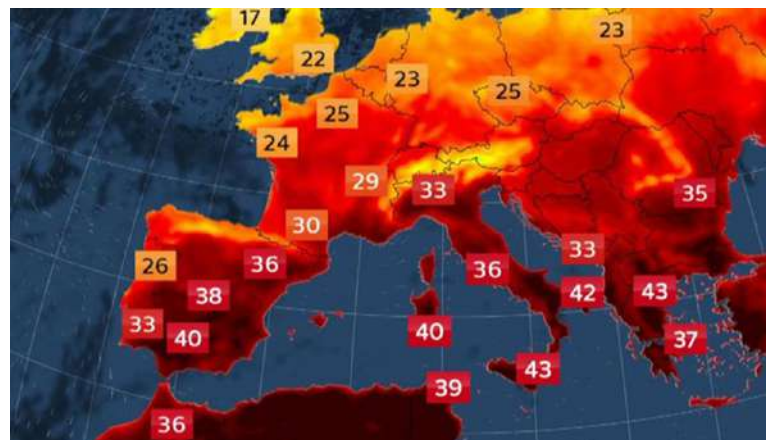
Heat waves can also lead to reduced water availability, affecting electricity production, crop irrigation and drinking water supply. In 2022, scorching heat meant French nuclear plants were unable to run at full capacity as higher river temperatures and low water levels affected their cooling ability. Research indicates that extreme heat has already had a negative impact on economic growth in Europe, lowering it by up to 0.5 per cent over the past decade.

As temperatures continue to rise, heat waves will become more severe. It's crucial that governments worldwide take swift and decisive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions immediately.

However, it's important to note that even if we were to completely halt global greenhouse gas emissions today, the climate would still continue to warm. This is due to the heat that is already absorbed and retained by the oceans. While we can slow down the rate of global warming, the effects of climate change will continue to be experienced in the future.

Emma Hill is an Associate Professor in Energy & Environmental Management, Coventry University

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Priest under fire after blessing mourners from back of a motorbike

A priest in Salford has come under fire after being film riding on the back of a motor bike while scattering holy water at a funeral for a young person killed on an e-bike.

Mourners gathered to pay their respects to 15-year-old Saul Cookson, from Salford, who died in a collision with an ambulance whilst riding an e-bike in June.

The funeral was conducted by Fr Frankie Mulgrew, at St James and All Souls Church in Pendleton.

Reports suggest up to 30 people may have followed the funeral cortege on motorbikes in tribute to Saul, and videos show Fr Mulgrew riding on the back of one of the vehicles in his clerical robes.

A viral video of the comic-turned-priest has caused division online, with some saying it was an inappropriate way of marking the death of the young man.

One person said: 'Aren't priests meant to be real pillars of the community and not supporting this type of behaviour. Hopefully the police will give him a ticket for failing to wear a helmet.'

Another accused the Church of using the occasion to 'try and keep themselves relevant'

But others say it was the perfect goodbye and proved that Fr Frankie was at the heart of his diocese. Post-

ing on a social media page dedicated to St James and All Souls Church, one user said Fr Mulgrew was "a inspiration to the Catholic Church and a breath of fresh air".

Another added: "He's totally Salford first; the most down to Earth priest we've seen. Bringing more people to the pews than others before him."

Fr Mulgrew is also known for running a 'Mercy Bus' - a mobile confession unit that tours the diocese and has received the backing of the pope.

He is the son of TV entertainer Jimmy Cricket.

Responding to the event, a Diocese of Salford Spokesperson said: "On Tuesday, 11th July following a funeral, one of our clergy blessed funeral goers who had been in attendance.

"The blessing took place on the back of an off-road bike. At the time he viewed this interaction as a gesture of outreach to the community that he serves.

"The way this blessing took place is not what we would expect from a member of our clergy and conversations have already taken place regarding the incident.

"We do not condone under any circumstances the anti-social behaviour that took place in the local

community that day.

"We will continue to work in this community as we do across Greater Manchester with all the local agencies to support community cohesion."

During the service, Fr Frankie encouraged mourners to do a kind deed in memory of the teenager over the coming week.

However, his death has been marred by violent outbreaks towards the police force, including fireworks thrown at a local station.

Saul died after he was followed by police traffic officers until bollards blocked their vehicle's path on 8th June.

The young rider then collided with an ambulance, which was not an active call and was being driven back to a nearby ambulance station.

Greater Manchester Police appealed for information after reports of "antisocial behaviour and anti-social vehicle usage" in the area on the day of the funeral.



Fr Frankie is seen riding pillion on a dirt bike as he blesses the other mourners with holy water. Screen grab obtained from BBC/social media

Inset, Saul Cookson died after the e-bike he was riding was in collision with an ambulance

Young carers left feeling lonely over summer hols

More than eight out of 10 teenagers with caring responsibilities feel lonely during the summer holidays, according to new research.

A survey found 82 per cent of 11-18 year-olds who look after loved ones feel isolated during the summer break.

Almost a third (32 per cent) feel lonely for most of the summer break and 35 per cent do not look forward to the time off at all.

Almost one in five (18 per cent) of them spend more than 12 hours a day cooking, cleaning and looking after loved ones who need support, the research by Action for Children and the Carers Trust revealed.

More than a quarter (26 per cent) spend more than 10 hours a day on such tasks.

The vast majority (86 per cent) of the youngsters said they get more worried or stressed in the summer break than in term time, with almost two-fifths feeling that way for most of the holiday.

A separate survey found more

than half of young adults said they felt they did more caring than they used to, with many saying they look after more people than before.

Noah, 19, who is a carer for three members of his family, said: "I never looked forward to the summer holidays as I never got a break.

"When you see friends going out, going to the beach, having a BBQ during the summer holidays, that's when you would feel the loneliness - they're the normal people, and you're not, sadly.

"There needs to be a lot more support - especially in terms of regular activities, and especially residential breaks - but there's hardly any funding for that."

Paul Carberry, chief executive of Action for Children, said: "Young carers are proud to look after family members, but their work deserves proper recognition and support.

"Young carer respite services can be a lifeline, but the support currently available just isn't enough to reach all of them in the right way."

OUR LADY, QUEEN OF PEACE PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

(at the Catholic National Shrine)

Led by Fr Zvonimir Pavičić OFM
Parish Priest of St James, Medjugorje

Monday, 28th August 2023

Itinerary:

- 1.15pm Gathering, Rosary & Litany of Our Lady followed by: Talk by Fr Zvonimir. Break (Sacrament of Reconciliation).
- 3.45pm Holy Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.
- 5.30pm Depart.



"Dear children! I am calling all of you to be carriers of the peace and joy of the risen Jesus for all those who are far from prayer; that the love of Jesus, through your lives, may transform them to a new life of conversion and holiness. Thank you for having responded to my call."
(25 April 2023)

Please give advance notice of coach parties and concelebrating priests to 07710567183 or pilgrimsofmary@hotmail.com.

Loneliness is the challenge of our times

Sir John Battle



We live in a global era of increasing urbanisation; now for the first time in human history, most of the world's population lives in cities and many in mega cities of millions.

Yet though we are nearer in proximity to each other, and some cramped in accommodation check by jowl, we are really no closer as persons. Pope Benedict reminded us that today, "poverty is also isolation".

A recent British poll of 18-70 year olds conducted by Life Search revealed that almost one in ten people say they do not have a "real friend" they can call on. Eight percent said they only had online friends they were in touch with on social media, email or computer gaming with, but had no personal face-to-face contact with them.

In other words it is estimated that some five million individuals in Britain regard themselves as friendless.

55 per cent claimed to have a "best friend" and perhaps sadly only 39 per cent said it was their husband wife or partner.

Those between the ages of 35-54 were recorded as having the fewest friends and perhaps not surprisingly, the youngest group who had the most.

In other words, there is a growing relational crisis of loneliness and isolation in our society of rampant fostered individualism.

It is to precisely to this challenge that Pope Francis addressed his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. He reminds us that 'appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. Consequently if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life... we achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our hearts are filled with faces and names.'

Daring to make the first move with a smile or 'hello' is an act of solidarity which contributes to rebuilding a relational world not just of neighbours but of the communities of supportive brothers and sisters we are called to become.

"We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our hearts are filled with faces and names..."

Who knew? Well, it turns out pretty much everyone...

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



I was amused to receive an email from a family member last week, while I was in the Holy Land, asking me if I knew the name of the BBC presenter who was at the centre of a media frenzy, following a number of allegations regarding inappropriate sexual contact.

Despite knowing the presenter's identity which is now public knowledge, mindful of the Holy Father's reminders about gossip and not wanting to jeopardise or soil my attempt at mini-pilgrimage, fitting in visits to various holy sites between meetings, I declined to answer.

It is not surprising, given the speculation and huge amount of coverage devoted to the topic, that my relative was dying to know who the person was. They were being told, along with everyone else, that the BBC was effectively turning a blind eye to sexually predatory and potentially abusive behaviour of one of its star presenters, allowing them to stay on air for weeks and months after the allegations were reported to them. Without knowing who this person was, it was difficult for the public to take a view.

The story was not merely one of salacious gossip - it was undoubtedly in the public interest as the BBC is a publicly-funded body. Huw Edwards is the media group's fourth highest paid presenter, earning a staggering £439,000 per annum and if it is true that he was using his vast salary, along with his power and influence as a highly respected broadcaster, to fund the crack habit of a vulnerable young person in return for sordid images, then the public, who pays his wages, does have a right to know, especially as Mr Edwards often posts opinions which come dangerously close to skirting the BBC's impartiality guidelines.

The situation was farcical; Edwards' identity was known to everyone in the media and being spread across the internet, yet the legacy media was self-censoring and refusing to name the star, for fear of being sued for breach of privacy.

Edwards' situation is similar to that of Philip Schofield, another household name who was until very recently, extremely popular with the public and well on his way to achieving national treasure status.



Many of us had known for years that Schofield had been entangled in an inappropriate, though not illegal, relationship with a young male ITV employee, who Schofield had first met when he was a teenager.

Far from being 'brave', Schofield's admission that he was gay, live on air in 2020, was an attempt to deflect from the rumours that had been flying around and to elicit sympathy. My sympathies lay squarely with Schofield's wife and children. If Schofield had announced that he was leaving his wife to embark upon a relationship with a much younger woman, he would not have been accorded hero status and therefore I fail to see why deciding that he wanted to explore whether or not he wanted to have sexual relationships with other men, in his seventh decade, was deemed praiseworthy.

It is always galling how the wife and children are expected to cheer supportively from the sidelines when they are forced to pick up the pieces as their father announces that he has either been lying to them for the entire duration of his married life, or that he has simply

got bored and decided to seek pastures new.

But while the behaviour of both Edwards and Schofield should not be ignored or brushed under the carpet we should also remember that their experiences are part of the cost of fame. The higher their stars rose, the greater their fall, yesterday's adulation, turning into today's widespread scorn and rejection.

Huw Edwards' has previously documented his long struggle against depression and has been hospitalised amid rumours that he has attempted to end his own life, following last week's revelations. He is a devout Christian who reportedly plays the church organ and takes his family to church every week and it therefore seems quite likely that he has long been struggling with internal conflict.

This does not mean that it was wrong for the *Sun* to publish the expose that they did, because clearly, like ITV with Schofield, the BBC also has some hard questions to ask itself about the kind of attitudes they fostered and whether or not they have an ethos or hierarchy that enables and allows

Huw Edwards: His downfall was the subject of much debate with the public.

high-ranking staff to get away with sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

We, the public, also have to ask whether or not our desire to know who the presenter was, in order to cast judgement on the situation, was based on righteousness or prurience. There are serious questions to be asked about whether current privacy laws are fit for purpose in the age of social media. A balance needs to be struck between public interest and allowing a free-for-all whereby anyone can be accused of anything online, because we know how mud can stick.

The hypocrisy of certain media commentators who were keen to expose various individuals following the MeToo movement, who are now claiming that the conduct of Edwards and Schofield is irrelevant and un-newsworthy, has not escaped me.

I also cannot help note the contrast in the approach of the police towards Mr Edwards and towards myself. In the case of Edwards, despite the allegations of soliciting explicit photographs from a teenager, the police took less than 48 hours to decide that no crime had been committed and no seizure of electronic devices was required.

By way of contrast, in the past nine months I have been subject to two separate arrests for alleged 'harassment via Twitter', I have had numerous devices seized, the police tried to bring a draconian stalking prevention order against me which would have prevented me from using the internet without supervision and I am still waiting to hear if I face criminal charges!

Whatever our personal feelings about Huw Edwards, we have to remember that the problem with mob justice and public shaming is that it rarely involves healing and reconciliation.

“

The hypocrisy of certain media commentators who were keen to expose various individuals following the MeToo movement, who are now claiming that the conduct of Edwards and Schofield is irrelevant and un-newsworthy, has not escaped me.... nor the alacrity with which the police decided that there was no legal case for Mr Edwards to answer ...

Christian councillor 'cancelled' for tweeting 'Pride is a sin'

A Conservative councillor claims he has been dropped by six companies after tweeting that 'Pride is a sin'.

Christian Cllr King Lawal, who has been a councillor at Northamptonshire Unitary Council for two years, claims he was banned from holding surgeries at the local library.

He was suspended for 21 days, pending an investigation. He also claims he was forced to resign from his own company, which he had built and grown.

He is preparing for legal action, with the help of the Christian Legal Centre, citing "multiple violations of his rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion."

The Christian Concern group, which is supporting him, said Mr Lawal had been "cancelled" by seven organisations, including being suspended by the Conservative party pending an investigation.

It said he would "launch legal action after having his life torn apart for sharing one tweet which gave the Christian and biblical position on LGBT Pride events".

Mr Lawal's now-deleted tweet said: "When did Pride become a thing to celebrate? Because of Pride Satan fell as an arch Angel. Pride is not a virtue but a Sin. Those who have Pride should Repent of their sins and return to Jesus Christ. He can save you. #PrideMonth #Pride23 #PrideParade."

The post included an image with a verse from Isaiah 3 verse 9 which said: 'Whatever God calls "Sin" is nothing to be Proud of.'

Cllr Lawal later provided further clarification in a more detailed statement: "When I referred to Pride as a sin in my previous post, it may have been misinterpreted as hateful. Let me explain why it is not.

"When Christians refer to 'sin' or 'sinners' we are speaking of ourselves.

"We are not singling out specific people or groups of people as sinners. Sin, according to the Bible, includes lying, stealing, gossip and hatred – not just things like homosexuality, adultery and sex outside of marriage.

"Jesus said that even to have unholy thoughts that we never act on is sinful. Therefore every single one of us is sinful by this standard, including myself."

Speaking to Premier Christian News, he said: "I would do it again.

"First, I am a Christian, and a believer in Jesus Christ and a soldier of his army, so I am a councillor second.

Actually, my political life works better with me being a Christian because I believe in truth, being honest and loving people. They don't work against each other.

I should be able to share my beliefs. Legally I can hold and share my religious beliefs without being persecuted for it."



Christian Cllr King Lawal

Welby in tribute as mum dies, 93

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Rev Justin Welby, has paid tribute to his mother, Lady Jane Williams, who passed away on Saturday aged 93.

"I loved her very deeply and it has been a privilege to be her son. I am the person I am in part because of her love and encouragement," the archbishop wrote.

The 67-year-old said his mother had lived 'a full human life with all its ups and downs' and praised her work as a prison visitor and her determination to assist individuals struggling with alcohol addiction, drawing from her recovery.

He wrote: "It's with profound sadness that I mourn her loss. I loved her very deeply and it has been a privilege to be her son. I am the person I am in part because of her love, example and encouragement.

"Our whole family share in the loss of a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. We are profoundly grateful to God for the gift she has been to us all."

"My mother lived a full human life, with all its ups and downs. Her story is one of redemption – which she found through faith in Jesus Christ, and loving service to others. In recovery from alcoholism, she helped countless others to know freedom from addiction."

Met Police still riddled with racism, misogyny, victim's mother claims

The Metropolitan Police still have "so much further to go" in rooting out racism and misogyny in the force, the mother of two murdered sisters has said.

Mina Smallman said a lack of acceptance and transparency persists in the Met, and that instances of both good and bad policing should be highlighted more often.

Ms Smallman's daughters, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, were stabbed to death while out celebrating a birthday in a park in Wembley, north-west London, in June 2020.

Former Met constables Deniz Jaffer and Jamie Lewis were jailed for two years and nine months each in December 2021 for sharing photographs of the women's bodies on WhatsApp, before the force was placed in special measures last June.

Ms Smallman's comments came ahead of the launch of the Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) on Wednesday, at which she is due to speak.

The alliance will see black community organisations and individuals working collaboratively to fight racist, misogynistic and homophobic policing.

Asked whether any progress has

been made under Met Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley, Ms Smallman told the PA news agency: "There has been an increased seriousness over vetting, for example, and I know they are working towards a better system of care for victims of domestic abuse and rape, but there is much further to go."

Ms Smallman said it is a "huge disappointment" that Sir Mark re-

'There is institutional racism in the force,' says Ms Smallman



fuses to accept there is "institutional racism" in the force.

The Chief Constables of Police Scotland and Avon and Somerset Police used the term to describe their forces in May and June.

Ms Smallman added: "I will keep on having conversations with him (Sir Mark), because it isn't about semantics, it's not about throwing your colleagues under the bus, it's about acknowledging and understanding as a white person why there is a lack of trust and saying 'I can now see it from your point of view'."

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IN BRIEF

Assault claims at 'toxic' McDonald's

A "toxic culture" of sexual assault, harassment, racism and bullying has been described by more than 100 current and recent McDonald's staff in the UK, said the BBC. Workers, some as young as 17, are being groped and harassed almost routinely. The BBC said it heard 31 allegations related to sexual assault, and 78 related to sexual harassment. There were also claims of racism and homophobia. "There are clearly instances where we have fallen short and for that we deeply apologise," said McDonald's UK.

Starmer splits party on benefits

Keir Starmer's decision not to scrap the two-child benefit cap if Labour wins power has exposed "deep splits" within the party, said *The Guardian*.

Shadow cabinet ministers have argued that if Labour wanted to appear fiscally credible at the next election, it could not make any spending commitments without saying how they would be funded.

But a "bad-tempered" meeting of the parliamentary Labour party saw deputy leader, Angela Rayner, repeatedly quizzed about Starmer's stance on the two-child benefit limit.

Codeine could be restricted

Over-the-counter sales of cough syrup or codeine linctus could be banned because of concerns it is addictive and can lead to serious health problems. The UK medicines safety regulator has received rising numbers of reports of dependence to codeine medicines, and pharmacists said they are worried about the overdose risk. Codeine linctus is "an effective medicine", but "as it is an opioid, its misuse and abuse can have major health consequences," said Dr Alison Cave of the Medicines and Health care products Regulatory Agency.

Burnham to tackle train firms

Train companies are facing legal action over their "devastating" plan to close almost every ticket office in the country. Five regional leaders including Mayors Andy Burnham and Tracy Brabin are preparing a legal action against the mass closures, arguing that the "shambolic" proposals would punish passengers, including the elderly and disabled. Train operators announced plans to close about 1,000 ticket offices across England.

Ukraine offers a reminder of why Nato was founded

WORLD AFFAIRS

Jan Ruzicka & Gerald Hughes

When Nato leaders met in Vilnius, Lithuania, to discuss Ukraine's links with the alliance, it was the future that was under the microscope. However, it's also worth considering how those discussions compared to the beginnings of the organisation.

Military alliances arise from shared interests and values. It remains the case, however, that an external threat is often necessary to crystallise a firm understanding of what these interests and values are. In the absence of a threat, nations in alliance may find it all too easy to become complacent and pursue individual rather than collective goals.

Russia's continuing war with Ukraine reminds us why Nato was formed in 1949 – in response to Soviet aggression.

The 1948-49 Berlin airlift (when the western allies flew essential supplies into the city while the Soviets blocked other access) became a symbol of the western resolve in the early stages of the Cold War.

When the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin launched the Berlin blockade, his goal was not just to cut off the western sectors of the city, but, crucially, to further Soviet interests in Germany. This was in line with a wider objective of establishing communist governments across Europe and fundamentally reshaping the balance of power between the US and the Soviet Union.

With the Soviet Union stirring up trouble all over Europe (and beyond), only a collective security organisation offered a prospect of joint defence. In April 1949, just as the Berlin blockade was nearing its end, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington DC to keep peace in Europe. Lord Ismay, the first secretary-general of Nato, said the way to achieve this was to "keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down".

Berlin blockade prompts alliance

As with the Berlin blockade and the wider Soviet expansion in the 1940s, today's alliance must deal with Russia's aggression on its borders. Consequently, Nato must decide and prepare how to deal with Russia in the years ahead.

The Russian aggression has produced a new wave of Nato



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his wife Olena Zelenska talk with French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron as they arrive for the social dinner during the Nato summit in Lithuania

membership demands. Finland is already in, having become the alliance's 31st member earlier this year. Nato secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg confirmed on the first day of the Vilnius summit that Turkey has now withdrawn its objections, and so Sweden will soon follow suit.

These two additions are important for the alliance's north-eastern wing, but they are overshadowed by the question of Ukraine's future place in Nato.

Some states have spoken forcefully in Ukraine's favour. UK defence secretary Ben Wallace has argued that Ukraine should be allowed to swiftly join the alliance without hitting some of the usual benchmarks. Poland and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) have advocated for an unambiguous timeline that would give Ukraine greater certainty about its future Nato prospects. Former chairman of the Nato military committee and current president of the Czech Republic, Petr Pavel, has stressed that a clear prospect of a Nato membership would be "the light at the end of the tunnel" that Ukraine needs to be able to see.

Other members have been more circumspect. Nothing decisive can happen within the alliance without the approval of the US. On the subject of Ukraine, US president Joe Biden said just a few days before the summit: "I don't think it's ready for membership in Nato."

