

So much
bravery, so
much horror:
how the
Church sees
Ukraine,
one year on
– pg 16–17

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Putin: You must stop this absurd and cruel war

The shattered remains
of an Orthodox church
after Russia's attack
on Bohorodychne, in
the Donetsk region of
Ukraine.

Photo: Yevhen Titov,
Reuters

One year on from the
invasion of Ukraine,
Church leaders ask if
God 'can ever forgive
so many crimes and
so much violence'

Putin's suspension of nuclear treaty is 'move in the wrong direction' – Vatican

Russia's decision to suspend its participation in a nuclear arms treaty with the United States weakens structures promoting global security in the nuclear age, a senior Vatican official said.

"Sadly, I think this is a move in the wrong direction in terms of peace and the security of the world," Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, said.

The Liverpooldian added: "The Holy See has been working on nuclear issues for many years now, and we regret the dismantlement of the nuclear architecture built in terms of containment of nuclear arms and testing, and this is just another step."

Putin made the announcement to suspend its participation in the New START treaty with the United States at the end of his state of the nation address on Tuesday, just three days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The treaty, signed in 2010, restricted the world's two largest nuclear-armed superpowers to a maximum of 1,550

Archbishop Gallagher:

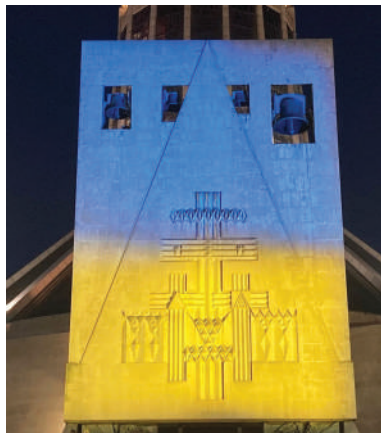
"The pope's ideal concept of a trip would be to bring the same message of peace to both Kyiv and to Moscow..."



deployed nuclear warheads – still more than enough to destroy all of Earth's major cities – and provided for a series of mutual onsite inspections.

As the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine approached, Archbishop Gallagher told the media that despite numerous invitations from Church leaders and civil authorities, the Holy See is not currently discussing a papal trip to Ukraine.

The latest invitation came from a delegation of Ukrainian parliamentarians who met with Archbishop Gallagher on 21st February, and attended



Liverpool's cathedral lit up in the colours of Ukraine to mark the first anniversary of the war

the pope's audience the day after.

The pope believes that "the conditions have to be right" for a trip to Ukraine to take place, Archbishop Gallagher said. "He doesn't want to go somewhere where there will be a truce for a number of hours" only for violence and death to continue upon his departure.

The pope's "ideal concept of a trip would be to bring the same message of peace to both Kyiv and to Moscow," the archbishop said. He recognised that the pope's desire to travel to Russia is difficult for Ukrainians to understand but said that the pope must adhere to his vision of achieving peace.

Pope Francis's overseas trips are focused on bring peace, the archbishop added, adding that a trip to Ukraine would have a prospect of bringing about "some very positive result."

In the meantime, the archbishop said, the Holy See continues to provide political support and humanitarian aid through the local churches.

He recalled his own visit to Lviv and Kyiv in May 2022 when he met with bishops from the Latin- and Eastern-rite Catholic Churches as well as with local and national government officials.

'That which is built on ruins will never be a true victory...'

Andy Drozdzia

On the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Cardinal Nichols and many Catholic leaders have joined Pope Francis in his urgent call for an end to the 'absurd and cruel' war and calling Catholics to 'an unceasing prayer for peace.'

"This first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine is a solemn and distressing moment," the Cardinal told the *Universe*. "The people of Ukraine continue to suffer. We must continue our support, both in practical ways, and in an unceasing prayer for peace."

This week's general audience ended with the pope asking "Can the Lord forgive so many crimes and so much violence? He is the God of peace," adding that 24th February marks "one year since the invasion of Ukraine, a year since this absurd and cruel war – a sad anniversary."

"The record of deaths, injuries, refugees and displaced people, destruction and economic and social damage speaks for itself," he said.

At every general audience and public recitation of the Angelus prayer for the past year, Pope Francis has asked people to join him in praying for peace. With the anniversary of Russia's invasion just two days away, the pope's appeal was even more intense, asking, "has everything possible been done to stop the war?", suggesting that he believes it has not.

He made an impassioned appeal for everyone "to commit themselves to ending the conflict, to starting



peace negotiations," he said.

"That which is built on ruins will never be a true victory."

But any peace must be fair to Ukraine and not at any price, said Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London. "Evil must not prevail," he said. "We continue to pray for a just and lasting peace for Ukraine. By divine grace and with the assistance of all people of good will, Russia's openly stated goal to destroy

Ukrainian statehood and 'resolve the Ukrainian question once and for all' must end in failure."

Bishop Nowakowski said this week's surprise visit to Kyiv by President Joe Biden was a telling statement of Western solidarity with Ukraine. "Joe Biden's visit shows that the world hasn't forgotten about Ukraine and that the world is standing with Ukraine in this horrific war," he said. "It is a great sign of hope for all the people in Ukraine affected by the war."

ACN praises Church response to war

UK Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN UK) has praised the response of the Churches during the fighting in Ukraine, saying it has been "has been absolutely sacrificial, with priests, Sisters, Brothers and lay workers doing all they can to support those whose lives have been utterly devastated."

Dr Caroline Hull of ACN UK said it had supported 292 vital projects in Ukraine, at a cost of nearly £8.5 million, since the Russian invasion. ACN was one of the first international bodies to provide assistance to civilians, with a large part of its aid carried out by Eastern Catholic and Roman Catholic dioceses.

ACN has provided support for thousands of internally displaced persons, as well as emergency subsistence aid for over 7,000 priests, religious and key lay workers who remained in their dioceses throughout the fighting, sometimes at personal risk, to help to those affected by the war.

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UK sees weekend prayers for peace

Andy Drozdziak

Prayers services and calls for peace and an end to the war are taking place across the country this weekend to mark the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022.

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and Liverpool Cathedral are holding a joint afternoon vigil today (Friday, 24th February) at both venues. Speakers are gathered from various faiths, as well as a choir of Ukrainian singers and Evensong sung by Liverpool Cathedral Choir.

Canon Tony O'Brien, Dean of the Metropolitan Cathedral, said: "As a cathedral and diocese we have close links with the Ukrainian community here on Merseyside and strong links with a Catholic diocese in Ukraine. We pray for an end to the conflict, for peace and for a just settlement."

Rev Dr Taras Khomych from the Ukrainian Catholic Parish said: "This vigil is an expression of our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, but also the fundamental values of our civilisation such as freedom and human dignity against the attacks of a ruthless authoritarian regime."

"We will pray for all those who have sacrificed their lives in a struggle against this vicious aggression, as well as for the rule of justice and lasting



A child hangs on to her mother as Ukrainian soldiers help other refugees flee fighting in eastern Ukraine at the start of the war. Over 8 million Ukrainians have left the country since fighting began

peace in Ukraine and around the world."

Friday morning saw one of the first prayer services for peace in Ukraine at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral

of the Holy Family in Exile in London. The Ukrainian Church in Coventry held another, followed by an evening candle-lit Vigil for Ukraine in Coventry Cathedral Ruins.

The war's civilian casualties were poignantly remembered, estimated at 18,955 by the UN: 7,199 killed and 11,756 injured. "We pray and hope for a quick end to this unnecessary

war, and for a return to peace and the ability of people to live normal lives, in peace, safety and freedom," participants said.

A 'Prayer Vigil for Peace in Ukraine' also took place at Bradford Cathedral, whilst Exeter Quakers organised an outdoor candlelit vigil in the town centre.

In Scotland, St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh is hosting an ecumenical service on Friday evening with Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, the Catholic Ukrainian Eparch in the UK. Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews and Edinburgh will also pray with Bishop Mark Strange of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the Church of Scotland.

Pax Christi England and Wales and Justice and Peace groups will join the National Demonstration 'Stop the War in Ukraine – Peace Talks Now!' in London on Saturday, when they will campaign for peace negotiations. The organisers warned of the dangers of avoiding 'negotiation.'

"This war of attrition will only escalate and possibly spread if it continues, in the absence of negotiation. The danger of escalation, possibly nuclear escalation, is very real and this is why we demand peace talks now," they said.



Mykola Melenets, 37, comforts his mother, Nina Melenets, 62, as the coffin of his brother and her son, Oleksandr Melenets, 44, is lowered into a grave in the village of Kamyanka, near Izium

Lent message remembers Ukraine's suffering

Irish archbishop Eamon Martin has used his message for Lent to highlight "the suffering people of Ukraine" and for acts of "prayer, charity and fasting" to be "dedicated to the plight of refugees."

Archbishop Martin said: "Ireland's hearts and prayers continue go out to the suffering people of Ukraine. During Lent let our acts of prayer, charity and fasting, each day, be dedicated to the plight of refugees, and for a global peaceful environment."

He also urged Catholics to "work for peace."

"We must always work for peace, pray for peace and make sacrifices for peace. All of us have the capacity to build peace by our words, our actions and our attitudes to others," he

said, adding that the war in Ukraine is only one of many such examples of death and suffering.

"Over the last year people around the world have experienced death and suffering on a large scale caused by wars and natural disasters," he said.

He urged Catholics to pray for world peace and to use the Lenten resources provided by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

"At this time, when homes throughout the country receive their annual Lenten Trócaire box, I encourage families to pray together in a special way, and to fast, for world peace, and for the alleviation of the suffering of refugee. I also invite everyone to follow our daily #LivingLent digital media initiative to grow closer to God."

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In brief

Survey finds cost of living misery

One-in-four households regularly run out of money, a group of charities have said. The Together Through This Crisis initiative said that nearly 40 per cent of people end the month with no money left, while 24 per cent run out of money for essentials either most months or most days.

Even within the 10 most affluent constituencies in the UK, 19 per cent said they found themselves unable to pay for food or bills by the end of most months.

The initiative's members are Save the Children, Shelter, Turn2us, Little Village and 38 Degrees.