Such a position is perhaps

somewhat puzzling given that the US has provided by far the most extensive military assistance to Ukraine. In early July, President Biden ordered and publicly defended sending cluster munitions to Ukraine, despite protests from human rights groups and the US Congress.

As has been pointed out, however, Russia has used cluster munitions throughout the current war.

Breaking Nato

President Biden's stance will no doubt temper enthusiasm. Indeed, on the first day of the Vilnius summit Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky criticised the proposed compromise for his country's path to Nato membership. But this compromise (there's no timeline for Ukraine's membership but it will not have to go through some of the usual, time-consuming procedures) also reflects the fact that there are states (such as Hungary) that are currently opposed to Ukraine's entry into the alliance.

The compromise ensures that Nato does not split over its differences, something that President Biden warned has been Russia's key objective.

Russia's war against Ukraine demands a comparable reaction from the west to the one it mounted in the 1940s. The alliance's 2022 strategic concept document sets out three core tasks of deterrence and defence, crisis

prevention and management, and cooperative security. This cannot be achieved without paving the way for new Nato member states, including Ukraine.

Policymakers in Kyiv are surely entitled to ask if there is a clear prospect of it joining the alliance. Until Russia's revisionist expansionism is stopped, Europe will not be peaceful and secure.

Comparing the situation today with that of 75 years ago a historical paradox becomes apparent – the most decisive impulse to Nato's existence came from a threat to a people and a territory that were not originally part of the alliance. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) only became a Nato member in May 1955. Today, Ukraine's resistance has clearly reinvigorated Nato.

A threat to a people and a territory that is not part of it has given the alliance a focus it has not had since the end of the cold war. It is up to Nato members to decide whether they will follow the historical precedent that has served Europe so well.

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Shelter criticises failure to act and end 'no fault' evictions

Lack of progress on rental reforms unacceptable, charity tells Government

Almost 200 families each day are being handed no-fault eviction notices across England according to a housing charity which has criticised slow progress on long-awaited rental reforms.

Shelter said its survey suggested more than 188,000 private renters with children have received a section 21 notice – known as “no-fault” evictions as the landlord does not need to provide a reason to evict the tenant – in the past three years.

The charity said it had calculated, using the number of families living in the private rented sector from the English Housing Survey, that this equates to some 188,000 families – and is equivalent to 172 families served with a Section 21 notice per day, or one every eight minutes.

In May, the Renters (Reform) Bill was introduced to Parliament, promising to deliver on a 2019 Conservative manifesto commitment to abolish Section 21 (no-fault) evictions.

But Shelter said the lack of progress with the Bill – which has only



had its first reading in the House of Commons and has no date yet for a second reading – is “unacceptable” and accused the Government of “failing renters”.

Shelter's survey, carried out by YouGov and which included 1,910 private renters in England including 489 with dependent children, also showed that almost a fifth have had to move three or more times in the past five years “laying bare just how insecure private renting currently is”.

Polly Neate, the charity's chief executive, said: “The Government is

failing renters by stalling on the Renters (Reform) Bill. For each day that MPs are off on their six-week summer break, another 172 families will be hit with a no-fault eviction notice, giving them just two months to pack up and leave their home.

“With private rents rising rapidly and no genuinely affordable social homes available, those with an eviction pending face an increasingly hostile situation. Far from a relaxing holiday, these families will be desperately scrambling to find somewhere to live.

“Many parents will be forced to

overpay and accept dire conditions, or deal with the prospect of becoming homeless.

“It is unacceptable that the Renters (Reform) Bill has made no progress in Parliament, when the very eviction notices the Government promised to ban years ago are continuing to land on people's doorsteps in their droves.

“The Government must bring back the Bill as soon as Parliament returns. England's 11 million private renters are depending on it.”

Shelter in partnership with the Co-operative Bank, covered Parliament Square in moving boxes on Wednesday – with each one representing one of the families in it statistics.

Nick Slape, chief executive officer at the bank, said: “Fighting poverty and inequality across the UK is extremely important to our customers, and that's why we're campaigning on this issue alongside Shelter.

“We were encouraged to see this Bill brought to Parliament, but we need to see tangible action from the Government now. Families across the country are depending on it.”

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said section 21 evictions will be abolished by this government.

Risk of terror attack in UK is rising, new report warns

The risk of a terror attack in the UK is rising with domestic plotters harder to detect, a persistent threat from Islamist extremists and advances in technology being exploited, a report has found.

The Home Office counter-terrorism strategy Contest has been updated for the first time in five years. Since it was last updated in 2018, there have been nine declared terrorist attacks in the UK in which six people were killed and 20 injured.

Police and security services have also disrupted 39 plots that aimed to target public figures such as MPs, events including the London Pride march, and tourist sites in London.

Contest said the Government must “ruthlessly prioritise finite resources” to respond effectively to terrorism. It added: “We face a domestic terrorist threat which is less predictable, harder to detect and investigate; a persistent and evolving threat from Islamist terrorist groups overseas; and an operating environment where technology continues to provide both opportunity and risk to our counter-terrorism efforts.

“We therefore judge that the risk from terrorism is once again rising.”

Glimmer of hope for home owners as inflation eases

A bigger-than-expected slowdown in inflation has fuelled hopes that the upward pressure on mortgage rates could start to ease.

Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation was 7.9 per cent in June, down from 8.7 per cent in May and its lowest rate since March 2022, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The Bank of England has been raising the base rate as a tool to quell stubbornly high inflation.

The latest inflation figures will raise hopes that rates do not need to climb as high as feared.

According to Moneyfactscompare.co.uk, the average two-year fixed-rate homeowner mortgage rate on the market on Wednesday is 6.81%, up from 6.78 on Tuesday.

The average five-year fixed residential mortgage rate is 6.33 per cent, up from an 6.30 per cent on Tuesday.

Andrew Montlake, managing director of mortgage brokers Coreco, said: “I suspect we will see a slight reprieve as swap rates (which lenders use to price their mortgages) ease a touch with the prospect that we are now closer to the top of the interest cycle than we thought we

were just a few weeks ago.

“The Bank of England must now exercise some restraint,” he added, in a hint that he wants to see no further interest rate rises.

Mr Montlake added: “While this may not yet mean we see a wholesale fall in mortgage rates, lenders should at least now move away from sudden rate hikes and also enjoy a period of calm reflection.”

Mark Grant, of business finance broker the Business Finance Branch, said: “This better-than-expected data is welcome but may not be good enough to prevent further interest rate rises.”

Martin Beck, chief economic adviser to the EY ITEM Club, said: “Looking ahead, the EY ITEM Club thinks inflation should continue to fall quickly over the rest of this year.”

He added: “Taking today's data and what it says about the future, the EY ITEM Club thinks another (0.5 percentage point) rise in bank rate next month is now looking unlikely.

“The EY ITEM Club expects a (0.25 percentage point) increase, with perhaps one more to follow in September, before the rate rise cycle comes to a halt.”

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IN BRIEF

Rates rises push families into crisis

Rising interest rates are pushing more households into debt as incomes fail to cover basic costs, the UK's largest debt support charity has said. Citizens Advice said the number of people it was seeing who could no longer afford the property they were living in had almost doubled in a year.

A report by the Resolution Foundation economic think tank said soaring interest rates had caused household wealth across Britain to fall by £2.1 trillion over the past year. This is the biggest fall since the Second World War, the think tank warned.

Sunak crackdown planned on unis

Rishi Sunak has pledged to crack down on what he called "rip-off" degrees that do not lead to graduate jobs. Universities in England will be forced to limit the number of students on underperforming courses, based on data on graduate employment and dropout rates. Writing for *The Telegraph*, Sunak said too many young people are being sold a "false dream" that going to university will give them the skills they need to get a "decent job". However, Labour has accused the government of "attacking the aspirations of young people". Universities UK, an advocacy group, said any measures must be "targeted and proportionate, and not a sledgehammer to crack a nut".

Tony Blair tells BBC to get tougher

Tony Blair has said the BBC should "stand up for itself more". Asked about the corporation's response to the Huw Edwards controversy, the former PM told Sky News: "I think it's a great British institution ... I mean, of course these things will hit them from time to time but I don't think it means that the whole of the BBC is now a bad institution

He added that "frankly, the BBC should stand up for itself a bit more".

The i news site said "the centrist silver fox is on the prowl in the political henhouse once again".

Ad revenue plunges at Twitter

Twitter has lost almost half of its advertising revenue since it was bought by Elon Musk. The new owner said the company had not seen the increase in receipts that had been expected in June, but added that July looked a "bit more promising".

Skulls of monks returned to Irish island for reburial

A reburial ceremony has been held on an Irish island after 13 human skulls that were stolen by academics more than 100 years ago were returned.

The skulls, thought to be around 400 years old, were taken from a monastery on the island of Inishbofin off Ireland's west coast by two Trinity University-affiliated academics in 1890.

After sketching the skulls in the nook of St Colman's monastery, considered sacred by the islanders, Alfred C Haddon and Andrew F Dixon took the skulls in the middle of the night.

Haddon's diary entry stated that when asked by sailors bringing them back to the mainland to hand over the satchel, 'Dixon would not give it up' and told the men it contained 'poitin', a distilled Irish alcohol.

'So without any further trouble, we got the skulls aboard and then we packed them in Dixon's portmanteau and locked it, and no except our two selves had an idea that there are a dozen human skulls on board and they shan't know either,' the entry read.

As part of a process to formally review legacy issues since its foundation, Trinity set up a group to examine whether the skulls should be returned, as well as whether the university's library, named after Irish philosopher and slave-owner George Berkeley, should be renamed.

Headed up by Senior Dean at Trinity Eoin O'Sullivan, the Trinity



Legacies Review Working Group researched the issue before offering a number of options to the board of Trinity University on what action it could take.

Mr O'Sullivan said the two anthropologists took the skulls because "they actually thought that this was good science at the time".

In February, the university's board agreed to return the skulls; Trinity Provost Dr Linda Doyle

apologised to the islanders for retaining the remains and thanked them for their engagement.

The decision to return the remains follows years of campaigning by Inishbofin historian, Marie Coyne.

An online petition page that had called for the skulls to be returned had been updated with a message this week.

"Many have been waiting for this

day for a long time.

"It's a step toward healing and honouring these people who were laid to rest on Inishbofin," it said.

On Saturday, the skulls arrived on the island, wrapped in plastic and placed in a traditional coffin designed by architect Christopher Day.

A funeral mass was held last Sunday before the 13 skulls were buried in the coffin.

Pact boost from Catholic Women's League fundraiser

The Catholic Womens' League at Our Lady, Queen of All Creation Church in Adeyfield, Hemel Hempstead recently celebrated their 40th anniversary with a fundraising lunch for PACT. Over seventy members and friends dined in style to raise a magnificent £820 for the charity.

The Catholic Womens' League (CWL) have partnered with PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) over the next three years as their national project and to date, members have hand embroidered nearly two thousand cross in pockets to distribute to people serving prison sentences.

The ladies are also supplying certain prisons with backpacks containing useful items for those leaving prison with nothing.

The Catholic Womens' League offers all women in Catholic parishes the opportunity to have a mixture of social, charitable, educational and spiritual activities on a local, diocesan and national basis. More information on how to join can be found at catholicwomensleaguecio.org.uk.

Vee Comparini, Westminster Diocesan President, is pictured cutting the anniversary cake (right).



'Pub boot camps' considered for long-term jobless

In what some people could consider a surprising move, Government ministers are suggesting long-term unemployed people should spend more time in the pub.

However, they are not advocating a drinking session, rather the creation of hospitality "boot camps" to get unemployed people back to work and help the nation's pubs and bars fill over 100,000 vacancies.

The government has met with hospitality leaders to discuss how to make it easier for unemployed people to find work in the sector. *The Telegraph* said boot camps, where Job Centre candidates would be trained on basic hospitality skills such as food preparation and food safety, were considered. Tory MP Alun Cairns said the idea "could play a key part in developing young people who are far away from the workplace".

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IN BRIEF**Fall in US abuse claims but problems remain on keeping the vulnerable safe**

A survey by the Church in the United States has found that abuse allegations against Catholic clergy and religious declined last year, but challenges remain with protecting vulnerable adults and ensuring online safety.

The USCCB's Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection's *2022 Annual Report – Findings and Recommendations on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was described by USCCB president Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio as “a milestone accounting of the continued efforts in the ministry of protection, healing, and accompaniment.”

The document – covering July 2021 to June 2022 – noted that 1,998 individuals came forward with 2,704 allegations of abuse, with claims down 399 from 2021 and 1,548 from 2020.

The decrease was largely due to resolutions of allegations received through lawsuits, compensation programs and bankruptcies.

Sixteen reports during the period involved current minors, with all other allegations made by adults citing historic abuse as minors. Year-on-year trends show recent allegations remain low, the report found.

However, it also found that specific challenges remain in ensuring diocesan review boards function properly, and in clarifying reporting procedures for abuse against ‘vulnerable adults.’

‘Fired’ Ganswein takes canon role

The longtime personal secretary of Pope Benedict XVI has been given his new assignment – though some commentators have suggested it is not the top position he may have hoped for.

Rather, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, who was asked to return to his German homeland by the pope after relations between the two became tense, has been appointed as honorary canon of the Freiburg cathedral, where he is expected to preside over liturgies beginning this fall.

Gänswein is reportedly residing in an apartment at the Freiburg seminary.

Some have speculated that Gänswein not receiving an official position in Freiburg should be perceived as a slight, but this view is contested by a local canon lawyer, who said it was “the type of arrangement I would have bet on Ganswein making.”

Sow the seeds of faith – even if the fruit takes a while to ripen

Justin McLellan

Even if the fruits are not immediately visible, Christians are called to sow seeds of faith in the world and people around them in their daily lives, Pope Francis said.

Before praying the Angelus with some 15,000 visitors in a sweltering St. Peter's Square, the pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which Jesus tells his followers the parable of the sower.

In Jesus' parable, the seed that falls on rich soil produces fruit, while seed that falls on hard or rocky ground or among the thorns does not. “If the Word is the seed, we are the terrain,” Pope Francis said, “we can receive (the Word) or not.”

The word of God, he explained, is like a seed: “it is small, almost unseeable, but it grows plants that bear fruit” and Jesus is the “good sower” who “never tires of sowing (seeds) with generosity” and calls Christians to do the same.

As an example, the pope said that parents are called to sow seeds of goodness and faith in their children and to not be discouraged if their children do not seem to understand or appreciate their teachings.

“The good seed remains, this is what matters, and it will take root in due time,” he said. “But if, giving in to doubt, (parents) give up sowing (seeds) and leave their children in the hands of trends and mobile phones without devoting time to them, without educating them, then the fertile soil will be filled with weeds.”

Young people, he explained, are



A group of nuns from the Suore Missionarie Nostra Signora degli Apostoli ignore the heat of St Peter's Square to listen to the pope

called not only to receive seeds of faith but also to “sow the Gospel in the furrows of everyday life.”

Young people, he said, can begin by sowing the Gospel through prayer: “a small seed that is not seen, but with which you entrust to Jesus everything you live through, so he can develop it.”

Pope Francis also suggested young people spend time with people in need. It can seem like time wasted, “but really it is holy time,” he said, “while the apparent satisfactions of consumerism and hedonism leave hands empty.”

The pope also encouraged young people to devote themselves to

study, which, like sowing seeds, “is tiresome and not immediately rewarding,” he said, “but is essential to build a better future for all.”

The pope recalled the important role of consecrated religious and laypeople who preach the Gospel “often without recording any immediate successes.”

“Let us never forget, when we announce the word, that even where nothing appears to happen, in reality the Holy Spirit is at work and the kingdom of God is growing, through and beyond our efforts,” he said.

The pope urged Christians to ask themselves how they plant seeds of the Gospel in their work, study and

free time. He recalled that he was speaking on the feast of Our Lady of Carmel and asked Mary to help Christians become “generous and joyful sowers of the good news.”

After praying the Angelus, the pope noted that July 19 marked the 80th anniversary of Pope Pius XII's visit to a Roman neighborhood immediately after it was bombed during the Second World War to show his closeness to the victims of conflict.

“Unfortunately, today too these tragedies repeat themselves,” he said. “How is it possible? Have we lost our memory?”

How the pope saved Rome: pg 20

Pope pops in to meet the summer camp kids

Carol Glatz

Pope Francis received a warm welcome when he visited a children's summer camp at the Vatican, receiving gifts, songs and a paper medallion designating him ‘my hero.’

The children's parents are all Vatican employees, and the Holy Father was happy to sit down with them and answer their questions.

“What message can we bring to our heroes, our parents?” a young boy named Edoardo asked. Pope Francis invited them to show gratitude and always tell their parents, “Thank you,” for all they do to raise them.

A child named Elena asked the pope who his superheroes are. “Grandparents,” he said, because they possess so much wisdom “and that is why it is important to talk to them.”

Raffaele asked the pope how they can be heroes “in the digital world.” The pope said they should focus on



The pope with some of the children at the summer camp

technology's “usefulness” in such a way that the tools serve the person and not the other way around.

The pope received a colour drawing of himself with dozens of the kids' signatures, two handmade plastic bracelets and a large paper

medallion held by a blue ribbon which he promptly pulled over his head. It said ‘hero’ in Italian and pictured St. Peter's Basilica and a smiling pope saying, ‘peace’.

Two children gave the pope a backpack and T-shirt from the sum-

mer programme telling him he could bring these with him on his upcoming trip to Lisbon for World Youth Day.

Other children held up a large colourful poster the kids made showing a large hornet's nest hanging in a tree surrounded by bees and the words, “You help us to ‘bee’ heroes,” reflecting the theme of this year's camp dedicated to honeybees and heroes.

The large hall, which normally seats thousands for audiences with the pope, was turned into an indoor playground with bouncy houses and huge inflatable slides.

The summer programme, running until 4th August, is organised by the Salesians and the private associations, Play It and “Tutti in una Festa.” The program offered the children activities such as swimming, tennis, games, crafts and educational initiatives aimed at building friendships and values.

Churches use backdrop of today's war for reconciliation plea to Ukraine and Poland

Jonathan Luxmoore

Church leaders in Ukraine and Poland have urged "reconciliation and unity" between their countries in the face of Russian aggression as they marked the anniversary of wartime massacres in Volhynia.

Throughout July, reconciliation prayers are held in places – often in the middle of farm fields – where entire villages vanished in 1943.

May "all those who still carry the wounds of those events in their hearts open themselves to the liberating and healing power of forgiveness, breaking the chains of hatred and (the desire of) revenge," said bishops from Ukraine's Greek and Latin Catholic churches.

The appeal marked 80 years since the 1943 'Volhynia Slaughter', which saw up to 100,000 Polish civilians murdered by Ukrainian nationalists, prompting revenge killings by Poles on a much smaller scale.

It said Catholic bishops in both countries took a "major step" toward reconciliation with joint letters of mutual forgiveness in 2005 and 2013, but were conscious that "further healing" was needed to ensure memories of "brutal" past violence would no longer "destroy future generations."

The Volhynia region in north-



Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki and Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk at the reconciliation Mass

western Ukraine, incorporating Zhytomyr, Rivne, Lutsk and other cities, was ceded to Poland in 1921, but occupied by German forces during World War II.

As German control weakened in early 1943, the nationalist Ukrainian Insurgent Army, or UPA, set out to forge a post-war Ukrainian nation-state by driving Poles from the region, attacking and torching up to 100 villages alone on 11th July, 1943.

Although some Ukrainians helped their Polish neighbors, UPA fighters and their supporters used scythes and axes in the killings,

which later spread westward to what is now southeastern Poland.

Besides mass deaths, Polish historians estimate up to a half-million Poles were displaced by the violence, while up to 15,000 Ukrainians were killed in Polish retaliation.

A researcher at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Political Studies, Grzegorz Motyka, said the massacres qualified as genocide, but this was still disputed by Ukrainian historians, who highlighted past anti-Ukrainian discrimination by Volhynia's Polish rulers.

Preaching at an ecumenical ser-

vice in Lutsk's Catholic Sts. Peter and Paul cathedral – attended by Presidents Duda of Poland and Zelenskyy of Ukraine – the Vatican's Kyiv nuncio, Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas, said Ukraine's defence against "Russian aggression" had now "united" the two nations, with "help flowing from Poland."

Meanwhile, the Polish bishops' conference president, Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki, and Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said that "Russia's aggression against Ukraine makes us realize that reconciliation and co-operation between our nations is a necessary condition for peace."

"For more than 50 years now, our churches have been supporting the process of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. I am proud that the Catholic Churches are the heart and the engine of the path of mutual reconciliation, forgiveness and healing the wounds of the past," Archbishop Shevchuk said.

Archbishop Shevchuk stressed that in recent months, reconciliation has been translated into concrete actions as millions of Poles opened their homes and hearts to refugees from Ukraine: "Poles always cheer for Ukraine ... they are

like compatriots and closest comrades... our friends and brothers."

Archbishop Gadecki said, however, that forgiveness and unity "cannot be achieved without reference to the truth and without calling the genocide of the Polish population in Volhynia by its name ... (not) resorting to half-truths and euphemisms like 'Volhynia tragedy,' 'Volhynia crime,' 'ethnic cleansing' or 'anti-Polish action.'"

Although hushed up under communist rule to assist Polish-Soviet ties, the Volhynia Slaughter has been researched since the 1989-91 restoration of democratic rule.

Polish victim associations have criticised Ukraine for honouring Stepan Bandera (1909-1959), who was a leader of the massacres.

The director of the Polish bishops' Office for Helping the Church in the East, Fr Leszek Kryza, said that more work was also needed by historians from both countries to "unveil and build on the truth."

"With so many Ukrainians now living on Polish territory and receiving Polish charitable help, a completely different climate is being created – and these terrible events could eventually serve as a focus of unity rather than division," said Father Kryza.