Questions mount over Bulley probe

Pressure is growing for an independent inquiry into Lancashire Police's handling of Nicola Bulley's disappearance. Speaking to Sky News, a former Scotland Yard detective said: "The bottom line is Lancashire Police and all their experts and all their doctrines did not find Nicola. Two people walking their dogs along a river bank did."

In a statement, Bulley's family said she was the "centre of their world" but criticised the media circus that had developed.

Relatives call for firearms reform

There have been calls for a "radical reform" of the firearms licensing system after an inquest found "catastrophic" failings allowed the Plymouth gunman, Jake Davison, to legally possess a shotgun that he used to kill five people.

Relatives of his victims said Davison had been given a "licence to kill" by Devon and Cornwall police. They added that "warning signs were ignored and a licence to kill was granted". Davison killed his mother and four other people, including a girl aged three, with a shotgun in August 2021.

Grammar schools' inequality concern

The BBC has found that a quarter of England's state grammar schools still let in hardly any poorer children, despite efforts to improve admissions procedures.

112 out of 160 grammar schools now have quotas or give high priority to disadvantaged children, but the "impact is patchy", said the report.

A leading academic said some grammar schools appear to have made only a "token effort". Governments began to phase out grammar schools in the 1960s amid concerns over inequality.

Charity chief reveals trauma will never leave war victims

Andy Drozdzia

An English charity leader has urged British Catholics to "not lose sight of what's happening" in Ukraine on the war's first anniversary, and praised the international Catholic response to the war-despite the desperate effects of trauma he sees.

Matthew Carter, Group CEO of Depaul International, told the *Universe*: "68 per cent of Ukrainians are suffering with trauma-it's terrifying. We have to stick with this. Don't lose sight of what's happening."

Depaul International provides emergency aid for refugees – including shelter, food and clothes – while the charity gives longer-term assistance such as therapy services and home repairs.

Thanks to donations, the charity has been able to scale up from helping 8,500 people a year to a full humanitarian response helping 30,000 people a day across the hardest-hit areas of Kharkiv, Odesa, Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Uzhhorod and Zaporizhia.

Led by local people, Depaul Ukraine is providing emergency shelter, food and accommodation services which are vital first steps in regaining stability. Therapists offer psychosocial support on site and via mobile outreach workers in Kharkiv and Odesa. Psychologists are supporting hundreds of children between the ages of 4-16 by running therapy sessions where they get to play and be creative.



"Our ethos is to work with the integrity of the individual. We are able to bring a special quality to this work. Allowing children to be children is basically what we're about," Mr Carter said.

CEO of Depaul Ukraine Father Vitaliy Novak explained the content of some of the sessions to help traumatised children.

"During our sessions, we create a normal environment where they can smile, play and grow," he said.

"We see happy children again starting to play, being naughty, but this is

a good sign, we are happy, as it shows they are normal children. This is the generation who will be rebuilding Ukraine, we need to support children for their sake, and also for the sake of the country."

Depaul helped over 3,500 households to survive the bitterly cold winter by rehabilitating bomb shelters and helping people to repair their homes.

When asked whether the response from the International Catholic community had been positive, Mr Carter used the words 'very much so.'

"We're receiving support from

CAFOD and they work with us. We have just done a joint visit with CAFOD. We're a relatively small organisation but we have grown and received support from SCIAF in Scotland. We've had great support from Australia, Ireland, the US. One of our greatest strengths is that we are working together with the international Catholic community," he said.

CAFOD is a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which has become the biggest charity donor raising more than £400 million since its launch in March 2022.

Mr Carter was also keen to praise the 'incredible team in Ukraine' which has 'stepped up to provide lifesaving aid to thousands of people, day-in-day-out.'

"Their work has never been more important," he said, adding a plea for prayer and any financial support.

"It's not going to go away tomorrow. Money doesn't go on forever-it is running out. The generosity of the individual is so critical," he said.

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Government has 'double standards' in its treatment of refugees fleeing conflict

Andy Drozdzia

Catholic justice leaders have criticised Government "double standards" in response to Ukrainian refugees and claimed the only reason Ukraine refugees were ever welcomed was society's "deeply compassionate" response.

On the first anniversary of the Ukraine war, JRS UK's Dr Sophie Cartwright praised the "compassion, welcome, and solidarity towards Ukrainians" shown by communities across the UK, but pointed out that at the same time, the Government was preparing to pass its Nationality and Borders Bill which sought to punish refugees for travelling without prior authorisation.

On Ukraine "the Government refused to follow EU countries in waiving visas for Ukrainians seeking sanctuary, and many struggled to get to the UK as a result.

"Then it introduced its scheme to send refugees to Rwanda."

Catholic political commentator Joshua Nichol pointed to Rishi Sunak's pledge to "stop the boats" and rhetoric used by Home Secretaries Suella Braverman and Priti Patel as evidence



The government's treatment of those fleeing conflict and entering the country via Dover (above) has been compared with its handling of Ukrainian refugees (right, at Krakow Station in Poland)



of "double standards."

"It was right that the UK responded with safe routes for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the barbaric Russian invasion. It was right that we opened our homes for Ukrainians who had lost theirs," Mr Nichol told the *Universe*.