Russia axes deal to keep grain exports flowing

Russia has halted an unprecedented deal that allowed grain to flow from Ukraine to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where hunger is a growing threat and high food prices have pushed more people into poverty.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the agreement was now over, adding that Russia will return to the previous arrangements on; after its demands are met.

Mr Peskov said: "When the part of the Black Sea deal related to Russia is implemented, Russia will immediately return to the implementation of the deal."

The operation centre for the initiative said the deal had been "terminated," ending the accord brokered by the United Nations and Turkey last summer to allow food to leave the Black Sea region after Russia invaded its neighbour nearly a year and a half ago.

A separate agreement facilitated the movement of Russian food and fertiliser amid Western sanctions.

The warring nations are both major global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other affordable food products that developing nations rely on.

Russia has complained that re-

strictions on shipping and insurance have hampered its exports of food and fertiliser – which is also critical to the global food chain.

But analysts and export data say Russia has been shipping record amounts of wheat, and its fertilisers have also been flowing.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he wanted to keep the initiative going even without Russia's safety assurances.

"We are not afraid," he said. "We were approached by companies that own ships. They said that they are ready, if Ukraine gives it, and Turkey continues to let it through, then everyone is ready to continue supplying grain."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the country's foreign minister would speak with his Russian counterpart on Monday – and that he was hopeful the deal would be extended.

The agreement was renewed for 60 days in May amid Moscow's pushback. In recent months, the amount of food shipped and the number of vessels departing Ukraine have plunged, with Russia being accused of limiting additional ships which would be able to participate.



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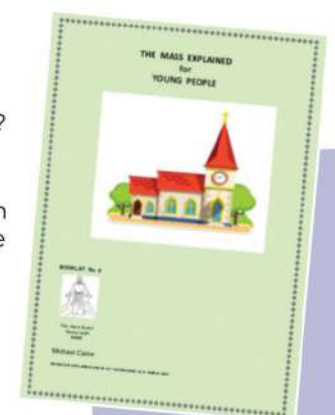
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IN BRIEF

Pence denies host's claims of Ukrainian religious persecution

Former US Vice President Mike Pence has had an angry row with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson at an Iowa presidential candidate forum, after the former TV man claimed the US was being duped into supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia.

He also repeated claims that Ukraine was persecuting members of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Pence has led Republican demands that President Biden does more to help Ukraine, a strategy Carlson has rejected.

The presidential hopeful said claims of faith persecution by the Ukrainians were "examples of Russia's plot to flood the USA with disinformation."

Carlson argued that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is "persecuting Christians" after his government took steps to restrict Moscow-affiliated Orthodox churches under the influence of the Russian government.

But Pence said that "I asked the Christian leader in Kyiv if that was happening, and he assured me it was not – people were not being persecuted for their religious beliefs."

Zelensky was protecting religious liberty" while combating "small elements" of a Russian Orthodox Church run by the Kremlin.

Pence added that the Institute for Religious Freedom reports that at least 494 Ukrainian religious buildings, theological institutions, and sacred places have been "wholly destroyed, damaged, or looted" by the Russian military since the invasion.

UN dismisses Syria demands

Syria's conditions in an offer to allow humanitarian aid to keep reaching rebel-held territories inside the country are "unacceptable", said the UN.

Syria's ambassador said that his government would continue to allow aid to enter the country via the Bab al-Hawa crossing from Turkey, which is particularly needed after the devastating earthquakes earlier this year.

However, the Syrian government reportedly insisted that "the United Nations should not communicate with entities it has designated as 'terrorist'".

Damascus also wanted the distribution of all aid to be supervised and facilitated by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Around 4.1m people in north-west Syria depend on the aid deliveries.

Biden meets pope's peace envoy in bid to rescue Ukrainian children

Carol Glatz

Pope Francis's peace envoy to Ukraine, Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, had a near unprecedented two-and-a-half hour meeting with President Joe Biden on Tuesday, during which the US leader praised the Holy Father's commitment to bring peace between Russia and Ukraine, as well as his humanitarian efforts to help the invaded nation.

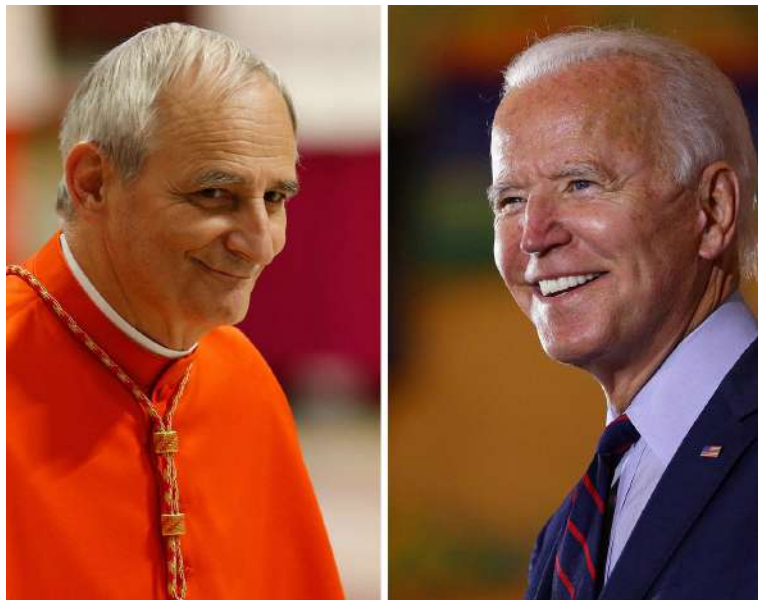
A statement released by the White House said that President Biden "shared his wishes for Pope Francis's continued ministry and global leadership and welcomed the recent nomination of a US archbishop as cardinal" – a reference to the elevation of Cardinal-designate Robert F. Prevost, 67 (*more on page 18*).

The president and the cardinal also spoke about "the Holy See's efforts providing humanitarian aid to address the widespread suffering caused by Russia's continuing aggression in Ukraine."

They went on to discuss the Vatican's "advocacy" for the return of the estimated 19,000 Ukrainian children who have been taken into Russia since the renewed invasion on 24th February 2022.

Ukraine's government says the true number of Ukrainian children in Russia could be much higher.

Cardinal Zuppi, the Archbishop of Bologna and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, had already brought up the topic during



Cardinal Zuppi and President Biden

his previous missions to Kyiv (5-6 June) and Moscow (28-30 June).

In Russia, the Italian-born Cardinal spoke about it with Yuri Ushakov, Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser, and Maria Lvova-Belova, Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation.

The Commissioner's website confirmed that the topic was discussed, and published a photo of the cardinal's visit explaining that they had spoken about humanitarian issues related to the "military operation" and the protection of children's rights.

Cardinal Zuppi travelled to Washington on 17th July, accompanied by an Official from the Vatican's Secretariat of State.

Ahead of his meeting with President Biden, the Cardinal met on Capitol Hill with several members of the US Congress.

The Holy See Press Office had previously announced that Cardinal Zuppi would visit Washington to "promote peace in Ukraine".

His mission "seeks to facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions regarding the current tragic situation, as well as to provide support for humanitarian initiatives aimed

at alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable people, particularly children."

Speaking to several Italian media outlets, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States said Cardinal Zuppi's mission is to "open a dialogue: to listen and be listened to."

Cardinal-elect Christophe Pierre said Pope Francis hopes to "contribute to peace, and more specifically to find inroads on humanitarian grounds, particularly with regard to children."

"The idea is to consider peace, amid the complicated context," he said. "The Cardinal is very realistic, and we try to do what we can."

The visit is "in the context of the mission intended to promote peace in Ukraine and aims to exchange ideas and opinions on the current tragic situation and to support humanitarian initiatives to alleviate the suffering of the most affected and fragile people, especially children," the Vatican added.

Cardinal Zuppi is Archbishop of Bologna and president of the Italian bishops' conference, said his main focus was on developing a plan to return to Ukraine children illegally deported to Russia, not on mediating the conflict.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the meeting involved discussions "on the widespread suffering caused by Russia's brutal war in Ukraine," as well as "efforts to provide humanitarian aid."

Patriarch shocked as Iraqi president revokes decree acknowledging role as Chaldeans' head

Dale Gavlak

Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church has been rocked after its patriarch, Cardinal Louis Sako, had his official recognition as head of the Church revoked by presidential decree.

The cardinal has already left his patriarchal residence in Baghdad and relocated to a monastery in the northern Kurdistan region.

Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid gave no explanation as to why he had revoked the decree, which was originally signed in 2013 by Rashid's predecessor.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda said there was confusion over why the decree had been removed, suggesting that it was not an anti-Christian move in a Muslim state. Rather, "the rationale may have resulted from requests for a similar decree from the patriarch of the Assyrian Church and the patriarch of the Old Assyrian Church, which the president denied."

"Withdrawing the republican de-

cre does not prejudice the religious or legal status of Cardinal Louis Sako, as he is appointed by the Apostolic See," Archbishop Warda's said, adding that the patriarch continues to enjoy "the respect of the president as Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq."

However, the Iraqi Kurdistan-based Rudaw news agency and



Chaldean Sako was said to be shocked by the president's actions

other media reported that Rashid's revocation may be linked to Iraqi politics. It alleged the revocation followed a meeting between the president and Rayan al-Kildani, a leader of the Babylon Brigades, a nominally Chaldean Catholic militia in Iraq which has close ties with the pro-Iran Popular Mobilization Forces and Iran's Islamic Revolu-

tionary Guards.

Observers say the political wing of the militia – the Babylon Movement party – claims to represent Iraq's Christian community, but has little or no Christian support and primarily represents Kildani's personal interests. Analysts also see Iran further tightening its influence over Iraqi politics, suggesting that Sako's effective expulsion shows he was a pawn in a larger power game.

Iraqi Christian rights activist Diya Butrus Slewa said the move smacked of "a political manoeuvre to seize the remainder of what Christians have left in Iraq and Baghdad and to expel them."

"Unfortunately, this is a blatant targeting of the Christians and a threat to their rights," Slewa said.

"We hope the Iraqi presidency hears our people and revokes this (decision) as soon as possible, otherwise it will become an international matter and the Vatican will get involved," Slewa added.

"Personally, I believe the approach to revoking the decree was flawed," Archbishop Warda said. "The President of the Republic could have convened a meeting with all the Church leaders to explain the history of these decrees. Instead, the matter was played out in the media, leading the Patriarch to interpret this action as punitive," he wrote.

Cardinal Sako pointed the finger of blame on the Babylon Brigades: "I decided to withdraw to Kurdistan due to the deliberate and offensive campaign by the Babylon Brigades and the revocation of the presidential decree."

Archbishop Warda said all events in Iraq carry a political subtext... "hence, it's prudent for the President to handle this situation directly with Church leaders." He also called on President Rashid to reinforce his previous assertions of Iraq's respect for Patriarch Sako's significance by "visiting the patriarch in Kurdistan."

Vatican backs down in row with China 'for good of the diocese'

The Vatican has moved to defuse a potentially ugly row with China, after the pope formally recognised the installation of Bishop Shen Bin as the new Bishop of Shanghai three months after Beijing announced his transfer from Haiman archdiocese.

According to media reports, the first the Vatican knew of the move was when the Chinese Government announced its decision, in April.

Shen Bin's appointment was in direct contradiction to the agreement signed between China and the Vatican. Signed in 2018, the agreement outlines procedures for ensuring Catholic bishops are elected by the Catholic community in China and approved by the pope before their ordinations and installations. The agreement was renewed in 2020 and again in 2022.

To unilaterally move Bishop Shen Bin the Chinese Government appeared to be ignoring the agreement, which many critics have claimed puts the Vatican in a weak position. The exact details of the agreement have never been released, but critics claim it is a fig leaf that covers up the fact that the Communist Party in Beijing controls all Church appointments.

This week, however, Pope Francis moved to ease tensions by recognising the move for the "greater good of the diocese," Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said.

"The Holy Father has appointed Bishop Joseph Shen Bin as bishop of Shanghai, in continental China, transferring him from the Diocese of Haimen," the Vatican announced 15th July.

Bishop Shen, 53, had been appointed to the Diocese of Haimen in 2010 "with the consent of the two parties," that is, China and the Holy See, the announcement added.

Cardinal Parolin admitted to Vatican Media that the original transfer of Shen Bin was undertaken "without involving the Vatican in any way in that decision."

In November, just a month after the latest renewal, the Vatican issued a public statement of "surprise and regret" when Bishop John Peng Weizhao of Yujiang was installed as auxiliary bishop of Jiangxi, a diocese not recognised by the Holy See, without consulting or informing the Vatican, he said.

Both of these transfers "were made without involving the Holy See," reflecting a way of proceeding that "seems to not take into account the spirit of dialogue and collaboration" established by the two sides over the years and upon which the agreement is based, he said.

However, the cardinal said, Pope



Francis "decided nevertheless to rectify the canonical irregularity created in Shanghai, in view of the greater good of the diocese and the fruitful exercise of the bishop's pastoral ministry."

The pope's intention, he said, is "fundamentally pastoral" so as to allow Bishop Shen, who is an "esteemed shepherd," to work with "greater serenity in order to promote evangelisation and foster ecclesial communion."

"At the same time, we hope that he will be able, in agreement with the authorities, to facilitate a just and wise solution to some other issues that have been pending for some time in the diocese, such as – for example – the position of the two auxiliary bishops, Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, who is still impeded, and Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi, who has retired," Cardinal Parolin said.

There are a number of other issues that have to be addressed, he said, but among the most urgent are: the creation of a bishops' conference with adequate statutes detailing its nature and pastoral mission to help foster "growth in the responsibility of the bishops in the leadership of the church in China"; and the establishment of regular communication between the bishops in China and the pope, which is "indispensable for effective communion."

"In fact, it must be said that too many suspicions slow down and hinder the work of evangelisation," Cardinal Parolin said. "Chinese

Catholics, even those referred to as 'underground,' deserve trust because they sincerely want to be loyal citizens and be respected in their conscience and faith."

It is "indispensable," the cardinal said, that "all episcopal appointments in China, including transfers, be made by consensus, as agreed, and to keep alive the spirit of dialogue between the parties."

"It is inevitable for there to be problems, but if this dialogue grows in truth and mutual respect, it can be fruitful for the church and Chinese society," he said.

To facilitate dialogue so that it be "more fluid and fruitful, it seems to me that the opening of a stable liaison office of the Holy See in China would be supremely useful," he said. This would foster dialogue with civil authorities and "contribute to full reconciliation within the Chinese church and to its journey toward desired normality."

"Together we must prevent disharmonious situations that create disagreements and misunderstandings," including among Catholics, he said. Applying the agreement well "is one way to do that, together with sincere dialogue."

The Vatican previously acknowledged the 2018 accord was far from ideal. It regularised the status of several bishops and paved the way for future nominations, but China has repeatedly violated it amid a broader overall crackdown by President Xi Jinping on religious freedoms.

CCP 'playing at God' says critic

Members of the bipartisan House of Representatives select committee on China in the United States have warned that the Chinese Communist Party is continuing to constrict religious freedoms – and that religion will be tolerated in the country "only as long as the CCP is playing the role of God."

There was evidence of enormous threats to religious liberty in the country, Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, said.

He pointed out that, according to the Chinese constitution, citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief, and "President Xi Jinping has no problem with this, just so long as he and the CCP are playing the role of God."

"The Xi definition of freedom has a much closer resemblance to what we would call oppression," Gallagher added.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2023 Annual Report found religious freedom "deteriorated" in China, and recommended the US list that country among those designated as a "country of particular concern" for China's "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations" of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Chris Smith, a congressman from New Jersey and a long-time critic of China, said that Xi has even made alterations to the texts of Bibles "using Xi's principles, which are Marxist, Leninist, communist."

He added, "It's an affront to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all the UN documents dealing with international religious freedom."

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Who's who in a red hat: how the pope favoured his old stamping grounds as he makes 21 clerics into cardinals

As reported in last week's *Universe*, Pope Francis has named 21 clerics who will be made cardinals at a ceremony on 30th September at the Vatican.

The group is not as geographically mixed as previous lists of new cardinals under Francis: 10 are from Europe – three Italians – and five come from South America, the two continents with which the pope has the strongest connections.

Just three new cardinals are from Africa and two from Asia – the two regions where the Church is growing strongest, in the face of declining numbers of faithful in Europe, North and South America.

Only one of the new cardinals is from the USA, Cardinal-designate Robert F. Prevost.

Below are very brief biogs of the new 'red hats.'

• Cardinal-designate Robert F. Prevost

Cardinal-designate Robert F. Prevost, 67, is prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, responsible for recommending candidates to fill the office of bishop in many of the Latin-rite dioceses of the world. He also oversees the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

A Chicago native, he served as prior general of the Augustinians and spent a total of little more than two decades serving in Peru, first as an Augustinian missionary and later as bishop of Chiclayo.

He has previously criticised the lack of unity in the Church as a "wound ... a very painful one."

• Cardinal-designate Claudio Gugerotti

Italian Claudio Gugerotti, 67, is prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches and has years of experience working with Eastern Catholics and Orthodox faithful, especially in the Caucasus region and Eastern Europe, where he served as a papal nuncio.

As nuncio, he was the Vatican's diplomatic representative to Georgia during the run-up to and aftermath of the 2008 Georgian attack on the breakaway province of South Ossetia followed by a Russian invasion of Georgia. The five-day conflict left at least 800 people dead and tens of thousands more fled their homes.

He had long warned that the poverty, political instability and major energy resources found in the Caucasus region made it a potential "powder keg" for violence.



Cardinal-designate Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, speaks with residents as he visits the town of Jenin in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on 10th July, after the Israel Defence Forces launched air and ground attacks on the Jenin refugee camp.

• Cardinal-designate Víctor Fernández

Argentine Cardinal-designate Víctor Fernández, 61, is prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the first Latin American to head this office in its nearly 500-year history. He has had a long close relationship with his fellow countryman, Pope Francis, and is familiar with the thought and vision of the pope; he has been credited for contributing to several significant texts of his pontificate.

Cardinal-designate Fernández was a key collaborator in 2007 of then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio in drafting the Latin American bishops' Aparecida document, which offers a pastoral vision and guidelines for the region's church and which, in turn, has been a blueprint for his pontificate.

• Cardinal-designate Emil P. Tscherrig

Emil P. Tscherrig, 76, is Swiss and has spent the past three decades serving as a Vatican diplomat. He was the first non-Italian papal nuncio to Italy and the Republic of San Marino when Pope Francis appointed him in 2017.

Pope Francis got to personally know him when the Swiss prelate was appointed papal nuncio to Argentina in January 2012.

He worked at the Vatican Secretariat of State for many years, helping plan then-Pope John Paul II's many foreign trips.

He has served in the West Indies

and other Central and South American mainland nations, as well as in Korea and Mongolia in 2004, and Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway in 2008. He served as apostolic nuncio to Argentina from 2012 to 2017.

• Cardinal-designate Christophe Pierre

French Cardinal-designate Christophe Pierre, 77, has worked in the Vatican's diplomatic service for 46 years, most recently as papal nuncio to the United States.

When Pope Francis appointed him as nuncio to the United States in 2016, replacing retiring Italian Archbishop Carlo Viganò, Cardinal-designate Pierre worked to explain the pope's priorities, foster unity in the church in the US and be a dedicated pastor by attending numerous church events, initiatives and talks. He served two years in the military.

• Cardinal-designate Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Italian Pierbattista Pizzaballa, 58, will be the first Latin patriarch of Jerusalem to be elevated to the College of Cardinals.

Serving for three decades in the Holy Land, the cardinal-designate said his elevation is an invitation for dialogue and reconciliation.

By making the patriarch of Jerusalem a cardinal, Pope Francis is showing his care and esteem "for the mother church, the church of Jerusalem," Cardinal-designate

Pizzaballa said.

• Cardinal-designate Stephen Brislin

Cardinal-designate Stephen Brislin, 66, is archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa.

The cardinal-designate is the former president of the Southern African bishops' conference and has been vocal about the social problems plaguing South Africa, which recently is experiencing frequent blackouts and widespread unrest caused by economic difficulties.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Church in South Africa, he said, is "to bring about healing, particularly the healing of relationships because we are a broken society," particularly due to the country's legacy of apartheid.

He said the Church also has an important role to play in "motivating and advocating for a more just economic system" to combat staggering wealth inequality in South Africa.

• Cardinal-designate Ángel Sixto Rossi

Cardinal-designate Ángel Sixto Rossi, 64, is the second Argentine in the list, and is the current archbishop of Córdoba.

He has authored several books on spirituality and education for both young people and adults. When he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis penned the prologue to his book *Small Things with Great Love*, writing: 'Ángel

Rossi is a priest who calls people with his word. When people know he is speaking, people come close, young people, families, sinners who line up at his confessional, radio listeners, everyone comes close.'

Cardinal-designate Rossi regularly leads retreats centered on the Ignatian spiritual exercises for priests, religious and laypeople.

• Cardinal-designate Luis José Rueda Aparicio

Colombian Cardinal-designate Luis José Rueda Aparicio, 61, is archbishop of Bogotá, Colombia. He has been a vocal supporter of a 2016 peace agreement to end decades of violence between the Colombian government and the left-wing guerilla group FARC. While the agreement remains intact, incidents of violence by FARC dissidents have continued throughout the country.

"Colombia cannot become accustomed to violence, Colombia cannot stay in the mafia culture of the drug trade that makes us not respect life," he said.

He expressed his hope that all Colombians, lay people and religious, commit themselves to "working to support life and for the reconciliation of all Colombians."

• Cardinal-designate Grzegorz Rys

Polish Grzegorz Rys, 59, is archbishop of Łódź, Poland.

Known among Poland's Catholics as a prolific writer on the faith, the cardinal-designate has authored more than 50 books with topics ranging from devotional practices to engagement with the secular world and with titles as simple as *Rosary* to *There is Room for Everyone in the Church*.

Cardinal-designate Rys wrote the reflections for the Stations of the Cross at Poland's World Youth Day in Kraków.

• Cardinal-designate Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla

Cardinal-designate Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla, 59, is Archbishop of Juba, South Sudan. Pope Francis has long worked to foster peace in South Sudan and by naming a cardinal in Juba, he will be giving greater weight to the Catholic Church's voice in the nation.

Cardinal-designate Mulla worked closely with Pope Francis during the pope's visit to South Sudan in 2023 and there were poignant

Continue reading on next page

moments of them together, such as riding in the popemobile before the trip's closing Mass in Juba and the cardinal-designate greeted the pope onstage to thank him for his visit.

Cardinal-designate Mulla has been an outspoken critic of tribal violence that fueled the country's civil war from 2013 to 2018 calling it "the greatest enemy of South Sudan." Incidents of tribally motivated violence persist despite a peace agreement.

• Spanish Cardinal-designate José Cobo Cano

Spanish Cardinal-designate José Cobo Cano, 57, has been archbishop of Madrid since June. He told the Spanish press after he was named Archbishop of Madrid that he believed Pope Francis had selected a relatively young prelate for such a large archdiocese because he wants leaders who are "seasoned" in pastoral care and who "know how people live."

He told Vatican News in 2023 that one of the greatest risks facing his archdiocese is the "uprooting of young people and the lack of hope."

"I think we have a youth that is searching, that is perplexed, that perhaps lacks models, but we have a church that offers the wonder of the Gospel," he said.

• Cardinal-designate Protase Rugambwa

Tanzanian Cardinal-designate Protase Rugambwa, 63, is coadjutor archbishop of Tabora, Tanzania and has a strong background in evangelization.

He told ACI Africa that as cardinal "the mission of evangelisation continues even though it is now more demanding and even engaging not only at the local level but also at the international realm of life and action."

• Cardinal-designate Sebastian Francis

Cardinal-designate Sebastian Francis, 71, is bishop of Penang, Malaysia, and president of the bishops' conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

He said that along with the cardinals from southeast Asia created before him, "we give a common witness to the universality of the Catholic Church and the apostolic continuity of the mission entrusted by the Risen Christ to St. Peter, the apostles and their successors."

• Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-Yan

Chinese Jesuit Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-Yan, 63, is bishop of Hong Kong.

The cardinal-designate has expressed his desire for those arrested during the 2019 protests in Hong Kong against a Chinese extradition bill to be treated with leniency. After his nomination as cardinal, he expressed his hope that "there will be more reconciliation" in Hong Kong and that "more hope can be given to young people." The Vatican has had increasingly



Cardinal-designate Grzegorz Rys of Łódź, Poland, blesses worshippers in front of the Cathedral of St. Stanislaw Kostka on Palm Sunday.

strained relations with China primarily due to apparent violations of an agreement between the two countries which outlines procedures for the appointment of bishops. However, in May 2023, Cardinal-designate Chow said that he did not believe the agreement was "dead."

• Cardinal-designate François-Xavier Bustillo

Spanish-born Franciscan Cardinal-designate François-Xavier Bustillo, 54, is bishop of Ajaccio, France.

Cardinal-designate Bustillo is the author of a book published by the Vatican's publishing house titled, *Witnesses Not Officials: The Priest in a Changing Age*, which he said was not a "manual for becoming a good priest" but a sort of pastoral letter to fellow priests. Pope Francis gave copies of the book to priests at the chrism Mass on Holy Thursday in 2022 and on other occasions.

• Cardinal-designate Manuel Alves Aguiar

Portuguese Cardinal-designate Manuel Alves Aguiar, 49, is auxiliary bishop of Lisbon, Portugal, president of the World Youth Day Lisbon 2023 Foundation and director of communications for the Patriarchate of Lisbon.

The future cardinal was described as a "radical environmentalist" by the Portuguese press for defending his town's river from pollution, and he was reportedly very active in the Portuguese socialist party.

At 49, Cardinal-designate Aguiar will be the second member of the college of cardinals under 50, joining Italian-born Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, who is six months his junior.

• Cardinal-designate Ángel Fernández Artime

Spanish Cardinal-designate Ángel Fernández Artime, 62, is rector general of the Salesians of St. John Bosco, his religious order. He was born to a fishing family in Gozón-Luanco, northern Spain.

A local newspaper noted his "marked maritime accent" after he was elected to lead the Salesian

congregation in 2014. It said that for five generations his family had dedicated themselves to fishing. "I thank God for being a small-town boy," he said then.

• Cardinal-designate Agostino Marchetto

Italian Cardinal-designate Agostino Marchetto, 82, is a former apostolic nuncio and the former secretary, from 2001 to 2010, of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, which was merged into the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2016.

Pope Francis has called him "the greatest hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council." In his books on Vatican II, Archbishop Marchetto has argued that the council was a continuation and not a break from the history of the Catholic Church.

As he is over 80 he will not be eligible to vote in a future conclave.

• Cardinal-designate Diego Rafael Padrón Sánchez

Venezuelan Cardinal-designate Diego Rafael Padrón Sánchez, 84, is the retired archbishop of Cumaná, Venezuela, and a former president of the Venezuelan bishops' conference.

Cardinal-designate Padrón has been an outspoken advocate for freeing political prisoners in Venezuela. "Political prisoners are typical of dictatorships; amnesty can contribute to reconciling the country," he told local media in support of laws to free political prisoners in Venezuela.

• Cardinal-designate Luis Dri

Argentinian Cardinal-designate Luis Dri, 96, has been a model for Pope Francis' philosophy toward confession.

The Capuchin priest is dedicated to hearing confessions in his soundproof confessional every morning and evening since he retired from active ministry in 2007 and has often been cited by the pope when he speaks about confession.

He said he did not deserve to be a cardinal: "I am nothing but a simple friar."

Haiti stumbles into new crisis as gangs take over and UN runs out of cash

A number of countries have called for international intervention in Haiti because of the government's inability to provide basic security amid the rise of criminal gangs.

At the same time, the UN's World Food Programme has announced it is facing a shortage of funds and will not be able to help 100,000 people in Haiti who urgently need its assistance.

It is believed nearly half the 11 million people in the country need help accessing food regularly.

"These cuts could not come at a worse time, as Haitians face a multi-layered humanitarian crisis, their lives and livelihoods upended by violence, insecurity, economic turmoil and climate shocks," said Jean-Martin Bauer, the agency's director for Haiti.

The agency warned that its Haiti response plan is only 16 per cent funded, and that it will not be able to provide food to a total of 750,000 Haitians if it does not secure \$121 million through to the end of the year.

"Unless we receive immediate funding, further devastating cuts cannot be ruled out," Mr Bauer said.

So far this year, the World Food Programme has provided more than 450,000 schoolchildren with hot meals, often the only food they receive in a day.

Per capita, the number of Haitians facing emergency-level food insecurity is the second highest in the world, with nearly five million struggling to eat every day, according to the agency.

More than 115,000 children younger than five are also expected to struggle with malnutrition this year, a 30% surge compared with last year.

Gang violence has worsened the situation, paralysing the transportation of goods and preventing people from leaving their homes.

"Haiti is in a desperate situation, the worst that it has probably been in its history," Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami said this week. Wenski has long worked with the Haitian communities of Florida.

"Haitians are very resilient. They're people of faith, and we have to pray to God that they get some relief," Wenski said.

Haiti has not had a president since July 2021, when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated.

A mum tends to her child in one of the makeshift camps for internally displaced people on Haiti



"It's a terrible situation, and I think the international community has been kicking the can down the road for a couple of years now," Wenski said.

According to Wenski, the political crisis began two years before the assassination. The current crisis follows 20 years of a "downward spiral" in economic, political, and social life in Haiti.

No national elections have been held since the assassination. Some observers worry elections are impossible without security restored to the capital of Port-au-Prince.

The struggle for power has worsened the violence carried out by armed gangs and kidnapers. Gangs control large sections of Port-au-Prince as well as some suburbs.

An agreement to send a UN-authorized multinational peacekeeping operation to help Haiti's national police restore security has been brokered with Haiti, but no country has committed its soldiers to such a measure.

Reluctance to commit personnel to intervene is in part due to the fact that Haiti's gangs are now well-armed.

"For any international force that goes in, there'll be a price in blood both on the international side and on the Haitian side," Wenski said.

As of 2020, there were 150 to 200 criminal gangs in Haiti. As many as 500,000 illegal guns could be circulating in Haiti for use in gang conflicts, according to a March report on Haiti's criminal markets from the United Nations Office on Drug Trafficking and Crime.

80 years on, Rome still reveres the pope who saved it from destruction

Some 80 years ago this week, before Pope Francis told priests to be “shepherds with the smell of the sheep,” his wartime predecessor left the Vatican to walk the rubble of Rome’s peripheries after bombings during the Second World War to show his solidarity with his flock.

While some commentaries about his legacy during World War II remain mixed, Pope Pius XII is still heralded by Romans, and the city itself, as the *Defensor Civitatis*, or “protector of the city.” And 80 years after the first bombs dropped on Rome, an exhibit near the Vatican organised by the Museum of the Popes project celebrated that status by recalling the efforts of Pope Pius to defend the city that envelops the Vatican.

The exhibit, titled *Defensor Civitatis*, displayed objects and photographs of Pope Pius’ life and pontificate that were privately donated from individuals close to him.

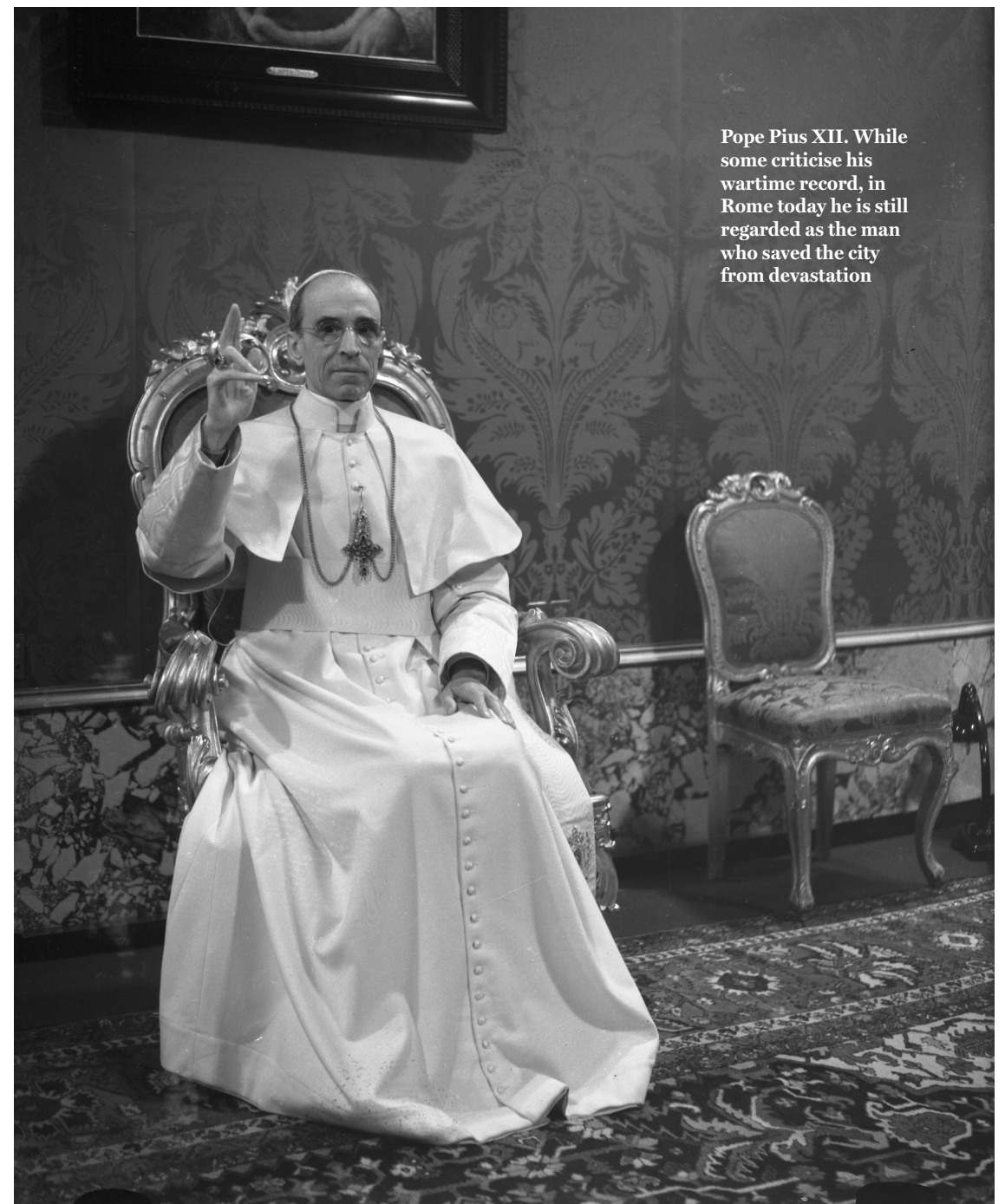
Ivan Marsura, director of the museum project, said that one of

the reasons Pope Pius was praised by Romans is because many popes had a history of fleeing Rome during conflict, and “he was the one who didn’t escape the city” when the war reached Rome.

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was meeting with Adolf Hitler in northern Italy when the Allies bombed Rome on 19th July, 1943, killing 1,500 people. Shortly after, Mussolini was voted out of power by the Grand Council of Fascism, arrested and sent to prison on an island off the Italian coast.

Italy’s King Vittorio Emanuele III was widely blamed for not defending Italy against fascism and letting it enter unnecessarily into war. He was reported to have started making his way to areas impacted by the bombing but turned around when people began throwing rocks at his limousine and shouting insults at the king riding inside.

It was therefore Pope Pius who, visiting the bombed San Lorenzo neighbourhood of Rome near the



Pope Pius XII. While some criticise his wartime record, in Rome today he is still regarded as the man who saved the city from devastation

city’s main train line, became identified as the city’s protector.

In her memoirs, Sister Pascalina Lehnert, the pope’s German assistant, recalled how after hearing the bombs on 19th July, 1943, Pope Pius told his driver to

prepare the car, grabbed whatever money he could find to hand out, and left immediately to go to San Lorenzo without telling anyone. Only after seeing the car take the pope across St. Peter’s Square and out of the Vatican did she notify

Cardinal Giovanni Montini, then-Vatican secretary of state and the future St. Paul VI, that the pope had left the Vatican.

Images of Pope Pius’ visit and a second public appearance in front of the Basilica of St. John Lateran on 13th August, 1943, show the pope among the masses with no security separating them. In one photo outside the basilica, the pope is seen holding a stack of lire – Italy’s currency prior to its adoption to the euro – which he gave to a parish priest to pay for the damages to his community. In this second visit Cardinal Montini is pictured at the pope’s side.

Amid the chaos of 13th August, Marsura explained, the car used to take the pope to the bombed neighbourhood had broken down and someone from the crowd offered their car to the pope for his return to the Vatican. Images from that moment show people looking upward – not at the pope but to the

“

Pope Pius visited the bombed San Lorenzo neighbourhood and became identified as Rome’s protector... Sister Pascalina Lehnert, the pope’s German assistant, recalled how after hearing the bombs, Pope Pius told his driver to prepare the car, grabbed whatever money he could find to hand out, and left immediately to go to San Lorenzo to see the damage and help those affected



Continue reading on next page

Images of Pope Pius' public appearance in front of the Basilica of St. John Lateran on 13th August, 1943, show the pope among the masses with no security separating them...

and below, holding Italian lira banknotes at the Basilica of St. John Lateran to give to those affected by the allied bombing. At the far right of the photo looking at the camera is Cardinal Giovanni Montini, the future St. Paul VI.

Far right, the pope's letter to US President Roosevelt, begging him to save Rome from the horrors of war



sky, since planes were still flying over the city, any of which could have dropped bombs.

Beyond gestures of solidarity with the people, in May 1943 the pope had also appealed directly to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt to spare Rome from bombings. The president said in response that allied pilots had been instructed to "prevent bombs from falling within Vatican City."

Despite this assurance, the pope and his people, as bishop of Rome,



remained in an active war zone and bombs fell twice in the Vatican in November 1943 and March 1944, damaging office buildings and killing one person.

Additionally, Marsura said the pope "was informed that Hitler wanted to abduct him, and he signed a document saying that if he was abducted by the Germans his reign as pope would end and he would be a simple cardinal. The other cardinals could then elect a new pope."

While historians still debate the authenticity of the abduction plot – some say it was a rumour devised by British intelligence – Marsura said the pope's reaction to it "showed the desire of the pope to stay in Rome despite the problems and difficulties he knew he was facing."

The pope's presence in Rome and his lobbying to the Axis powers and Allies for Rome to be declared an open city resulted in a "miracle," according to the late Arcangelo Paglialunga, eyewitness to Rome's liberation in 1944 and a longtime Vatican journalist.

He told Catholic News Service in 2004, "Pope Pius XII had done so much. Just think, the last Germans left Rome the evening of June 4th right at the same time the first Americans were coming in.

"It seemed like a miracle that not a shot had been fired. Nobody died. This was the miracle of Rome."

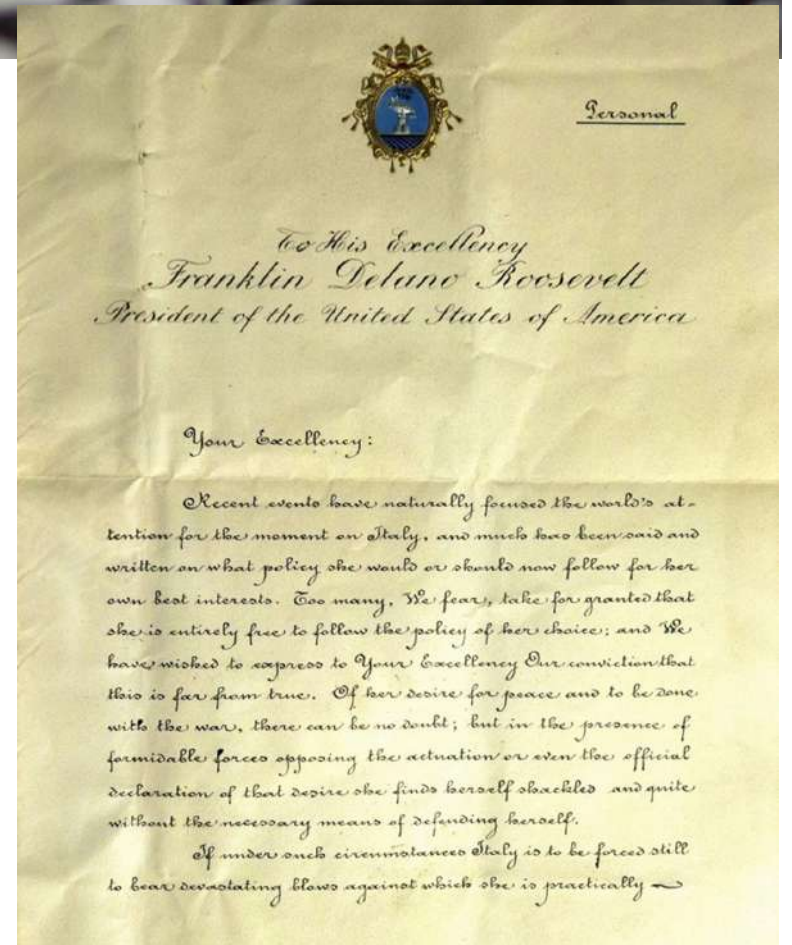
As leader of the Catholic Church during World War II, Pope Pius has received mixed analysis of his actions during the war: he worked through diplomatic channels to

push for peace as head of a country that declared itself neutral in the conflict between the Axis powers and the Allies, but he also chose not to openly condemn the murder of six million Jews across Europe and North Africa.

And that history is becoming only more complex as new information and analysis comes to light from scholars recently given access to documents from the wartime pontificate of Pope Pius for the first time in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed the pace with which scholars could come to Rome and study the newly released archives, but new findings continue to trickle out and are expected to follow in coming months.

So while there are still questions



today about his inaction against the Holocaust, Marsura explained that the pope's efforts to defend the city was immediately recognized by the people of Rome.

When the city was liberated by Allied forces June 4, 1944, Italians waved banners that read "Pius: Protector of the City" and "Long live the pope." After his death the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, ran the headline *Shepherd and Protector of the City*.

Tens of thousands of people

gathered in St. Peter's Square the following day to receive Pope Pius' blessing. The large square in front of St. Peter's has since been named 'Piazza Pio XII' in his honor with the title "*Defensor Civitatis*" beneath his name. Sister Lehnard wrote that "all of Rome gathered in the square to thank the Holy Father," that June 5.

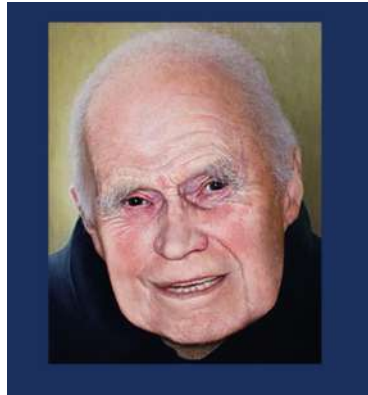
"It was thanks to him that the city was saved," she said. "Forever he will remain in history as the saviour of Rome."

Joyous book offers an insight into spiritual life of Br Michael Strode

'Who are you looking for?' – An introduction to the life and spirituality of Brother Michael Strode'

It must be rare that a biography so completely captures the spirit and the spirituality of its subject. Brother Michael Strode was an unwitting advocate for disabled people, a retired doctor and later a member of the Cistercian community at Caldey Abbey, off Tenby. The author, John Wolff, has achieved something remarkable in 272 pages that delve into the innermost thoughts of a man who was far too humble and self-effacing to want his life to be written, but who reluctantly conceded that his story should be told.