"But there are double standards. One of Rishi Sunak's 5 Pledges is 'stop the boats'. How does that run alongside a welcome operation that the Gov-

ernment want to laud as their success?"

Dr Cartwright pointed out that hope is possible – but a 'new approach' by the Government is essential.

"People continue to be displaced by the war, and those who escaped a year ago remain exiled from home," she said. "But another world is possible. And we can play a part in building it. We can stand in solidarity with the

displaced, but that requires a very new approach."

A Government spokesman said: "Since Russia's illegal invasion, the UK has welcomed over 162,000 Ukrainians to safety, demonstrating the extraordinary generosity of the British public."

He added that local authorities "have a legal duty to ensure no families are left without a roof over their heads"

Refugees face an uncertain future as they fear returning

Andy Drozdziak

Ukrainian families face an uncertain future in the UK as the war continues.

A Catholic lady from the North East – who wished to remain anonymous – said that the family she welcomed has settled in well, but that uncertainty remains over their length of stay.

The Ukrainian family, which comprises a child, a mother and grandmother, came to the family in May 2022 through a Government scheme.

“They seemed to settle in remarkably well,” she told the *Universe*.

“We didn’t know what we were going to get,” she said. “The mother of the family is an English teacher, so her English is extremely good.

“She told us how the windows had been blown out in their houses in a Russian attack, but they seemed to take everything they had faced in their stride.

“The problem now is the uncertainty: nobody knows how long they are going to be here – six months, twelve months, who knows.”

She added that, although it was a ‘risk’ inviting the family to stay, the council has been ‘very supportive’. Yet uncertainty remains – the family have a three-year visa, but no one knows what will happen after three years.



Yulyia holds her pet cat in the wreckage of her home on the outskirts of Kyiv. The future is hugely uncertain for all Ukrainians: those left behind and those who have fled to seek sanctuary abroad

The uncertainty extends to concerns that increasing numbers of Ukrainian refugees in the UK are facing homelessness or destitution.

The latest official figures show that 4,295 Ukrainian households have needed assistance from UK councils in the face of the risk of homelessness.

A cross-party coalition of more than 70 MPs and peers said it welcomed the Government’s response to the conflict in 2022 but called for more action “to ensure that refugees could access a safe and secure home and did not have to face homelessness”.

A letter has been sent by the group of politicians to housing and home-

lessness minister Felicity Buchan.

The Local Government Association (LGA) also echoed the call for more housing. LGA chairman James Jamieson said Ukrainians are entering an already “logjammed system where we just do not have enough housing and every council has significant council house waiting lists”.

Russian troops admit war crimes, atrocities

Audio intercepts obtained by The Associated Press of conversations between Russian soldiers in Ukraine and their loved ones have confirmed atrocities and war crimes have been committed

Over 2,000 calls have been intercepted, and reveal a shockingly callous attitude, with soldiers boasting to loved ones of executing prisoners of war and mutilating bodies.

But they also reveal that many soldiers feel they have been misled over the invasion, and how they have resorted to looting and drinking to gain reprieves from the horror of war.

AP verified the calls with the help of the Dossier Centre, an investigative group in London funded by Russian dissident Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

One soldier, called Leonid, said he had joined up for the money but he was now frightened by what he had seen and was ordered to do.

He was also concerned that he had become accustomed to criminal behaviour: as official supplies ran short, so Russian soldiers were forced to steal.

When asked by his mother if he been looting he replies “Of course we are, mom. Are you crazy?”

“We take everything: food, bed linen, pillows. Blankets, forks, spoons, pans.”

He also admits killing civilians “not soldiers, just people, like you are, mum.”

Stella Maris calls for action to evacuate stranded mariners

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic maritime charity Stella Maris is marking the one-year anniversary of Ukraine’s war with Russia by calling on the UN to help evacuate 331 seafarers still trapped in Ukraine on vessels in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

They cannot leave because the Black Sea, along with the Sea of Azov, has been mined, and there is also a risk of an attack by Russian forces.

Stella Maris is one of 32 organisations to urge UN Secretary General António Guterres to evacuate all remaining seafarers and ships. In the letter the organisations underline the urgency of the situation.

“Our seafarers cannot be forgotten. For 12 months now they have been caught up in a crisis far beyond their control. Simply doing their jobs cannot come at the expense of their lives,” they write.

“Action must be taken now. Without our seafarers, movement of the vital grain shipments out of Ukrainian ports would not have been possible. While there are challenges, it must nonetheless be a top priority.”

“We call on the United Nations to address this matter urgently and evacuate all remaining seafarers Stella



Fr Alex and Rostik preparing to ship visit in Odesa port on 24th January (Stella Maris)

Maris port chaplain Fr Alexander Smerechynskyy and assistant chaplain Rostyslav Inzhestoikov, resumed regular ship visits in Odesa at the end of January, having previously been forbidden for months from being allowed to visit ships.

“Rostik and I are delighted to visit ships once again in the port of Odesa,” Fr Alexander said, adding that they were actively working in Ukraine to support seafarers and their families.