After a brief account of Michael's upbringing, the story begins with his embarking on a career as a doctor during World War II. His mother had become a Catholic but he had decided he was agnostic. On his train journey to work he was taken with the story of the empty tomb (John 20:15, where Mary Magdalen supposed the risen Lord to be the gardener). "Suddenly", he said, "I just felt that this story had to be true" (hence the book's title). And it led to his decision to become a Catholic.



A serious illness affected Michael's career and he began working at Chailey Heritage, a school hospital for children with disabilities. From there he was to found two charities; one of them, HCPT, continues to take thousands of disabled or disadvantaged children and adults to Lourdes each year in small 'family' groups – a ground-breaking concept in its day and much copied since.

There is not space here to recount either Michael's influence on HCPT and other charities over many years or the development of his own spirituality. But on his retirement he discerned a calling to become a Cistercian Oblate at Caldey. He fully expected the Abbot to refuse him on grounds of age and health, but he was accepted. In 1991, 'Doctor Michael' (or 'Doc')

became 'Brother Michael' to many. There his faith deepened as he explored themes of prayer, service and love.

John Wolff, who joined HCPT as a student helper in 1958 and was to become one of its trustees, knew Michael for longer than anyone apart from his immediate family. In 2006, he asked Michael if he would talk about his spiritual journey. With typical modesty, Michael replied "I think you will find the cupboard rather bare". But later he is quoted as saying that the spiritual insights he had received "could help others to meet Jesus along the way. I believe I have been led to understand certain things which I want to share." Using Michael's own writings and interviews, the book explores his spiritual life, his doubts, his self-professed shortcomings and his intuition. And at the end the reader is beautifully led to Michael's "final gift" – his most treasured prayers.

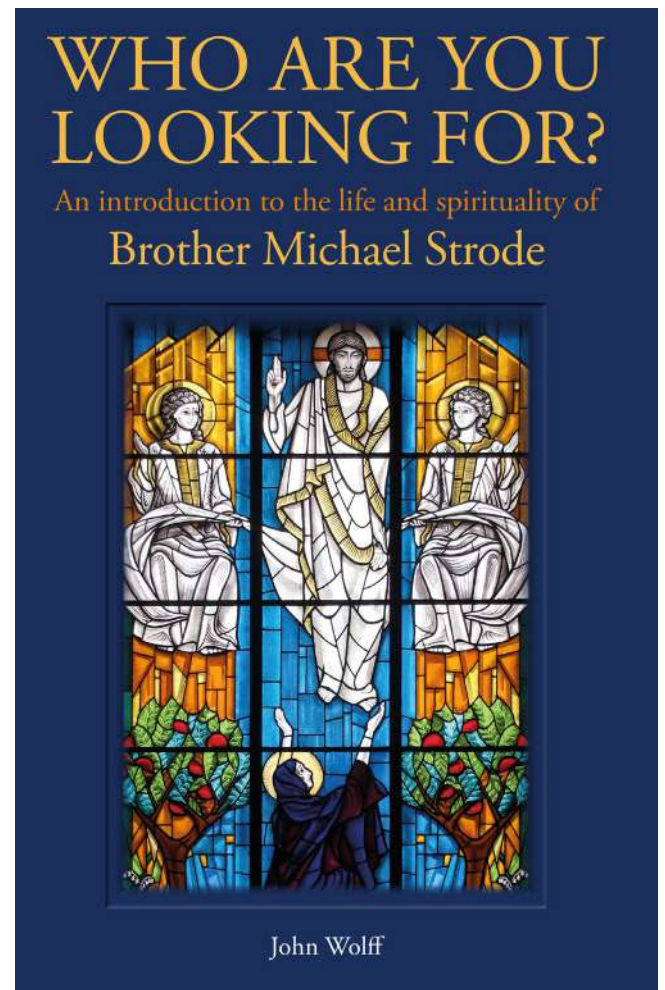
Michael's spirituality was not lost on his brethren. At a Mass at Westminster Cathedral to celebrate his centenary (5th June), Fr Jan Rossey, the superior at Caldey, described Wolff's work as "a delightful book, so beautiful, so full of insight, so full of faith and hope, of charity and friendship, so full of

inspiration." He encouraged everyone "to read it, and reread it, and pray it, for it is a book full of prayer, to absorb it and try to live it." He urged them to buy several copies: "a perfect present for those who are open to the message of Brother Michael's life".

Michael died on 27th December 2019, aged 96. At his funeral, many felt that they had worked or lived with a true saint. And so it was that a committee, the CBMC, was formed to prepare the ground for what is hoped will be his eventual canonisation.

To quote the author, "I believe Michael has left us many gems within these pages. Some lie on the surface. Others need a little digging for. My prayer is that readers find them." In this joyous book the reader should discover more about Brother Michael's effect on people – how his life's work and, yes, his saintliness has inspired so many others. He deserves to be better known.

• Published by CBMC Publishing
For more information, see www.brothermichaelstrode.org/



Not the best book... but perhaps the one you need to read

David Mills

Friedrich von Hügel's niece was a bit of a snob, and being a snob was bad for her, especially the kind of snob she was. The Austrian-English Catholic theologian was a highly intelligent, highly learned and cultured man, a scholar admired across Europe. If anyone had a right to be an intellectual-cultural-spiritual snob, he did.

He wasn't, but his niece, Gwendolyn, was. "Only the best attractive to you," he noted in one of his letters to her, collected in *Letters to a Niece*. The letters were given as intellectual and spiritual direction, and were written from 1918 till he died in 1925. The result is a great book. Gwendolyn was hugely blessed.

Her problem wasn't just plain old snobbery, though. It was a feeling Hügel called 'fastidiousness' and it's

one I suspect many of us have. We demand things be done to a high standard, without any mess or imperfection – especially without any mess or imperfection. We want it just so.

Is that, we tell ourselves, too much to ask for in the important things? Can anyone blame us for keeping our distance from the messy and imperfect?

Gwendolyn was an Anglican and a serious Christian. Before warning her about her problem, Hügel tells her that she has "the great grace to love and to worship Christ our Lord." If I read her uncle's direction right, she believed in the Christ who had a body but wasn't comfortable with the Body of Christ. She didn't like to go into churches with people in them.

Nor into churches where things were not done well. She did not go

to church services in the country, for example, apparently because the services didn't meet her standards, and she didn't like the homilies. They weren't clever enough for her. She doesn't seem to have liked them much better in the city, either, and for the same reasons. She did accept services at churches that did things just so, which tended to be those in the more affluent parts of London.

She was, in a word, fastidious. But fastidiousness is a very hideous thing, Hügel tells her. He comes as close as he ever does in his letters to laying down the law. Someone 'dominated by such fastidiousness, is as yet only hovering round the precincts of Christianity.' That person 'has not entered its sanctuary, where heroism is always homely.'

'The touching, entrancing beauty of Christianity, my Niece, depends

upon a subtle something which all this fastidiousness ignores,' he writes. 'Its greatness, its special genius, consists, as much as in anything else, in that it is without this fastidiousness.'

He reminds her that Jesus the Light of the World was 'the menial servant at the feet of those foolish little fishermen and tax-gatherers.'

He points to St. Francis, who so loved God that he took up a life as anti-fastidious as it's possible to be. "The full, truly free, beauty of Christ alone completely liberates us from this miserable bondage."

He points out that 'the best helps you more than the less-than-best. You learn more from a good homily than a bad homily, are better formed by a well-celebrated liturgy than a badly celebrated one, find more meaning in a beautiful statue than in a kitschy one. It's not your

fault that other people can't tell the difference.'

He reminds her that 'the homily that would make a seminary professor weep may carry more wisdom than the most elegant one you will ever hear. People may sing *On Eagles' Wings* with sincere and deep piety, and you will gain more by joining in than by pining for something better. People may come to that sentimental Madonna with a deep love for Mary that they wouldn't feel with a classically beautiful one. Not the best in one sense, but the very best in another.'

Here's the worst part. The fastidious Catholic rejects mess and imperfection. But the messiest and least perfect thing that a Catholic will meet is other Catholics. Fastidiousness tempts us not just to look down upon others but to separate ourselves from them.

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

Here's a challenge: to save sinners!

At the end of this article, there's a challenge I've set that you may find interesting. It all starts with two great questions that are asked about the reply Jesus made when asked what his mission here on earth was.

In different ways he said: "I've come to save sinners".

The two great questions are: How important was this reply? What did it all mean?

Jesus was the Son of God and knew that his father wanted the spiritual souls of all people to live with him in heaven for all eternity when they died. The major point of it all was that: **People had to earn this.**

Jesus came as a human being to show and tell people what they had to do to earn what God wanted for their immortal souls. People not only needed to know what God wanted for them, but also how to achieve it. As an example, the same problem exists in any organisation.

In very simple terms, that problem is to determine what their objective is. In the case of many businesses, it's to make a profit. To achieve this, they create strategies



that must be followed in order to accomplish their objective such as:

Setting up departments - such as HR, R&D, manufacturing, IT, accounts, sales.

To complete the process, tactics must be employed to accomplish each strategy, so that the objective can be achieved such as:

- Recruit relevant staff for all departments.
- Ensure each employee gets

adequate training.

- Use R&D techniques to continually improve products.
- Employ effective sales techniques.

And others.

It's the same with the objective of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We know it was to 'save sinners', but what effective strategies did he and the Church he created employ to accomplish this, and what effective

tactics do we all practice completing the necessary strategies?

Let's look at some of the strategies and their tactics used to gain Christ's objective. Some of the more well-known strategies are:

- The Mass.
- The Sacraments.
- Missionary work.
- Praying.
- Corporal works of mercy.

The tactics used to determine these strategies will vary from country to country and person to person, but let's look at the tactics used in the Mass as an example.

The main tactic is using the structure of the Mass itself. It starts by allowing people to show true penitence for their sins.

The next tactic is the Liturgy of the Word, which shows us how God wants us to live our daily lives according to his will, and how his son Jesus and some of the Apostles explained how we can do this effectively.

Another tactic is that part of the Mass called The Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is when a priest consecrates bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Immediately following this is

another tactic, which is when the priest sacrifices the body and blood of Christ back to God on our behalf.

A final tactic in the Liturgy of the Eucharist is for us all to receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion, because Jesus told us to do this in memory of him at the Last Supper.

From all this we can see what a wonderful strategy the Mass has become. The others we've listed also have tactics that are very effective in helping the Church show people how they can ensure their spiritual souls go to Heaven when they die.

Always look out for the strategies that Jesus and his Church have employed to help us all gain God's great promise and use the tactics that have been developed to make these strategies effectively keep our immortal souls in God's favour.

All this was the mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'To save sinners'. Not surprisingly it's also the mission of his Church. My challenge to you is:

Can you determine any other strategies and associated tactics that the Church uses to save sinners?

JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Our celestial companion

Moonscape

A grey, dusty, cratered surface, sharp curved against a blackened sky. Our satellite companion in space.

For thousands of years, this silent grey pitted globe has hung in Earth's night sky going through its phases from new to full, controlling tidal waters, reflecting a white light on our sleeping land, always there yet always out of reach, a tentative prize for an outstretched hand, seeking beauty.

There is something about the ethereal light of the moon that has inspired writers down the ages.

Take these few words of Padraig Daly.

*Night falling:
A gap between fields
rutted by tractor tyres
in the rut-pools, sparks of moon.*

Then came the challenge from John F Kennedy to the American nation, "...before the end of the decade to land a man on the Moon and bring him back safely to earth".



This extraordinary, dangerous feat was accomplished in the days of late July of 1969 when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on land beyond their home planet

Earth. What must they have felt like standing on that arid, deserted land, looking back at their home, the blue planet, hung above their helmeted heads? They were more alone than any man had ever been,

truly alone in space.

During their short stay on the Moon, they had a conversation with President Nixon from the Oval Office, a long-distance call indeed.

Their safe return was successfully

completed, and the celebrations began. It was a marking point in the history of mankind.

Now, after some sixty years, we are planning a return to our small satellite, this time with a purpose beyond just making a visit. The long-term aim is to create a staging post for human exploration of the planet Mars. So, our spirit of exploration continues to broaden with new frontiers to explore, new ideas to assimilate.

A similar pattern might be drawn for our acquisition of faith as each new generation reaches out a little further to explore new ground, testing the firmness of footing, one step at a time. Just as scientists sometimes end up in cul-de-sacs so too do theologians. Corrections in direction are made and we move on.

The important thing is having the courage and insight to ask the difficult questions and then to cope with the answers that arise and continue to listen to the argument in an open and generous spirit.

Forgiveness is a grace, and remains the most Christian trait of them all

Perhaps the greatest hallmark of a Christian or anyone else for that matter is the ability to forgive. Letting go of an offence can be hard but holding on to it creates far worse problems. Bitterness can wreak havoc within the soul. It can tear you up inside like a cancer if you don't know how to get rid of it.

Forgiveness starts with being honest with yourself. That is a good attitude to have and, since you're not perfect, why judge others? You have no right to. Only the one without sin, scripture tells us, can cast stones (John 8:7). Perhaps, you've believed a lie about what's bothering you, about what someone did to you, and have magnified it over time, making it bigger than what it is. Best to drop it, get over it, and move on.

Feelings, in themselves, are neither right nor wrong. It's what you do with them that matters. Let go of pesky feelings of hurt if you want to set yourself free. Then you can release the offender from his chains, and free yourself from being



bound by them. Abraham Lincoln got it right when he said, "I conquered my enemies by making them my friends."

Have you ever noticed that the closer we live to other people the easier it is to hurt them? We live closer to family members than anyone else. Next to our families are our neighbours, and after our neighbours are our fellow workers. Not only are we prone to hurt them, they in turn are prone to hurt

us. A hurt coming from someone close destroys confidence and trust. That's why forgiveness is so difficult, that's why it is the greatest of challenges, that's why it is a mark of strength. Only the strong can forgive for it takes strength to overcome negative feelings that inhibit growth. It takes courage to recognise you need to forgive the sins of others if you want to be free of your own.

There is an interesting

expression: "Nursing a grudge." Think of what it means, A grudge is a negative emotion that is about to die but you will not let it. By nursing a grudge, you become a prisoner to your own hurt : protecting it, holding on to it, and feeding it every bad medicine to keep it alive. Common sense tells us this is only a waste of time and energy. It does you no earthly good to nurse a grudge, so let it go and set yourself free.

Forgiveness is called a grace because it is out of this world. It would be foolish to refuse such a life-empowering grace in your life. When the Scriptures say you need to forgive "seventy times seven times" (Matthew 8 : 22), it means you must forgive all the time, no strings attached because God has forgiven you, no strings attached. This is the grace of forgiveness that comes from the heart.

Some people say, "I will forgive but I cannot forget." If by this is meant carrying resentment in the heart, rather than learning from the experience, it is not true forgiveness. The meaning of resentment is "to feel again." Forgiveness refuses to feel again the hurt, and makes it possible to get over it, forget about it and be renewed.

Learning to forgive is a choice. It is not magic. The residue of hurt may take time to wash off, but it will go away if you set yourself free by forgiving your offender. Then you can get on with your life.

Our shepherd does not push or herd us; he leads us to the better pastures we seek

'When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, he will sit upon His glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before Him.'
Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:31

In today's scripture we meet a King with no earthly match. This King is a shepherd for us and, like the good shepherd; he does not push or herd the sheep from behind but walks ahead of them and leads them into fine pastures.

This King seeks us out when we're lost, empowers us when we're helpless, and rescues us when we're trapped.

The King who comes in judgment in today's Gospel (Matthew 25/31-46) comes into our lives, not with punishment and condemnation but with sympathy and reconciliation. Jesus comes to lift up sinners.

He wills not the loss of any member of the flock, but only that each member recognise him. Jesus says that he is to be recognised in all those in need. Judgment in his

kingdom is to be levied according to whether we have recognised him in our neighbours in need by feeding, clothing, housing, refreshing and consoling them. Thus Jesus insists: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me."

Remember that those who are condemned in today's Gospel were cast out of the kingdom not just for what they failed to do but for what never occurred to them to do.

We must, therefore, choose to do well and to do it in the ways that Jesus tells us; the Gospel reminds us that it is the little things that count. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, healing and visiting the sick, giving shelter to the homeless and visiting those in prison.

It is the little steps that we take in all these areas that build up God's kingdom. So, put one foot in front of the other and commit yourself to helping others.

You are not just trying to reserve a place for yourself in God's kingdom, you are leading others to it as well.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



The Lord leads a 'rainbow coalition' in which there is never a 'weeding out'

23rd July 2023 – 16th Sunday,

(A) Wisdom 12:13

Because God is all-powerful he governs the world with patience, allowing time for repentance

For who will say, "What have you done?" or who will resist your judgment? Who will accuse you for the destruction of nations that you made? Or who will come before you to plead as an advocate for the unrighteous?

For neither is there any god besides you, whose care is for all people, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly; nor can any king or monarch confront you about those whom you have punished.

You are righteous and you rule all things righteously, deeming it alien to your power to condemn anyone who does not deserve to be punished.

For your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all.

For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it. Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose.

Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

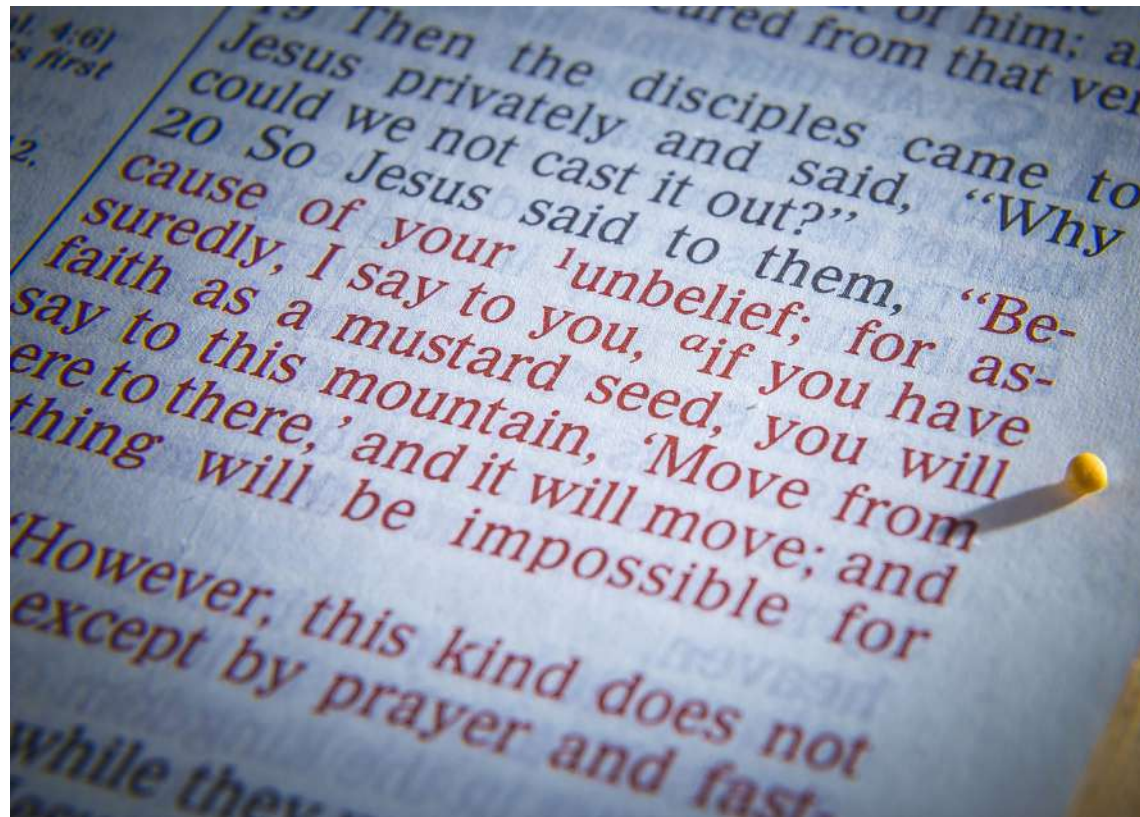
Responsorial: Psalm 85:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

*R./: Lord, you are good and forgiving
O Lord, you are good and forgiving,
full of love to all who call.
Give heed, O Lord, to my prayer
and attend to the sound of my voice. (R./)
All the nations shall come to adore you
and glorify your name, O Lord:
for you are great and do marvellous deeds,
you who alone are God. (R./)
But you, God of mercy and compassion,
slow to anger, O Lord,
abounding in love and truth,
turn and take pity on me. (R./)*

Romans 8:26-27

God understands our ill-expressed wishes better than we do ourselves

Likewise the Spirit helps us in



our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43
God will judge all justly at the end of time

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the

smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world." Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Giving us time to grow

There were people in Our Lord's time who wanted him to separate the bad from the good as well. Among them were people who claimed the moral high ground, the Pharisees whose name means "the separated ones."

Even John the Baptist expected Jesus to separate the cream from the skim, to have only holy people around him. He foretold that Our Lord would separate the chaff from the wheat. He said (Mt 3:12) "He will gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out."

That's precisely what Our Lord didn't do. He had all sorts of people around him, a rainbow coalition of people, the learned, the ignorant, the good-living, the bad-living, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the lot. What in God's name is he doing, they said. Why doesn't he get down to business? Why doesn't he weed them out?

As any gardener knows, weeding can be the greatest threat of all to the life of the young seedling. At first, the problem is one of identifying which is which. The weeds must be left until the seedling can be clearly recognised. Even then, removing the weeds may pose an even greater threat. It might sever the seedling's root system. Often the weed brings the seedling away with it.

In the case of human beings it is an even more risky business. 'Weeding-out' has no history of

success which doesn't seem to curb people's passion for it.

Seventy years after Hitler's final solution, the horrendous weeding out of six million Jews in concentration camps, the Bosnian Serbs are attempting the brutal policy of 'ethnic cleansing.' Race, religion, colour, sex, politics are still considered ready-reckoners for identifying society's weeds. Increasing power over nature provides new and sinister instruments for weeding out. The unborn child, the seed of life is threatened with abortion.

At the other end of life, euthanasia is proposed as the final solution for the new Jews, the old, the maimed, the incurables and the burdensome. Right through life, the weeding-out continues remorselessly. The handicapped are institutionalised, the delinquent penalised, the deviant, ostracised, and the poor are patronised.

Weeding out is not confined to faceless bureaucracy. We're all tempted to try our hand at it. We are sharp at spotting the undesirables, the troublemakers, the misfits. One shudders to think of the people who might have been weeded out if God had not chosen to intervene. Probably most of the saints in the calendar. Peter, after his triple denial in the crucifixion crisis should have been weeded out for failing the leadership test. Strange isn't it, that Christ never weeded out Judas? The church did not always show her master's tolerance. Galileo could testify to that. The spirit of the Inquisition lives on. Excommunications and anathemas may be out of fashion but old habits die hard.

The parable of the weeds is starkly simple and yet widely ignored. To the question "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" the answer of Jesus is a categorical "No." And the reason is self-evident. Only God has eyes sufficiently discerning and fingers sufficiently gentle for this job.

Weeding out is God's prerogative. Life would be so much better for everybody, if only we would leave it to him.

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See www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

The Church salutes those everyday heroes who willingly donate their organs to others

Q. What is the position of the Catholic Church on donating body parts for medical science?

A. Let's divide the answer into two parts: post-mortem transplants and those from living donors. Gifts from a donor who has clearly died – either to a living recipient or to scientific research – is the easier part.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: 'Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity' (No. 2296). The Church does teach that the remains, after organ donation or medical research, should be treated with reverence and should be entombed or buried.

As to gifts from living donors – bone marrow, say, or a lung – this is morally permissible under these conditions: so long as it is not life-threatening to the donor, and does not deprive the donor of an essential bodily function; and provided that the anticipated benefit to the recipient is proportionate to the harm done to the donor.

In his 1995 encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, St. John Paul II called organ donation an example of "everyday heroism," and in 2014, Pope Francis told the Transplantation Committee for the Council of Europe that organ donation is "a testimony of love for our neighbour."

Q. Is it not our duty to point out when a friend is committing a sin? Otherwise, if we don't try to save the soul of a sinner, then we too can be found guilty. I don't want to see someone risk not being with God throughout eternity because of my failure to point out his error. My friends and I were discussing this. Their view was that it is none of our business and, if a person claims to be a Christian, they should already know that what they're doing is wrong.

A. I am on your side of this argument, and I would take issue with your friends. I would quote to them this verse from Matthew's Gospel: 'If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother' (18:15).

Though the phrase 'against you' might be taken to limit the sin in question to a personal offence, it is important to note that the common interpretation of Catholic theologians extends the meaning to



Pope Francis accepts a gift during an audience with members of the Italian Association of Organ Donors at the Vatican. The pope said that, when done ethically and free of charge, organ donation is a selfless gesture.

whatever serious offence comes to a person's notice-and also that the phrase "against you" does not appear in some of the earlier scriptural codices.

Note also that St. Paul comments on the duty of fraternal correction in Galatians: "If a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit" (6:1).

I remember, though, reading what St. Anthony Mary Claret said were the circumstances that warranted fraternal correction; not only, he said, must it have been a grave offence, but there must be a reasonable hope that the person will accept the correction.

Q. I am a 'cradle Catholic' of 75 years, now homebound. We are taught that if one follows the teachings of the Church, is a good person and dies in the state of grace, then that person will go to heaven. But suppose some close loved ones don't make it there? How can we be happy in Heaven without them? I asked an extraordinary minister of holy Communion, who replied: "Let's hope God in his mercy forgives them, too." But to me this seems to negate the existence of hell. Please help a confused Catholic!

A. The question you pose has, I would suppose, challenged every reflective Christian for centuries. Various theories have been suggested. One is that hell exists

only as a concept, not in reality, and that God will find a way to forgive everyone and bring them finally to heaven.

But to me that seems to conflict with Matthew 25, where Jesus pictures himself at the final judgment separating the faithful from the unfaithful, casting some into "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Another suggestion is that our memories will fail us in eternity and that those who are lost will simply vanish from our minds. I'm not enthused about that theory either, since it seems unlikely that, once our bodies are perfected in heaven, we will simply lose our minds. What I do feel certain about is that heaven will be better than we can ever imagine it.

In Revelation (21:4), we're told that God "will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." I also believe, along with St. Paul in 1 Corinthians (2:9), that "eye has not seen, and ear has not heard ... what God has prepared for those who love him."

So I guess that my answer to your question is that I simply don't know -- but that I'm not worried about it. It's one of those (many) things that I'll just have to let God figure out.

Q. As I understand purgatory, it is a place where a cleansing is

Eucharist as viaticum, bread for the journey. In this prayer, the priest says: "Through the holy mysteries of our redemption, may almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come. May he open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you to everlasting joy."

Even if a priest is unavailable, the church provides in the Handbook of Indulgences that a dying person who is rightly disposed and has prayed regularly during life may be granted this same plenary indulgence (No. 28). So to me, it's quite reasonable that Jesus could have absolved the repentant thief of both sin and of punishment. If a priest can do it, why not Christ?

Q. How, in good conscience, can I remain a practicing Catholic with all the scandal and hypocrisy exposed within the Church? So many of the church's actions seem far removed from the message of Jesus. The Church gathers riches upon the earth, has its own country, bank and government and has a hierarchy. Popes have been bought, cruelty has been inflicted and the Church gets involved in politics. Would it be a mortal sin if I left the church? I believe in Jesus as my saviour, and I look forward to receiving the Eucharist. Am I a hypocrite in staying?

A. Some of the things you mention about the Church trouble me deeply, but others do not. It doesn't concern me that the church "gathers riches" when the goal is to help the poor-or to preserve sacred items for posterity.

Nor does it bother me that the Vatican is its own nation and therefore needs its own bank and independent government. The Church has a hierarchy because that's the way Jesus set it up, with Peter in charge. Nor does it trouble me when the church takes public positions on issues of human rights; that is its moral obligation. What does concern me, of course, is that there have been a few bad popes in history and that cruelty has at times been inflicted in the name of the church. I think here of the Crusades. What centres me in the church and what constitutes for me its biggest gift is the Eucharist-as you have mentioned. I pray for the Church, that it may strive after the perfection of Christ, its founder.

Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers

done, even if we have received the sacrament of anointing of the sick and/or made a good confession and had our sins absolved before death. On the day Jesus was crucified, he told the good thief, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Are we to assume that no cleansing in purgatory was required for him? And if that's the case, why not?

A. Your understanding of purgatory is correct. It has been a clear and consistent belief of the church, as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven" (No. 1030).

What we don't know, of course, is just what this transitional state consists of, how long it lasts, whether it might even be instantaneous and what it feels like-these are questions beyond our reckoning so long as we are still on this side of eternity. What needs to be factored in, too-and some might be unaware of this-is a prayer called the "Apostolic Pardon."

This prayer of blessing is customarily administered by a priest when someone is close to death and follows the anointing of the sick and, if possible, the sacraments of penance and the

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



The one thing necessary...

The lecturer I admired most was an existentialist who spent his time trying to convert us to his chosen philosophy. Everything he said seemed to make sense but none of the books he recommended did.

They were always too difficult for me, even the more popular works. I struggled for weeks trying to understand Kierkegaard's popular masterpiece *Purity of Heart*. I thought that at least that would be easy enough to understand but it was not.

Nevertheless, it was not all a waste of time, for its full title, *'Purity of Heart' Is to 'Will One Thing'*, has remained with me over the years and helped me to understand things that I may never have understood without it. It has helped me, for instance, to understand what Jesus meant when he said that there's only "one thing necessary."

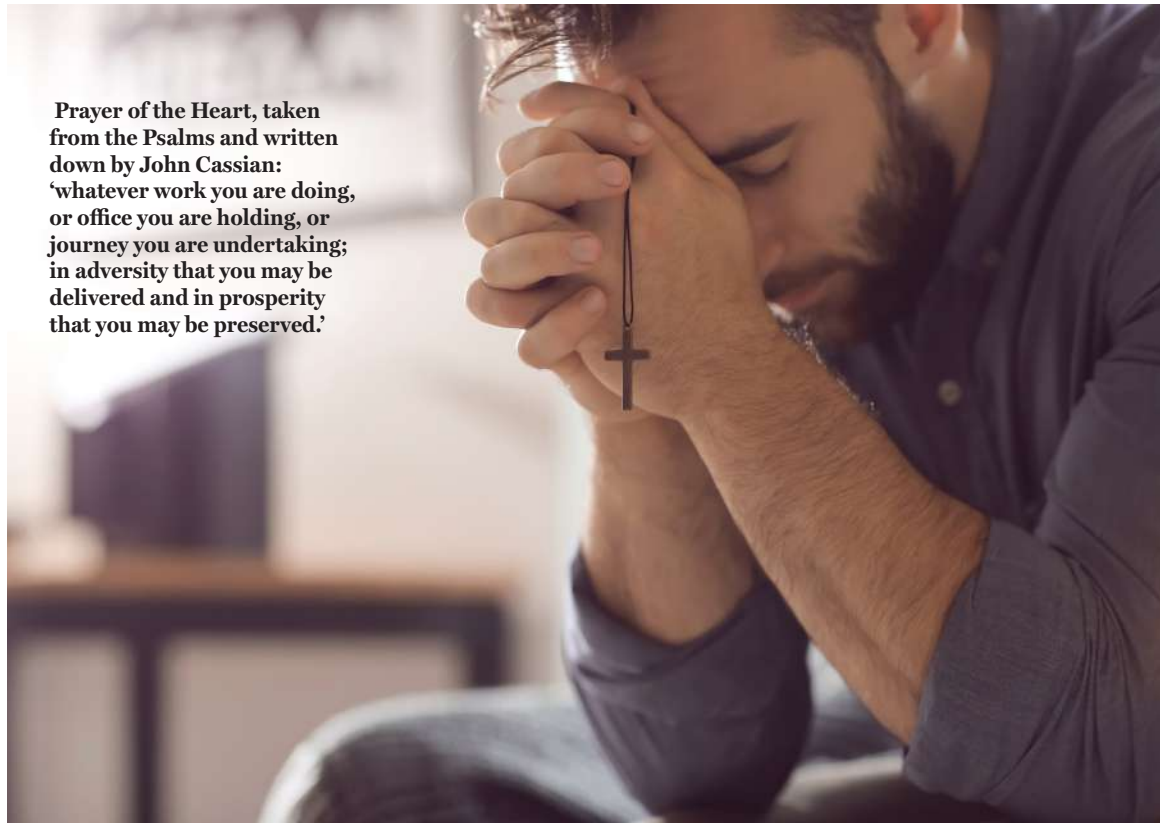
When you really think about it, that is all that really matters, to will one thing before everything else. For that you need a pure heart, a heart that is not fragmented by a thousand and one desires competing with each other and destroying the peace of mind that we all long for. Whenever I have been in danger of becoming confused by the complexity of the spiritual life I just remember Kierkegaard and he puts me back on the straight and narrow again.

A pure heart is utterly simple because it simply wants one thing. I don't know what that one thing was for Kierkegaard, but for Jesus it is to love God with your whole heart and your whole mind and your whole being. Nothing else matters. If you get this right then everything else follows as a matter of course. As St John pointed out, if your love of God is genuine it automatically enables you to love your neighbour, which is the second of the two commandments that sum up all the others.

Taken together the two of them constitute what came to be known in the Early Church as the "Great Mandatum of the Lord," possible only to those who had the genuine purity of heart that enabled them to will but one thing in all things.

When Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God," he meant that when you begin to love God above all else you can begin to see him in everything and everyone and encounter him in everything you do and in everyone you meet. In order to do this more perfectly the Desert Fathers used to spend time each morning examining the forthcoming day to see how their single-minded love of God could enable them to

Prayer of the Heart, taken from the Psalms and written down by John Cassian: 'whatever work you are doing, or office you are holding, or journey you are undertaking; in adversity that you may be delivered and in prosperity that you may be preserved.'



transform it. They would try to anticipate all they had to do and the people they would expect to meet, so that throughout that day they could continue to offer themselves to God by the gentle and peaceful way in which they did everything and treated everyone. Success was never gauged by how well they succeeded in doing this but by how well they tried and tried again and again on successive days no matter how often they failed. St Francis of Assisi used to say that if you can't love your neighbours then at least don't harm them.

Let's face it, for most of us that's about the most we can do while we wait on God to give us the grace to do what is quite impossible without it. What the Desert Fathers learned and what St Francis practised so perfectly was that mere waiting on God is worthless unless that time is filled by doing all we can do to receive the grace to love our neighbour as ourselves. That's why the Desert Fathers spent their time before the day began preparing for it by trying to anticipate all they had to do and everyone they had to meet.

Then they asked God's help to enable them to do everything as

Jesus himself would have done it. They found from experience that this was the best way to extend the purity of heart with which they tried to make their morning offering at the beginning of the day, throughout every moment of that day. This is how they endeavoured to observe at all times the "Great Mandatum," what Jesus called the "one thing necessary" without which nothing has any ultimate meaning or purpose.

My father used to use the *Prayer of the Heart*, taken from the Psalms and written down by John Cassian. 'You must continually recite it in your heart, whatever work you are doing, or office you are holding, or journey you are undertaking; in adversity that you may be delivered and in prosperity that you may be preserved. You should be so moulded by the constant use of it that when sleep comes you are still considering it so that you become accustomed to repeating it even in your sleep. When you wake let it be the first thing to come into your mind, let it anticipate all your waking thoughts. When you rise from your bed let it send you down on your knees and thence send you forth to your work and business

and let it follow you about all day'.

What better way to prepare for the day ahead than by setting ourselves goals or targets to attain by the end of it.

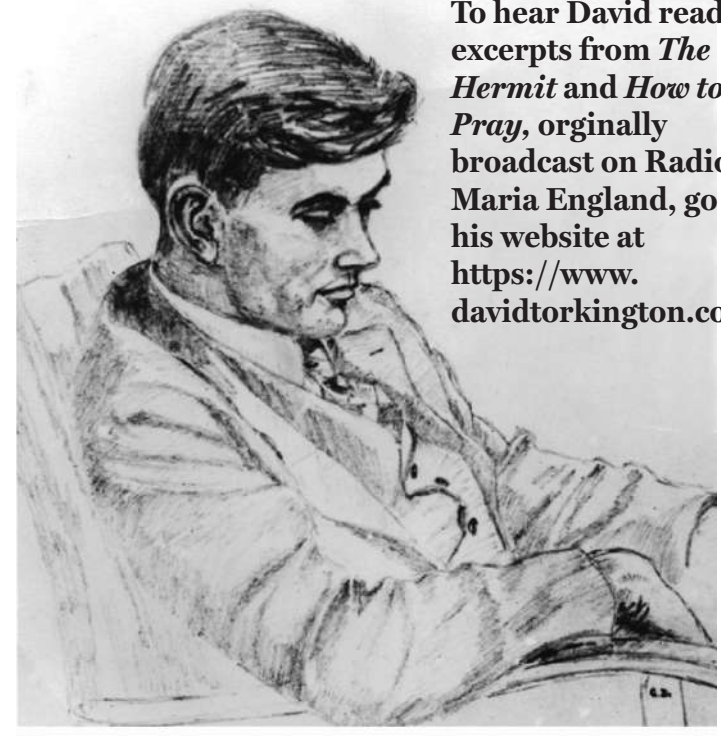
However, once we've offered the day to God and mentally previewed it with the aim of transforming it, it's a good idea to make a few resolutions to do what we are likely to forget or find convenient to forget. It might be just to do hum-drum tasks that we keep

putting off, like changing the sheets on the bed, putting air into the car tyres, or defrosting the freezer, or something that's more important. There's always that friend or relative who's sick or in need whom we should phone, or write to, or even drop in on for a few minutes. Or perhaps we should make a resolution to apologise to one of the family, a friend or someone at work for the way we behaved the previous day.

It's very difficult to stand up for someone who's been abused by authority at work, or elsewhere, or to speak the truth when no one wants to hear it, or to make a stand for what we know is right, but these are some of the more important things that could occupy our minds as part of morning prayer. Then we can ask for the strength to put the resolutions that we know we ought to make into practice. I can even promise you peace of mind if you fail, so long as you make a genuine attempt to do what is right and sincerely ask God's pardon if you fail.

Thanks to Kierkegaard I was able to see one of the simplest truths of the spiritual life that I may not have seen so clearly without him, and to see too from the practice of the Desert Fathers how that truth can transform each passing day. **David Torkington's blogs, books, lectures and podcasts can be found at <https://www.davidtorkington.com>**

David Torkington reads from *The Hermit*



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

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What the Desert Fathers learned and what St Francis practised so perfectly was that mere waiting on God is worthless unless that time is filled by doing all we can do to receive the grace to love our neighbour as ourselves.



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



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Outstanding report for proud South Shields Catholic primary

A “happy” primary school in South Shields has been rated ‘Outstanding’ by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI).

St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was inspected by the CSI in June.

Lead inspector Elaine White said in her report: “The quality of relationships at all levels is outstanding and contributes to this being a happy school where Gospel values are at the centre of school life.”

Ms White added: “A powerful sense of community runs through school. Pastoral care and nurture of all pupils are a high priority. The love and care demonstrated for pupils is evidenced through voluntary lunchtime mindfulness sessions, which support wellbeing, are anchored in spirituality, and are linked to Gospel teachings.

“This high level of pastoral care is appreciated by parents. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about school and very supportive of its work.”

The report continued saying that “all staff are excellent role models”, “teachers’ high level of subject knowledge leads to pupils demonstrating very good progress in religious education lessons” and “leaders are highly ambitious for St Gregory's”.



Pupils at the school are “well-engaged and highly articulate about previous and current learning”, “talk confidently” and display “outstanding religious literacy which begins in reception class and continues to develop through to Year 6”.

Prayer and liturgy are the

“heartbeat of this school community” with the rhythm of the school day built around regular prayer.”

The findings were enthusiastically endorsed by the parents, with one commenting: “St Gregory's is a wonderful school where children are taught to value themselves.”

Headteacher Alison Dunne said: “We welcome the positive outcome of our recent CSI inspection, as we believe it reaffirms our school's mission and all the wonderful work that goes on in school.

“This really does highlight the dedication of our whole school community.”

Papal honour for nursing home volunteer



Bishop John Sherrington, the auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, presented Jacquie Scott with the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal at St Thomas More Catholic Church Eastcote Middlesex on 4th July.

The Mass was led by Bishop John, Fr Martin Plunkett, parish priest, and Fr John Deehan, parish priest of Our Lady Help of Christians in Kentish Town. Fr John is also chairman of St Vincent's Nursing Home and former parish priest at St Thomas More.

Fr John Deehan, who nominated Jacquie for the medal, wished to reflect the dedication and determination in faith to support the redevelopment of St Vincent's, which has been on the site in Pinner since 1912. Jacquie has worked as a volunteer for over 24 years.

The current establishment, which is celebrating 17 years this month, is a Catholic residential nursing home reflecting the spiritual and pastoral care of the Catholic faith, with pro-life values.

The Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal is awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for service to the Catholic Church.

• Jacquie is pictured right with the three clerics.

Service to the poor at heart of Matins homily

On 2nd July, the new Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Patricia McAllister was welcomed to Matins at Westminster Abbey by Fr Michael Jarmulowicz, parish priest at Harrow Road and Paddington, who will serve as the new Lord Mayor's Chaplain. Fr Michael delivered the homily.

Patricia, a parishioner at Harrow Road, has been a councillor since 2009, representing Queen's Park Ward, one of the most densely populated parts of Westminster. As councillor, she advocates on behalf of her residents, represents the local community, and facilitates community cohesion, notably helping set up the North Paddington food bank.

In his homily, Fr Michael spoke about this service, and in particular the charities which the Lord Mayor has chosen to support this year, the Passage and the Carers Network. The work these charities do, he said, "is a true example of Jesus' command to 'take up your cross and follow me.' What does that mean? It is not just passively accepting sufferings, but actively, like Simon of Cyrene, taking up the burdens of another to help them."



Councillor Patricia McAllister was welcomed to Matins by Fr Michael Jarmulowicz

Picture: Westminster Abbey/ Picture Partnership

Turning his attention to the Gospel reading, where Jesus proclaimed the beatitudes, Fr Michael asked what it means to be blessed or happy: 'We get true deep down happiness or true blessedness when we recognise our true selves and therefore our dependence on God.'

"Jesus came into this world to witness to the love of the Father, by

taking our burdens on himself, and we in our turn should give that same witness, and as the last few words state: 'so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

"Let us pray that the City of Westminster will be that 'city built on a hill' giving witness to caring for the poor and vulnerable."



Deacon Tito left moved by 'secret' award of medal

In front of a church filled with family and friends, Deacon Tito Pereira was surprised to be given a Benemerenti medal at his parish, Our Lady of Lourdes in Acton, on Sunday, 2nd July.

The parish priest, Fr Patrick Adusei Poku, had applied for the Benemerenti medal on his behalf, last year, awarded by the Pope to members of the clergy and laity for service to the Church, to recognise Deacon Tito's service of over 35

years to the parish and as a deacon since 2007.

Fr Patrick compiled a 'secret' dossier of Deacon Tito's years of service, during which he has celebrated many baptisms and marriages for parishioners, as well as supporting the community.

Deacon Tito was visibly moved by the award, accepting it during a standing ovation from parishioners as his wife pinned the Benemerenti medal on him.



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AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Fr Dominic so grateful as he marks 40 years of Ordination

Con McHugh

On Monday, 3rd July, Fr Dominic Kavanagh celebrated his 40th Anniversary of Ordination with a Mass at St Augustine's, Solihull. He has been at the church for almost 18 years and is clearly very much appreciated – as could be seen by the full congregation on the day.