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— COMMENT — 'Putin's one-man show simply underlines Russia's isolation'

As we observe the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine, the sight of Vladimir Putin standing alone on a vast stage in Moscow seemed to highlight Russia's isolation more than anything else.

President Putin still seems happy to take full personal ownership of his ill-judged invasion of Ukraine, and shows no sign of backing down or going away.

However, it would be a mistake to imagine he is alone in his delusional justification for the war. The bizarre narrative he has cultivated, of painting Ukraine as an illegitimate neo-Nazi state propped up by Nato aggressors intent on destroying the Motherland, is shared by a surprisingly large number of Russians.

In his address, he invoked the Russian spirit of defiance in the face of an invader, of a people fighting for their existence as a nation. He harked back to World War II. Just like then, they would never give in.

Sadly, he may be right in this assessment, which means the Ukrainians face years of bloody conflict with no obvious end because they will not give up either, and Nato cannot let them be defeated.

As he spoke, President Joe Biden was arriving in Warsaw, where he repeated America's determination to support Ukraine "for as long as it takes".

There are hopes for peace. One avenue suggests Russia's spring offensive will make advances and Putin will then sue for a negotiated settlement from a position of strength; he may even then cede a little ground, to appear magnanimous.

But it is unlikely Kyiv would agree to that. President Zelensky has made clear that the only outcome he would accept is a fully sovereign Ukraine once more, with all lands restored. A bitter stalemate looks likely.

Elsewhere this week, once again Mr Putin sought to play the nuclear card, suspending a landmark arms control treaty in a bid to spook the West. But this bluster merely underscores his weakness.

What was most bizarre about President Putin's speech was that it looked forward to a golden economic future for his nation. The reality is that this war has ruined Russia and it will remain in the economic freezer for some time. The audience applauding him must surely know this by now – and they will also know who is responsible.

Two women blazed a trail on the way up and the way down

POLITICS

Rainbow Murray



Leading two small countries on opposite sides of the planet, Nicola Sturgeon and Jacinda Ardern have both won widespread respect and admiration for their strong, courageous and determined leadership. They are both women who have smashed through glass ceilings to reach the summit.

Sturgeon is the first woman (and longest serving person) to hold the office of First Minister of Scotland. Ardern is the first leader of New Zealand (and second in the world, after Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto) to give birth while in office. They both defended liberal policies and steered their countries through numerous crises with their calm, visible leadership.

But it is perhaps in their exit from office that the parallels are the most striking. Sturgeon's resignation speech had many echoes of Ardern's speech in January announcing her decision to stand down. Both cited the immense personal toll of leadership: long hours, lack of privacy, time away from family, and the human cost. Two women known for their feminism and their candour were willing to acknowledge that it is not possible to fire on all cylinders forever, and once burnout hits, it is time to let someone else have a turn.

It is a running joke that quitting politics "to spend more time with the family" is a euphemism for being forced out for political reasons. For sure, each has faced her own challenges in recent months – Sturgeon is currently embroiled in the controversy surrounding transgender rights in Scotland, while Ardern was facing declining popularity and the prospect of losing the next general election.

But both still commanded the leadership of their party and the respect of their nation, and neither was under any imminent pressure to call it quits. In Sturgeon's case, as she herself pointed out, she has weathered many a political storm. The current one is by no means the greatest challenge she has faced in her nine years as first minister. Indeed, in both cases the announcement came as a surprise. Both leaders chose their own moment to exit, and both chose to quit while they were still winning.

The fact that these exits come as such a shock is, in part, because of the stark contrast with recent examples of men who have attempted to cling onto office even after they had been shown the door. Donald Trump refused to accept the outcome of a democratic election in



the US and stands accused of inciting insurrection in a desperate bid to hold onto power, while in the UK, Boris Johnson faced an unprecedented wave of ministerial resignations before finally accepting the inevitable.

The idea that office is a duty, and that one should serve only as long as it is in the public interest to do so, is a concept lost on too many of our political elites. Seeing two leaders step back as soon as they felt that they were no longer the best person for the job, rather than waiting to be forced out, is a refreshing and inspiring change.

Women in politics

How much of this different approach to politics can be explained by the fact that both Ardern and

Sturgeon are women? My research on women leaders reminds us that we must avoid being quick to resort to gender stereotypes. The qualities of humility and duty are often seen as feminine traits, yet they are certainly not shared by all women, nor are they qualities possessed uniquely by women.

But we do also know that women in public life tend to be judged more harshly than men. The total commitment and devotion to the job that each leader gave throughout her tenure took its toll, but it is harder for women to survive in public life without excelling at their job. It's unlikely that Johnson would have got away with as much if he were a woman.

It is also the case that women politicians around the world face

violence and intimidation for having the audacity to be powerful and opinionated. Sturgeon hinted at this, referencing the growing "brutality" of life as a politician.

She also spoke about how ideas about her have become fixed in the public mind. While this is likely true of her male counterparts, it is an unusual comment to make when explaining a decision to leave office. Women's growing presence in politics has been associated with political renewal – the replacement of the "male, stale and pale" with a new generation of politicians. The desire for renewal has now come full circle: we see women leaders seeking to avoid the staleness of their male predecessors by knowing when to quit.