Fr Michael White and Canon Tom Farrell, two of his best friends, will also be celebrating their 40th Anniversary over the next couple of weeks – a total of over 120 years service to the Church.

In the Mass booklet, Fr Dominic wrote: "This celebration of my 40th Jubilee year of Ordination gives me the opportunity to express my thanks to our good Lord for all the untold Blessings I have received from Him, most of which have come on "two feet."

"I wish to thank my family, my brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews and their children; my only surviving aunt, Imelda, and my cousins, my friends in the priesthood and the diaconate, and

the Communities of Religious Sisters whom I have come to know; my parishioners whom I have come to love and respect, including those from the previous parishes in which I have served.

"You have all helped to form me and your faith and love have greatly encouraged me.

"I thank too those of you from the neighbouring Christian churches and from other faith communities for your example and friendship.

"I reflect with gratitude on the teachers of Sacred Heart primary school in Coventry where the seed of my vocation was first sown; and where I was prepared for the Sacraments. The staff of Cotton College where I spent my secondary education, priests and lay teachers, were so totally dedicated to forming and educating us in the Christian way of life.

"The staff of Oscott College where I spent six years in seminary formation were hued from the same rock as my teachers at Cotton – and their example remains inscribed in my heart.



"I am so grateful to God for being a priest in the Birmingham Archdiocese. The fraternal love and support; the camaraderie, the example of so many priests and deacons who day in and day out serve the Lord with courage and constancy is a living witness for me of the abiding friendship of Christ.

"I am so thankful to have been appointed to Saint Augustine's, to this beautiful Church, in its unique

position at the beginning of the High Street and I look back with such gratitude for all the Lord's blessings during these past years.

"I thank each and everyone of you for your prayerful support and good example. I am confident that with your support I may continue to have the heart of a shepherd after the example of Jesus, our good shepherd, and that our Lord will continue to bring to completion the

work He has begun in me.'

During the Mass, after Communion, a presentation was made by Madeline Coburn. She thanked Fr Dominic on behalf of the parish, and presented him with a Papal Blessing from Pope Francis (see picture above).

After Mass, refreshments were available in the parish hall and the garden where it was possible to thank Fr Dominic in person.



Super snappers receive their Knights' prizes

A brother and sister combination from Our Lady Star of the Sea (OLSS) church, Lowestoft, have been named as the winners of the Knights of St Columba Easter photographic competition.

Noela da Costa, 13, won the Easter Altar backdrop (OLSS) council, province and national certificates category, while her younger brother, Venancio da Costa (9) won the Easter Altar (OLSS) at council and Province level. Both received certificates and cash prizes. Pictured presenting them with their awards are Knights (from the left) Bro George Slaughter [Grand Knight Lowestoft Council], Bro Christopher Brooks [Past Provincial Grand Knight East Anglia Province] and Bro Jason Wickard [Provincial Grand Knight East Anglia Province].

Reading rewarded at Saint Paul's

A group of dedicated readers from Saint Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester were rewarded for their positive attitude to reading by being invited to a Pizza Party in the school library.

The results this term were:

The winning classes were Mrs Evan's Year 7 (7U), who read 1,764,562 words, and her Year 8 (8T)s, who read 3,865,425 words; while in Year 9 Miss Fannon's 9U read 3,683, 874 words. Miss Lewis's 9T read 2,023,051 words to be awarded second place, and the New Horizons winning class (9NH) read 102,815 words.

Ms Irena Savova, the school Librarian, explained: "We are very keen to encourage reading and the joy of books at Saint Paul's; we have some extremely avid readers. Rewards like the Pizza Party recognise the pupils' dedication and interest and have a very positive effect."

Eco-champions fly the flag for school at Caritas conference

Linda Guilding from the parish of Lymington, Brockenhurst and Milford shares news from Our Lady & St Joseph primary school, Lymington, which recently took part in the Caritas Schools conference.

A very big well done to Emilia and Louis in Year 5, who represented Our Lady & St Joseph at the very first CARITAS Catholic Schools Conference.

The conference took place online, and Catholic schools from all over Hampshire and Dorset attended,

including our sister school, Holy Family.

Emilia and Louis wrote and delivered their own presentation to show the eco journey that OLSJ have been on over the last three years. They created the PowerPoint and script themselves.

They joined other schools in break-out rooms and listened to their ideas and actions that they had taken, in their settings, to look after their environment. It was great to share good practice between the schools and for our pupils to speak to other pupils

about their shared love for the environment and God's creation.

Emilia and Louis are Year 5 Eco Leaders and will take over the Eco Council as School Eco Chairs in Year 6.

In a few weeks time, they will be representing OLSJ in person at a Hampshire Conference with other schools, so this event has served as good practice.

We are very proud of their professionalism and confidence in presenting. Even though they went first, they were not nervous at all. Well done.



Emilia and Louis pictured taking part in the online conference. 'We are very proud of their professionalism and confidence in presenting. Even though they went first, they were not nervous at all. Well done.'

Stonyhurst celebrates another IB success

Stonyhurst is celebrating the class of 2023's stunning International Baccalaureate (IB) results.

The IB is growing in popularity, and looks set to take on more pupils next year. Mrs Alice McNeill, senior deputy head, said: "The IB programme at Stonyhurst continues to go from strength to strength with one of our largest cohorts ever this year.

"These results reflect achievements across a broad spectrum of starting points. We are exceptionally proud of the progress each and every pupil made in each of the IB disciplines at the same time as making the very best of all the wonderful opportunities here at Stonyhurst and making friends for life."

Mrs Debbie Kirkby, director of IB, said: "The entire IB team is so proud of the results achieved by this year's Diploma cohort. Their final scores are a testament to the tremendous, combined efforts of the young people and their teachers; they represent a celebration of achievement for each and every pupil in the cohort."

For the entire cohort, the average IB score this year was 33.4, well above the global average of 30.24. The cohort of 35 pupils was the

largest cohort to date and hence this above-average score shows the quality of teaching across a very broad range of starting points and languages.

The results in English B were exceptional, showing that Stonyhurst continues to be the go-to for exceptional progress in English for non-native speakers. 87 per cent of pupils achieved the prestigious bilingual diploma.

Destinations for IB pupils include St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Warwick, and Exeter in the UK but also ESADE (Spain), LUISS (Italy), Maastricht (Netherlands), St. Glion & Les Roches (Switzerland), ESCP (Paris).

Individual stories give a sense of what these results mean. Caspar achieved an amazing 43/45, which is roughly equal to 5 A*s at A level. He is now looking forward to taking up his place to study medicine in Germany. Pilar achieved 34/45, including achieving a sought-after A grade in her 4,000-word Extended Essay in economics, while Isaac combined his passion for sport, achieving Distinction (DD) in his CTEC Sport Diploma, with IB psychology and business and so receives the IB Career-related Programme certificate.

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The Universe Catholic Weekly's guide to the more leisurely side of life

GARDENING

Thinking ahead: What to plant in an autumn vegetable garden

Knowing what to plant in an autumn vegetable garden will open your eyes to a whole new world and extend your gardening season for many weeks or longer.

While summer is typically considered the season for the classic vegetable garden, the cooler temperatures of autumn find far fewer pest and disease populations to challenge plants (and gardeners). In addition, many edible varieties that would never grow happily in warmer times thrive in cooler and even cold weather of the autumn vegetable garden.

If heat, humidity and bugs, along with constant watering and weeding are just not your thing, then autumn gardening should be pure pleasure to those who are not fans of those ubiquitous conditions of summer gardening.

Most cool season crops will do fine even through frost and some freezing temperatures. But depending on what you grow some level of protection may be necessary when temperatures drop below certain levels.

While all of the following plants can also be grown in late-winter or early-spring, the information below was written to specifically address planting options for late-summer to early-autumn of the most popular cool-season edibles.

Best plants for an autumn vegetable garden

Beets: For an autumn harvest, plant beets 10-12 weeks before first frost. Or look for seedlings already started for help with timing.

Seeds germinate in about 5-days. Beets taste best if you harvest them before they get too large (2"-2.5" is ideal).

Broccoli: Late summer or early September direct seeding is best for timing. Sowing early will allow plenty of time for broccoli to head up. Or go with transplants when available. If you don't want them all ready



at once, consider staggering your sowing times over a few weeks. Cut main head from the plant when crown is still rather tight. Leave remaining plant in the ground and you may get additional smaller side heads later. The sweetest broccoli you will ever eat comes from your own garden when kissed by frost.

Brussels sprouts: This is likely the hardiest plant in your edible garden. Seeds germinate best when soil temperatures are still warm (75-80 degrees) so direct sow seeds now as these plants are not fast growers. You can also buy seedlings if you're getting a later start. Its taste is all the better when several frosts have visited your plants. Another great plant for adding vertical interest to a garden (so be sure to stake these plants).

Cabbage: Direct seed in late summer or autumn. Seeds germinate in about 6 days. The

smaller the heading size, the faster till harvest. A plant that thrives in cool but not cold temperatures, there are many varieties available. Grow your own and experience the pleasure of what fresh sweet cabbage really tastes like. You don't know until you experience the dramatic difference for yourself.

Carrots: Root crops are classic for cool season growing. Carrots seeds germinate in about 7 days but grow slowly. In autumn, sow seeds no later than 10 weeks before the first frost. The seeds are tiny. Sow as evenly as possible but expect to come back after germination to thin out crowded sprouts for proper spacing.

Cauliflower: Similar to broccoli and cabbage but a bit more challenging. Look for young seedlings and set transplants into the garden in late summer or early autumn. Mature heads are sensitive to

frost so for autumn crops sowing after mid-August may not allow ample time for full maturity. It's well worth dedicating a bit of space to this for the chance of experiencing just how good it can be from your own garden.

Garlic: Super easy to grow, sow cloves directly into the soil about 2-inches deep in mid-autumn and enjoy the harvest next summer. If you like garlic, growing the varieties you love is always a plus and couldn't be easier.

Kale, Collards and Mustard: Super foods that are winter hardy. A few plants will fill a garden bed quickly. Sow seeds in late summer or early autumn. Or transplants when available. Also ornamental, these plants are great to cook up on a cold night or toss in a smoothie, especially kale.

Lettuce: Super easy to grow, sow seeds directly into beds or

containers starting about 8 weeks before the first average frost date. Lightly cover with soil. Seeds germinate in about a week. For a faster start, use transplants. With so many varietal options, the ornamental qualities are superb as well. To extend the season, sow a new crop of lettuce seeds or transplants about every two-weeks for a succession of fresh lettuce all through the season.

Onions: Onions grow happily through winter, forming bulbs next spring for a summer harvest. Although not difficult to grow, there's more to know about selecting the right kind of onions for your growing area (short-day or long-day), as well as seeds or sets. Do your homework before you make your purchase to ensure you get the most appropriate selections for your area.

Peas: Sow seeds in late summer to early autumn. Seeds germinate in about 10-14 day (longer when soil temperatures are cooler). Peas are great for adding vertical interest. Just give them something to climb on. Shorter varieties are also available.

Radishes: The fastest growing edible plant in your garden, they can be ready to harvest in less than 30 days from seed. Radishes thrive in the cool soil of autumn. Keep in mind there are over 200 varieties. So if all you know are the small hot ones, give radishes another look for a fast-growing, tasty, storable crop.

Spinach: Sow seeds in early autumn. Seeds germinate in 3-5 days and plants grow well through autumn. Harvest from the outside to allow plants to keep growing from the centre. Although winter hardy, cover with a light layer of straw for extra winter protection and enjoy harvesting into late next spring. What could be better than harvesting some fresh sweet leaves of spinach for a salad or side dish?

HEALTH

Joe Wicks' advice shows there is a fitness regime that's ideal for people with Parkinson's

Aideen Sullivan & Lucy Collins-Stack

Many people associate Parkinson's disease with the physical symptoms it causes – such as tremors, muscle stiffness and balance problems – which can all make everyday activities difficult. But just because Parkinson's makes movement harder, doesn't mean those with the disease should stop moving.

This was highlighted in a recent video posted by British fitness influencer Joe Wicks on his YouTube channel. In the video, Wicks guides viewers through exercises they can do if they have Parkinson's disease – and explains why it's important to keep moving.

There have been several scientific studies exploring the impact of different types of exercise on people with Parkinson's disease.

On the whole, most types of exercise have been shown to have a positive effect on people with Parkinson's – improving quality of life and physical symptoms. Aerobic exercise appears to be particularly beneficial.

One clinical trial, for instance, found that high-intensity exercise may reduce the severity of motor symptoms in people recently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

To conduct their study, researchers split participants into three groups. One group performed a high-intensity treadmill routine, running close to maximum effort. Another performed moderate-intensity exercise, running at a light jog. The last group were given no instructions to perform a treadmill-based exercise regime. The exercise regimes



were performed for 30 minutes between three and four times a week for a period of six months.

At the end of the study, the participants who had performed the high-intensity exercise had less severe motor symptoms compared to the other groups. None of the participants in the study had yet been prescribed medication to manage their symptoms – so the positive effects appear to be solely down to exercise.

Another long-term global study of 2,940 people with Parkinson's found that those who said they consistently exercised for at least 2.5 hours a week (around 20 minutes per day) had a better quality of life compared to those who didn't exercise at all. The greatest benefit was seen in participants with advanced Parkinson's disease.

However, given that all the participants were taking medication to manage their

symptoms at the time of the study, it's difficult to know if exercise alone explained this link.

Maintaining a regular exercise routine may also slow the worsening of Parkinson's symptoms. A study, which looked at 237 people recently diagnosed with Parkinson's, found that those who reported doing moderate exercise 150 minutes a week showed less decline in motor symptoms after six years compared to those who did less exercise and were less active in general.

This was true for many different types of physical activity – including doing household chores – so long as the exercise was regular and sustained throughout the study.

It isn't only high-intensity aerobic exercise that may be beneficial to people with Parkinson's. A large systemic review, which examined 156 randomised clinical trials and

data from 7,939 participants, found that many types of exercise – from swimming to walking – can improve movement and overall quality of life in people with Parkinson's.

The authors also concluded that there was no evidence that one kind of exercise worked better than others.

Research has also shown that regular physical activity may help prevent other Parkinson's symptoms from worsening – such as sleep problems.

While researchers still aren't sure why exercise may improve symptoms for people with Parkinson's, some evidence from laboratory and clinical studies shows that exercise may protect the brain's neurons (the nerve cells which send messages from the brain throughout the body) by releasing a protein in the brain called brain-derived neurotrophic factor.

This is a protein which can promote the survival and regrowth of neurons and is present at higher levels during physical exercise. Levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor have been shown to be lower in people with Parkinson's.

Another protein, called irisin, which is made by muscle cells when we exercise, may also help protect neurons, as shown in cell models of Parkinson's disease.

Tailored workouts

While exercise has many benefits for people with Parkinson's, it should be used as a complement to other treatments, such as medications which help manage symptoms.

It's also important that people with Parkinson's consult their GP when putting together an exercise regime. This is to avoid risk of pain, injury or falls by determining which exercises suit each person.

Exercises which maintain and improve strength and balance are recommended. Pilates, for example, has been shown to benefit balance and overall strength in people with Parkinson's. Yoga can also improve flexibility and overall mental wellbeing in people with Parkinson's, while balance training (such as tai chi or yoga) may prevent falls.

If you're up for something more intense, strength training has been shown to improve slowness of movement. Swimming is also a good option, and may especially be beneficial for those who with joint stiffness or pain.

But even if you're having trouble motivating yourself to exercise, many types of physical activity may be helpful as long as you do them regularly. For example, walking, gardening and household chores (such as cooking, hoovering and dusting) may prevent symptoms worsening and improve quality of life.

And, these activities may be easier to incorporate into your daily routine than a gym workout.

Aideen Sullivan is Professor and Head of Department of Anatomy & Neuroscience, University College Cork

Lucy Collins-Stack is a Senior Post-Doctoral Researcher, University College Cork



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LIFESTYLE

7 wellness expert-backed ways to prepare for a summer break



Summer is the time for exploring new places, spending time outdoors and relaxing in the sun. Whether you are heading to the beach or to the mountains, it is important that you prioritise wellness in ways you can and prepare in advance for a weekend away, keeping your personal health and nutrition in mind.

Bestselling author and podcast host Max Lugavere is sharing his seven steps to prepare for a successful weekend trip that prioritises well-being and incorporates his go-to healthy snack: almonds.

1. Get those ZZZ's

The beginning of a great trip starts the night before. Sleep sets the tone for the day, so make sure to get enough hours, especially if you have a big day ahead. Most adults require on average 7-9 hours each night.

2. Fuel up with a nutrient-dense breakfast

Breakfast is still the most important meal of the day, and a non-negotiable before a day

out and about. Protein is a must. One staple for me are almonds, which contain six grammes of protein and four of fibre per serving, along with 13g of unsaturated fat and one of saturated fat. This makes them a perfect food to amp up Greek yogurt, cottage cheese and other high-protein faves.

3. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate

Don't forget to drink fluids (and eat hydrating foods). My goal is to always replace fluids and electrolytes lost, which varies based on the type of exercise I partake in, the weather and my diet at the time. Listen to your body and keep drinking liquids (without added sugar) and eating water-rich whole fruits and vegetables. When gearing up for a weekend on the go, your water bottle is your best friend.

4. Pack a satiating snack

To maintain sustained energy levels, I grab almonds to snack on. Almonds are a natural, whole food that will keep you full and are low in sugar, so no need to worry about your energy crashing.

5. Get some sun, but don't overdo it

We need some direct sun exposure to create vitamin D, get a nice healthy glow, and even help generate nitric oxide to keep our cardiovascular system healthy. But there's no need to burn, which causes

photoaging. I like to eat foods rich in skin-protecting astaxanthin (such as wild salmon) and antioxidant vitamin E (from almonds, for example). I also always keep a mineral-based sunscreen on hand if I anticipate overexposure.

Trust me, your skin will thank you by the end of the weekend.

6. Any movement is good movement

You don't have to go on a long and steep hike to get the most out of a summer weekend. Walking offers many benefits for your health, so depending on how you're feeling, it's totally okay to choose this low impact and sustainable option, and don't forget to bring your water and a post-workout snack.

7. Bring activities

Whether setting out for a beach day, a hike or sightseeing, I always pack a book, game or other activity. If you have downtime, you'll be so much happier you can initiate in a group activity or pursue a passion, rather than resorting to scrolling on your phone.

Are you ready to incorporate healthy habits into your summer routine and beyond? By utilising Max's tips above, you'll surely be able to have your best summer yet.

Check out almonds.com for more information on how you can kick-start your wellness routine this summer.

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We need some direct sun exposure to create vitamin D, get a nice healthy glow, and even help generate nitric oxide to keep our cardiovascular system healthy. But there's no need to burn, which causes photoaging...

FOOD

Salmon with capers

What could be simpler for a light, tasty summer meal than some fresh salmon fillets, seasoned well and cooked with capers? Garnish with wedges of lemon, and serve with potatoes and salad for a nice, healthy lunch or supper.

Ingredients

4 fillets of salmon
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp capers
1/8 tsp salt
1/8 tsp ground black pepper
4 wedges of lemon

Method

1. Preheat a large heavy frying pan over medium heat for 3 minutes.

2. Coat salmon with olive oil.
3. Place in frying pan, and increase heat to high. Cook for 3 minutes.

4. Sprinkle with capers, salt and pepper. Turn salmon over, and cook for 5 minutes, or until browned. Salmon is done when it flakes easily with a fork.

5. Transfer salmon to individual plates, and garnish with lemon wedges.

Great with new potatoes and salad.



FILMS

It's impossible not to enjoy Tom's latest Mission action romp

In a timely move, the people behind the slick, vibrant espionage thriller *Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One* (Paramount) have added an experimental Artificial Intelligence project run amok to their roster of villains. So if film lovers weren't afraid of AI before seeing the film, they may well be afterward.

In fact, an early scene in which various US intelligence service chiefs – most prominently CIA Director Eugene Kittridge (Henry Czerny) – detail the potential havoc the unleashed AI could wreak begins to sound like a forecast of the apocalypse. But, of course, the real aim here is fun, not fear – and the good news is that this glossy diversion is suitable for a fairly broad audience.

This is the seventh installment in the blockbuster franchise derived from the TV series that first aired in 1966 and that first came to the big screen 30 years later. So by now, neither Tom Cruise's Ethan Hunt nor his duo of closest collaborators, tech whiz Luther Stickell (Ving Rhames) and gadget meister Benji Dunn (Simon Pegg), require much introduction.

This time out, the freelance operatives – who have an on-again, off-again, plausibly deniable partnership with the



Tom Cruise in action: the star's still happy to take the lead on his stunts
Photo: Christian Black, Paramount Pictures and Skydance

US government – are in pursuit of a two-part mechanical key that provides the only means of shutting the AI down and thus stymying its plan to rule the world. Athwart their path on this globetrotting quest stand at least two formidable opponents.

One is notorious black

market arms dealer Alanna Mitsopolis (Vanessa Kirby), aka the White Widow. The other is a mysterious figure, known only as Gabriel (Esai Morales), who seems to have played a pivotal role in Ethan's past.

A duo of adversaries calls for a like number of allies. So Hunt re-establishes his relationship

with ex-MI6 Agent Ilsa Faust (Rebecca Ferguson) while also recruiting the aid of skilled pickpocket and newfound love interest Grace (Hayley Atwell). Despite her chemistry with Ethan, however, sly, free-spirited Grace's true intentions remain doubtful.

Director and co-writer

Christopher McQuarrie's script, penned with Erik Jendresen, makes brief references to serving the greater good, sticking to the truth, recognising the inherent dignity of every human being and placing the welfare of others ahead of your own. But the real agenda here consists, needless to say, of spectacular stunts, hair-raising chases and suave trickery.