Sturgeon and Ardern have both been trailblazers for women in politics. They have demonstrated that integrity, compassion and openness are traits that are not only possible but desirable in our political leaders. They have also shown that stereotypically "feminine" traits, and the "masculine" traits more traditionally associated with world leaders, do not have to be mutually exclusive.

But while both women have shown the ambition to reach the summit, and the aggression needed to win political battles, neither leader is defined by these qualities. Instead, they have demonstrated a balanced approach to leadership that many of their counterparts would do well to follow.

Rainbow Murray is a Professor of Politics, Queen Mary University of London



Jacinda Ardern left office before the toll of the job became too much

Scots Labour leader admits concerns over assisted dying

Scotland's Labour leader has said he does not "instinctively support" assisted suicide, as Holyrood approaches a debate on new legislation.

Speaking to *The Scotsman* newspaper, Anas Sarwar said he has been "really struck" by comments against the practice by his colleague Pam Duncan-Glancy, who is disabled.

He added: "I've always been really struck by her saying we need to ensure people are given the assistance to be able to live given so many circumstances people face, particularly those with a disability."

"So I'm yet to be persuaded on the legislation. I don't instinctively support

McArthur insisted it is "a law that's time has come".

If the bill becomes law, it will allow terminally adults in Scotland to access lethal drugs from the state to end their own lives.

Dr Gordon Macdonald, of the campaign group Care Not Killing, which is spearheading opposition to the Bill, said: "Evidence from other countries shows that when assisted suicide or euthanasia are legalised, the safeguards promised are quickly removed and the law is extended to include more and more vulnerable people."

"People will come under pressure from others to end their lives for fear of being a financial or care burden. People with depression won't get the proper psychiatric support they need and palliative care services will continue to be underfunded."

"This is a very dangerous Bill and the proponents of a change in the law have failed to address these concerns or even to engage in a debate about them."

"We need to care for people who are suffering, not encourage them or provide them with a mechanism to end their lives. This is why we champion the extension of high-quality palliative care to all those who need it and better support for their families."

Christian justice charity CARE is urging MSPs "not to legalise assisted suicide, which is profoundly dangerous and unethical."



Pop out to the shops for a blessing

Fr Frankie hands out Ash Wednesday blessings from a 'pop-up' stand in his local shopping centre in Salford. "It is indeed a blessing to see so many come forward to receive ashes," the priest said. "May this season of Lent bring us closer to God. May we allow him to enter our lives, strengthen our faith and fill us with the Holy Spirit."



Anas Sarwar says he does not 'instinctively support' plans for assisted dying

the legislation. I think, again, safeguarding is really, really important on that, but I'm willing to listen to the debate."

On the issue of conscience votes, he said: "I imagine there will be disagreeing views, so we'll have that conversation as that bill comes closer to the floor of Parliament."

Scottish Liberal Democrat MSP Liam McArthur lodged a member's proposal for assisted suicide legislation last year and achieved sufficient support to bring a bill forward. Mr

MSP questions whether other faiths would face Forbes' criticism

Attacks on Kate Forbes' views on same sex marriage and gender legislation have been condemned as 'misogynistic' and 'incredibly disappointing' by Catholic MSPs in Scotland.

Announcing her bid to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as SNP leader, Finance Secretary Forbes said she would have voted against gay marriage in Scotland at the time it was made legal almost a decade ago. She also said she would have "struggled" to support the Scottish Government's Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill.

Her views caused a backlash, with one leading SNP activist dismissing her comments on marriage equality as "completely irresponsible and 'dangerous.'" She was also condemned on social media as a "religious extremist,"

a "loser" and an "unscientific bigot."

Catholic MSP Carol Monaghan said it was "incredibly disappointing" Forbes was being attacked "because of her faith", questioning whether those of different faiths would be treated the same.

"How can we be a truly inclusive society when someone like Kate is told there are some positions that she cannot aspire to because she belongs to a minority faith community?", she asked. "Substitute a different faith into the comments about Kate online and the issue becomes clear: Kate cannot hold this position 'because she is Muslim (or) a Jew'."

"We are entering dark territory here with far too many people failing to recognise this," she said.

Some prominent supporters of her campaign to become leader have withdrawn their backing, including Public Finance Minister Tom Arthur; Minister for Children Clare Haughey; and Health Committee convener Gillian Martin.

Forbes is a member of the Free Church of Scotland and said her faith does not impact her ability to serve as an MSP.

She said she regrets the pain caused by her comments on equal marriage.

She told Times Radio: "I regret enormously the pain or hurt that has been caused because that was neither my intention, and I would seek forgiveness if that is how it's come across."

Caroline Farrow: see page 8

New polling shows strength of support for online age verification checks

Christian justice charity CARE is urging UK Ministers to introduce stronger curbs on pornography, as a survey demonstrates public support for action.

A new survey by People Polling

shows 8 in 10 British adults (78 per cent) think porn sites should have age verification, to prevent access by children. Only five per cent of the public disagrees, and 17 per cent don't know.

The Government has previously committed to age checks on porn sites, but campaigners fear current proposals aren't strong enough.

CARE, which has spearheaded the campaign to protect children

from porn, said Ministers must respond with a range of actions.

A spokeswoman for CARE outlined the urgent need for the Online Safety Bill "to be truly fit for purpose." "This survey chimes with

our own polling, which also found broad public support for age verification measures.

"Concrete age checks can prevent younger children from accessing explicit content."

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Lent and time

Sir John Battle



It's a real conversational cliché among the 'active retired' that you are busier than when you were working in paid employment.

Not being your own boss or on a regular work timetable tends to mean you have to manage demands and daily calls which are difficult to properly programme and control.

It can be like being 'on call' and of course, without a bit of organising discipline, the time simply disappears.

This week, a six-month trial of a four-day week (on one's existing salary) with 61 companies in Britain ended, and was hailed as a success. Most of the companies taking part have agreed to extend the trial or make it permanent. Organised by the Four Day Week Global campaign, 2,900 employees in a range of businesses took part and they have reported better worker satisfaction, improvements in business performance and productivity, and reducing worker sickness rates by two-thirds.

Less stress and an improved work-home life-leisure balance was high in the positive feedback.

Of course, some sectors can work to a four-day setting easier than others and personal service sectors such as carers, nursing, teachers, counsellors, charity and community workers all find that work demands on their time are greatly increasing. Indeed many mothers can't dream of a four-day week!

Yet Lent, commemorating the time when Jesus took 40 days out in the desert, is an annual time for us to reset our own work-life-prayer balance. Few can do a full monastic-style retreat. Yet often our ideal Lenten resolutions are too big to be practically implemented and achieved. To reset our daily balance can be more difficult on our own than we imagine. So while fasting and almsgiving remain at the core of our Lent practice, actually making time 'to press the pause button' each day (and withdraw from mobiles, social media, news and TV) to create space for the soul could work. The Cistercian monk and spiritual writer Fr Basil Pennington, in his work on 'Centering Prayer', helpfully suggests that each day (as well as morning and night-time prayer) "for five minutes or longer listen to the Lord speaking to you through a Bible text and respond to him". Keep at this every day for at least a month.

Finding just five minutes a day this Lent could be a way to reset that work-home-leisure-prayer balance, especially for those of us unable to manage well the daily demands and dreaming of a four-day week.

Attempts to drown out Kate show where the real hate is

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



No sooner had Kate Forbes, Scotland's Finance Minister, declared her intention to stand for leadership of the Scottish National Party, following Nicola Sturgeon's resignation last week, than the media feeding frenzy had begun.

Forbes' 'crime' is not that she is a Christian, but as the media has been keen to highlight, that she is particularly devout!

In today's world any aspiring politician can still just about get away with stating that they were brought up as a Christian or still have a Christian faith, but woe betide anyone who dares to go any further.

Speaking to the BBC's Nick Robinson last year, Forbes, whose parents were both missionaries, made a heartwarming profession of faith that immediately had her marked out as a religious nutter by the liberal establishment.

"To be straight, I believe in the person of Jesus Christ. I believe that he died for me, he saved me and that my calling is to serve and love him and to serve and love my neighbours with all my heart and soul and mind and strength."

Almost immediately questions began arising about whether or not Forbes' would pass the 21st century's Tests Acts, namely, where did she stand on LGBT issues and she was found wanting, having admitted that she would not have voted in favour of same-sex marriage in 2014. In an interview with the *Scotsman*, Forbes said that she would have voted according to her conscience and in line with mainstream teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman.

LGBT activists have predictably raised the roof over this piece of breathtaking honesty. Their anger is not based on Forbes' actual voting record, she was not after all an MSP at the time of the vote, but in her audacity in daring to unashamedly continue to state her beliefs when many other politicians who voted against same-sex marriage have since recanted. Forbes stands as living proof that there are still people who hold fast to Christian values on sex and sexuality, which is why there is a concerted attempt to hound her out of public life.

What the clamour has ignored is that in the same interview, Forbes went on to say that while she would not have voted in favour of same sex marriage, she would have respected



Possibly, because of her winsomeness and because of her left-wing politics, Kate Forbes makes for an uneasy hate figure who is exposing some very ugly prejudice and bigotry.

and defended the democratic choice that was made, adding that she is a servant of democracy and not a dictator. Christ's admonition about whether or not a slave can have two masters comes to mind, but to be fair, Forbes would be unable to repeal the law even if she wanted to. What many people seem to be forgetting is that laws require the support of the electoral chamber and, as Nicola Sturgeon found out, the support of the people, if they are to be able to pass. It is simply unfeasible that a leader of any Western democracy can impose laws or repeal others at will.

Any leader attempting to unpick marriage laws would be committing career suicide. Such a measure would be viewed as deeply unjust (effectively, the state would be seen to be dissolving marriages on a whim) and require such a monumental amount of effort for absolutely no payback, that it would not be seen as worthwhile.

Like it or not, marriage has been redefined in this country – what Christians need to do now is continue to uphold our views on marriage as well as our rights to publicly defend and promote these beliefs to others. Nobody is arguing for the repeal of same-sex marriage, recognising that it would be both unfeasible, and arguably, unjust to arbitrarily deny couples a status that had previously been granted to them.