Christopher McQuarrie recently told collider.com about preparing for the famous stunts for Tom Cruise in the *Mission: Impossible* films.

"They all have their own risks, and it's not always what you perceive the risk to be," he said.

"There's all of these different factors and variables that you're constantly thinking about that could go wrong outside of all the variables that you've eliminated. The more variables, the scarier the stunt. I think that's kind of, to me, what makes it terrifying is how many different ways Tom could be killed doing the stunt, but they're all knowns. They're all things that you've thought about and can't control."

Yet the mayhem is bloodless and Hunt's Bond-like way with women is mostly kept in the background. So older teens, at least, can be green-lighted to get an eyeful of his latest spectacular adventure.

Slow-burning Lourdes drama has sensitive soul

A pilgrimage to Lourdes provides the framework for the tender drama *The Miracle Club* (Sony Classics). By turns humorous and touching, director Thaddeus O'Sullivan's delicate film will appeal to grown-ups and perhaps mature teens. But it's neither aimed at nor suitable for kids.

In a tough neighbourhood of Dublin in 1967, best friends Lily (Maggie Smith) and Eileen (Kathy Bates) excitedly prepare to journey to the sacred destination in the company of a third friend, Dolly (Agnes O'Casey). Dolly is hoping that the trip will cure the mysterious muteness of her young son, Daniel (Eric D. Smith), while Eileen is secretly worried about a lump on her breast.

The dynamics of their



Laura Linney and Mark O'Halloran star
Photo: Jonathan Hession

expedition are suddenly transformed, however, by the unexpected – and initially unwelcome – return of Chrissie (Laura Linney), a former member of the main duo's social circle who's been absent in America for 40 years. Chrissie's re-

appearance has been prompted by the death of her estranged mother, with whom both Lily and Eileen were close.

The reasons for Chrissie's exile are not immediately made clear, though a connection to the long-ago drowning death of

Lily's son, Declan, is apparent. Despite the fact that Lily and Eileen continue to shun her, Chrissie decides to join the tour to France which is to be presided over by Fr Dermot (Stephen Rea), the wise and sympathetic, if not very forceful, local cleric.

What follows is a sensitive exploration of tragedy and spiritual healing as long-festered emotional wounds are laid bare and the possibilities of reconciliation and renewed relationships examined. Although the confessions of wrongdoing required to restore harmony and peace of mind are interpersonal, rather than sacramental, they are positive examples of moral honesty.

Questions are briefly raised in

the dialogue about the authenticity of the apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous and the miracles attributed to Our Lady of Lourdes, and such scepticism may grate on believers' nerves. They may also wince at the repetition of an all-too-common Irish expletive that at least approximates misuse of the Lord's name.

As for viewers focused on the effectiveness of the tale, as penned by Jimmy Smallhorne, Timothy Prager and Joshua D. Maurer, they may feel it takes too easy a shortcut to forgiveness.

Yet, in the age of the three-hour comic book adaptation, there's something to be said for a modest, character-driven movie that comes full circle in a mere 90 minutes.

Catch it while you can, but the Hadrian bathhouse will be covered up again soon

HISTORY

**Anna
Walas**

Why archaeologists rebury excavations

Hadrian's Wall in Northern England is a popular tourist spot for those interested in British history. Visitors this year will get an extra bonus as they will have the chance to see the Roman bathhouse at Birdoswald before it is reburied by archaeologists.

Birdoswald was a Roman military base on Hadrian's Wall, which was built in the AD120s during the reign of the emperor Hadrian. At the time of its building, it occupied the northern-most reaches of the Roman empire, stretching some 73 miles from east to west.

The bathhouse, which was discovered in 2021, is just outside of the Roman fort and is in an area known as the extramural settlement. These areas are thought to have housed a mixture of families of soldiers, civilians, traders and service providers. They commonly contained houses, communal spaces, workshops, taverns and other facilities you would find in a sprawling military town.

Two years after its discovery, the excavating team has announced they'll be reburying the bathhouse, which might seem odd to many. I've worked on several excavations on Hadrian's Wall and I'm the regional editor for reports on discoveries there. I can tell you that the bathhouse is not the first find to be buried again and won't be the last.

Reburial is a common archaeological practice that happens once a team has found and excavated as much as they had planned to. It will help preserve the site for future archaeologists who might have more modern methods and can study the evidence better or ask new questions.

A destructive process

The excavation at Birdoswald aims to put the occupation of the military forts on Hadrian's Wall into a wider perspective and provide a rare look at the lives of ordinary people living around the wall in Roman times.

The bathhouse is preserved in parts to the height of two metres and contains a heated room known as a hypocaust. This is a system of water supply, which most likely led



The Roman bathhouse at Birdoswald will be reburied to preserve it for the future.

to a water heating system.

Parts of every excavation – for example soil deposited within the bathhouse interior, a Roman floor or contents of a storage pit – are effectively being destroyed when archaeologists dig through them. Once something has been dug out, it cannot be excavated again.

For this reason, archaeologists must meticulously record the excavation, publish its results and preserve what's been dug out and what remains in place – or as archaeologists say, using a Latin phrase, what remains "in situ".

Because of the destructive nature of excavations, archaeologists rarely excavate whole buildings or sites. Instead, a careful excavation strategy is made to target the areas that are likely to yield the most useful information.

At Birdoswald, several areas outside the fort were targeted for excavation, including the bathhouse and the main road leading out of the fort. It's common practice to only dig out half of the features because a sample of recovered material is generally enough to get an idea of the

function of what's being excavated. Also, much of the physical labour of fieldwork is manual, and so takes a lot of time.

Unless a site is threatened with destruction, for example, due to development work or erosion, the dig team leave sites with much of the archaeology pretty much intact. This allows future archaeologists, who might have better methods and techniques, to revisit the site and gain new information from the parts of the site that remain intact.

At Birdoswald, archaeologists return to the same spot several years in a row, each time digging a little deeper than before. In the same way, they excavate only a portion of the bathhouse each year.

To bury, or not to bury?

Excavations stop at the point when all the planned trenches are completed and when specific research questions, usually about the use and dating of a site, have been answered. At Birdoswald, the questions include the use, the significance and the role of the settlement outside the fort.

The archaeologists at the

bathhouse are coming to this point and have decided to cover it back up (known as backfilling) once their work is over.

The most widely reported risk to archaeological heritage is the lack of maintenance and conservation of in situ excavated remains. So, in many countries, including the UK where it is standard practice, backfilling of excavated sites is a condition of excavation permits.

If left open, the condition of sub-surface deposits can deteriorate quickly when exposed to the new conditions above the ground, including changes in temperature, sun exposure and fluctuating humidity levels. Physical damage will also occur, including cracks in stone structures, weathering, later crumbling of parts of the structures and the erosion and slumping of the edges of the trenches and cuts made by archaeologists. Human factors pose dangers too, including looting, metal detecting, vandalism and curious visitors wanting to step into excavations.

Before backfilling the bathhouse, the team will have analysed

different materials, assessing their ability to resist conditions such as high humidity and biological damage, including burrowing animals and plant roots. The mounds of soil that had been dug out will be put back in the order in which they were excavated. This ensures vegetation can return to the site the following summer.

The bathhouse will likely be covered with a layer of clean sand or a plastic sheet to let future archaeologists know when they might be approaching valuable archaeology in situ. Sometimes coins with current dates are added to the fill material to enable identification of the trenches.

The site will be reburied in the next few weeks. However, if you miss your chance to see it, there's a fully reconstructed bathhouse that shows what the Birdoswald bathhouse might have been like at the nearby fort at Wallsend.

Anna Walas is a Honorary Research Fellow and Community Archaeology Liaison Officer, University of Nottingham



Hadrian's Wall is often revealing more of its secrets as the years pass by

SPORT

John William Devine

In 1999, with an eye on the turn of the century, the Norwegian Olympics committee came up with a novel plan: why not expunge ALL Olympics records, and start again, to ensure all lifetime achievement times, weights and distances that may be tainted by drug use were stripped from the record books?

In effect, we start again with a clean slate, and hope that improvements in drug detection would ensure that all future sporting events were run – or jumped, or thrown, or swam – clean.

The idea wasn't taken up, but ever since, despite the great leaps made in exposing drugs cheats in sport, suspicion has been levelled at some sports' stars achievements, with every major sporting games since having at least one event over-shadowed by rumours – or proof – of drug use. The fact remains that it feels like the drugs cheats are one step ahead of the authorities.

But what if we turned the Norwegian idea on its head and instead of trying to enforce a no drug use policy, we embraced a free for all, at which all competitors could use any means they felt necessary to beat their opponents?

John William Devine takes up the story...

What would sport be like if performance-enhancing drugs were allowed? How fast could the fastest athletes run? How high could they jump? How heavy could they lift? The Enhanced Games seeks to answer these questions by removing all restrictions on doping.

In lifting the ban on performance-enhancing drugs, the Enhanced Games challenges a core tenet of modern sports ethics – that sport should be doping-free.

When the first Enhanced Games takes place in December 2024, athletes in its five categories of competition – track and field, swimming, weightlifting, gymnastics, and combat sports – will be allowed to ingest whatever substance they wish to improve their performance.

There will be no tests, no bans, no limits. For some, including the games' founder Aron D'Souza, the Enhanced Games is the next step in sport's evolution, but for others, it is a moral stain on the sporting landscape.

Advocates of "enhanced sport" contend that permitting athletes to use whatever drugs they choose will allow sport to test the limits of human potential, to respect athletes' bodily autonomy, and to escape the unending cycle of cheating scandals generated by a failing anti-doping system.



Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson leaves rivals Carl Lewis, Linford Christie and Calvin Smith in his wake as he storms to victory in the 100 metres at the Seoul Olympics in 1988. Johnson was subsequently disqualified after a test revealed he had used performance-enhancing drugs, and Lewis took the title, followed by Christie

Faster, higher, stronger – and the best cheater: giving drugs a green light

However, it is far from clear that enhanced sport will open new horizons of sports performance, support athlete autonomy, or promote fair competition.

Peak performance?

Anti-doping rules limit the substances that athletes can use to reach peak performance. Anabolic steroids can help weightlifters to lift heavier and erythropoietin can help distance runners to run faster. So the prohibition of these substances appears to place a ceiling on the pursuit of sporting achievement.

Athletic excellence is not, however, reducible to outcomes.

A sprinter who runs with a tailwind, a marathon runner who rides the subway, or a high jumper who uses a trampoline are not better placed to explore the limits of human potential in their respective sports.

In each case, an extraneous aid (that is, the tailwind, subway and trampoline) assists the athlete to reach the desired outcome more efficiently but without demonstrating any further athletic skill or ability. These supposed "enhancements" obscure rather than cultivate athletic excellence.

The use of performance-

enhancing drugs may, in a range of cases, more closely resemble running with a tailwind than mastering a new athletic skill.

In evaluating any sports performance, the outcome cannot be detached from the means of its achievement. More work needs to be done by philosophers and sport scientists to determine when, if ever, drug-assisted performance truly extends the limits of human performance, as envisaged by the organisers of the Enhanced Games.

Furthermore, sports are designed to test a specific cluster of skills and capacities, including physical, psychological, tactical and technical abilities. Performance-enhancing drugs elevate the importance of certain physical attributes, such as strength and stamina.

Lifting the ban on drugs would alter the nature of sports by increasing the significance of this sub-set of physical attributes at the expense of other physical attributes, such as coordination and agility, as well as non-physical attributes such as strategic skill, mental resilience, and technical proficiency.

A second argument advanced by advocates of the Enhanced Games is that lifting the ban affords athletes more extensive control over their bodies. "My body, my

choice," as D'Souza, puts it. Allowing athletes to use whatever substances they wish better respects their autonomy – so the argument goes.

However, lifting the doping ban would allow – perhaps even incentivise – athletes to ingest dangerous or untested drugs. Supporters of enhanced sport suggest that this presents no moral concern, provided that athletes give free and informed consent.

Even charitably assuming that such consent eliminates any moral concern, the removal of the ban will expose unwilling and uninformed athletes to pressure from coaches, parents, sponsors and governments to use dangerous and experimental drugs that could pose a serious risk to their health. Lifting the ban on doping invites the proliferation of coerced doping.

Time to abandon a failed system?

The Enhanced Games may find reluctant support from those who oppose the use of performance-enhancing drugs in principle but have become disillusioned by the failure in practice of the World Anti-Doping Agency and national anti-doping agencies to contain the problem.

If sport is replete with cheating

by doping and attempts to address this problem impose. If sport is replete with cheating by doping and attempts to address this problem impose burdensome bureaucratic and testing obligations on athletes, perhaps the best solution is to lift the ban, both to close off this avenue for cheating and to remove the burdens of anti-doping on athletes.

However, lifting the doping ban would grant further competitive advantage to athletes who represent economic superpowers such as the US and China. These governments could invest huge sums into drug research and development for the benefit of their athletes. They could provide expert medical supervision, not available to athletes from less wealthy states, to ensure that drugs are used in ways that minimise harm and maximise their effect.

In a sporting world in which inequality of opportunity is already rampant, the removal of the doping ban would only deepen an existing moral failing.

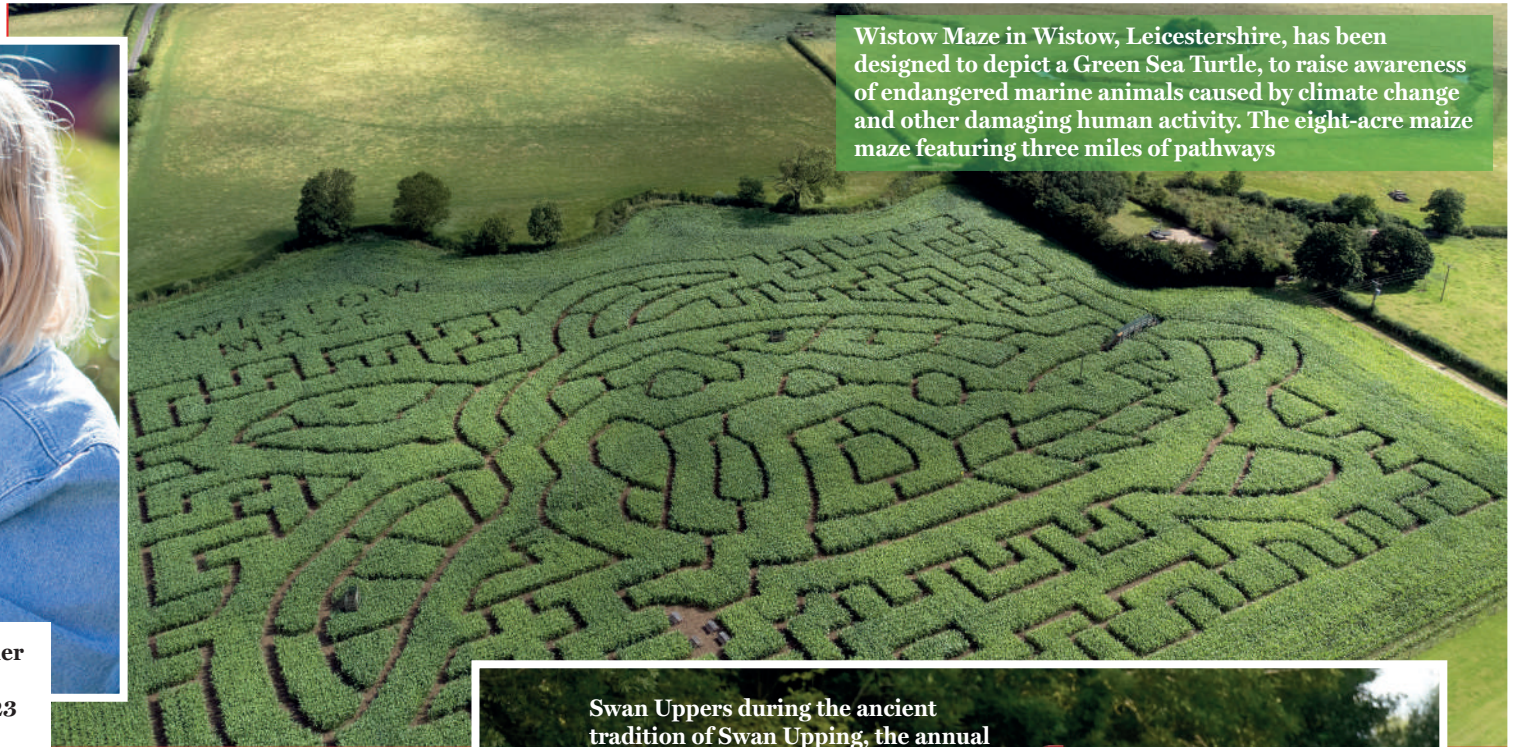
Recent doping scandals and persistent rumours that doping remains prevalent among elite athletes provide reason for pessimism about the prospect of doping-free sport, but lifting the ban is not the answer. Doping is a problem that needs to be managed, not side-stepped. Competitions that allow it will increase the risk to athletes' health, render competition even more unfair and threaten to undermine the fundamental purpose of sport.

John William Devine is a Senior Lecturer in Ethics, Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Swansea University

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



Genevieve Moss from Derbyshire, with her pet cat Zebby, who has been named Cats Protection's National Cat of the Year 2023 in recognition of the way he supports Ms Moss, who is deaf. Zebby alerts his owner to sounds around the house.



Wistow Maze in Wistow, Leicestershire, has been designed to depict a Green Sea Turtle, to raise awareness of endangered marine animals caused by climate change and other damaging human activity. The eight-acre maize maze featuring three miles of pathways



Swan Uppers during the ancient tradition of Swan Upping, the annual census of the swan population on the River Thames, the first census of King Charles III's reign.

Sotheby's is auctioning off one of Diana, Princess of Wales' iconic items of clothing. The 'black sheep' jumper is part of the Fashion Icons sale in New York and is expected to sell for between £40-70,000



Above, a man cools off in a fountain in Turin, Italy, as the Cerberus heatwave took temperatures across southern Europe to new records



Chiara, aged 2, views works from the fifth annual Young Artists' Summer Show at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, which opened to the public in the Clore Learning Centre and online on Tuesday. The show displays a selection of works by young artists aged 4-19, chosen by a panel of judges including Royal Academicians and RA Schools students.



Left, New Chief Yeoman Warder Rob Fuller (left) and Yeoman gaoler Clive Towell on their first day in post at the Tower of London.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday, 23rd July, 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19;
 Responsorial; Psalm: Psalms 86: 5-6, 9-10, 15-16
 Second Reading: Romans 8: 26-27
 Alleluia: Matthew 11: 25
 Gospel: Matthew 13: 24-43

Monday, 24th July: Sharbel Makhlof, Priest. First Reading:

Exodus 14: 5-18
 Responsorial Psalm: Exodus 15: 1bc-2, 3-4, 5-6
 Alleluia: Psalms 95: 8
 Gospel: Matthew 12: 38-42

Tuesday, 25th July: James, Apostle Feast

First Reading: Second Corinthians 4: 7-15
 Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 126: 1bc-2ab, 2cd-3, 4-5, 6
 Alleluia: John 15: 16
 Gospel: Matthew 20: 20-28

Wednesday, 26th July: Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Virgin Mary Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Exodus 16: 1-5, 9-15

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 78: 18-19, 23-24, 25-26, 27-28
 Gospel: Matthew 13: 1-9

Thursday, 27th July: First

Reading: Exodus 19: 1-2, 9-11, 16-20b
 Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56
 Alleluia: Matthew 11: 25
 Gospel: Matthew 13: 10-17

Friday, 28th July: Friday Ordinary Weekday

First Reading: Exodus 20: 1-17
 Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 19: 8, 9, 10, 11
 Alleluia: Luke 8: 15
 Gospel: Matthew 13: 18-23

Saturday, 29th July: Martha, Disciple of the Lord Obligatory Memorial

First Reading: Exodus 24: 3-8
 Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 50: 1b-2, 5-6, 14-15
 Alleluia: John 8: 12
 Gospel: John 11: 19-27 or Luke 10: 38-42

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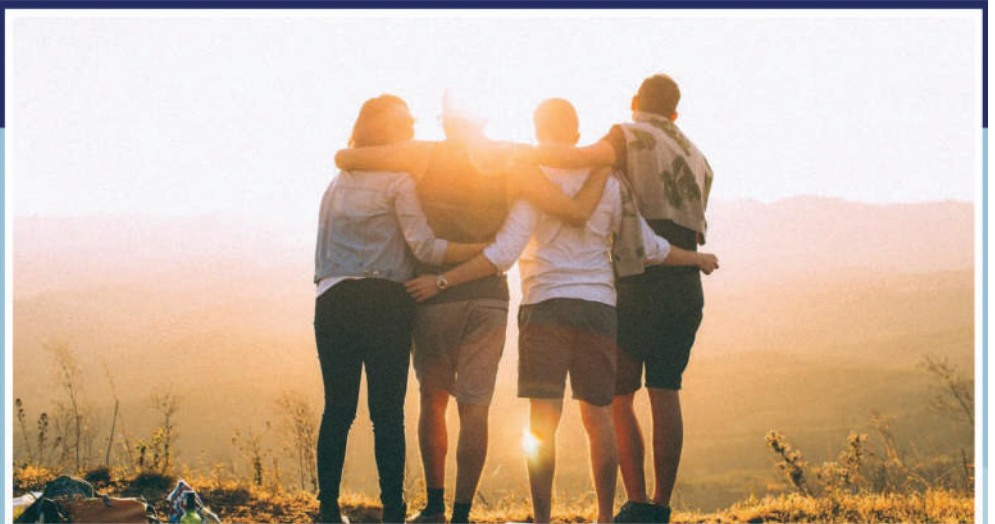
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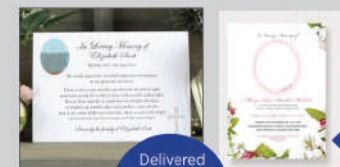
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