What has been refreshing about this whole row is the way in which a whole swathe of Scotland's left-leaning or self-identified liberals, who would previously have been frothing about the 'religious right', have in fact been rushing to Forbes'

defence, because Forbes herself is both politically left-wing and, of course, a keen advocate of Scottish independence, and was formerly Nicola Sturgeon's right-hand woman.

Sturgeon was well-aware of Forbes' religious views and yet still chose to appoint her as Finance Minister.

As the furious row about transgender rights has demonstrated, Forbes is far more in touch with Scottish electorate than Sturgeon. One of the reasons Sturgeon's controversial gender reform act was rushed through Holyrood so hastily was because Sturgeon knew that Forbes would resign her position if she was whipped in favour of voting for the bill, therefore Sturgeon was desperate to get it through before Forbes returned from maternity leave, rather than risk losing her.

Forbes' stance on the transgender issue, correctly referring to a transgender identified rapist as a man, demonstrates that she is much more in touch with the Scottish electorate on this issue, than her former boss. Her views on abortion, as one might expect, are no more 'right-wing' than her views on marriage. Christian ethics and morals on these difficult and delicate issues do not fall neatly into the left/right western political axis.

What many commentators are forgetting is that Catholics make up a significant minority of Scotland's population and there are also many Protestants who will have sympathy with Forbes' views. Ironically, Forbes is demonstrating that she is far more tolerant than her detractors, who don't seem able to cope with

someone who dares to hold or express different values.

It was astonishing to see a headline flash up on my phone, over Forbes' views that having children outside of marriage was wrong – a classic case of 'Christian woman has Christian views' shocker.

This was not an issue that Forbes has been canvassing or proselytizing on, she was simply answering a question put to her by an interviewer, desperate to weed out any other problematic views. Forbes doesn't believe it is right to have children outside of marriage, so she got married before she had a baby. Good for her! It doesn't mean she is going to implement policies to force people to follow suit, although encouraging stable family units is clearly no bad thing.

It's tempting to be discouraged by this latest demonstration of an attempt to bar a Christian from political leadership as happened with former Lib Dem leader Tim Farron, but there is reason for cautious optimism. Possibly, because of her winsomeness, and because of her left-wing politics, Kate Forbes makes for an uneasy hate figure who is exposing some very ugly prejudice and bigotry. As one commentator asked, why is it acceptable to derive ideology and doctrine from Karl Marx but not from the Bible?

I wish her all the very best. While I am not sure where I stand and sit on the fence when it comes to the thorny issue of Scottish independence, a win for Kate Forbes would be a win for Christianity in politics, and an encouragement to us all.

Paddy's great day as he meets the King, the boss and his hero

Andy Drozdziak

A pupil at a Wythenshawe Catholic school was left speechless after meeting the King, the Queen, the England football team manager and his Manchester United hero Marcus Rashford all on the same day.

Paddy Martin, a Year 11 pupil at St Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe, met King Charles and the Queen Consort when the royal pair visited Marcus Rashford's old youth club, Norbrook, in Northern Moor.

Paddy chatted to the King in a relaxed and friendly way about his activities at Norbrook Youth Club. He also met England manager and Prince's Trust ambassador, Gareth Southgate, while Manchester United star Marcus Rashford was also present.

The King and Queen Consort spent about an hour at Norbrook, and Paddy commented on the 'special day.'

"It was wonderful to meet the King and the Queen Consort," he said.

"I couldn't believe it when King Charles came to sit next to me. All the visitors seemed very interested in what we had to say about the activities we had been involved with at the youth club. It was a very special day which I will always remember."

The royal party heard about how the innovative programme supports



Paddy chats to King Charles and the Queen Consort
Photos: Frank Augstein, PA

and guides young people in developing a positive attitude to money and its management, as well as encouraging them to reach their full potential.

Young people shared the youth club's efforts to encourage a love of reading by making books more accessible. Guests also saw the formal unveiling of a library donated to the centre by the Marcus Rashford Book Club, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust.

Charles and Camilla sat down and spoke to Paddy and other teenagers

who have been helped to develop confidence and other life skills thanks to the Thrive programme – a collaboration between NatWest Group, the National Youth Agency and footballer and campaigner Rashford.

At the end of the discussion, Charles said: "Thank God for a caring bank."

Norbrook Youth Club was established more than 60 years ago and offers a safe and friendly environment for young people from age 6 to 18 to enjoy free and diverse weekly activity sessions. The club fosters health and



Paddy with England manager Gareth Southgate

wellbeing through a wide range of activities that allows young people to develop, have fun and make friends.

St Paul's headteacher Alex Hren congratulated Paddy for representing the school. "We are all extremely proud of Paddy – he's a wonderful ambassador for Saint Paul's," he said.

"This was an amazing opportunity for him, and he came over very well chatting to the King and Queen Consort in a very relaxed, friendly and informative manner.

"Well done, Paddy."

Voluntary code could see betting firms off club shirts

The Government is likely to do a deal with the Premier League which could see gambling firms being removed from the front of football shirts.

The UK Government's White Paper on reforms to the 2005 Gambling Act is expected in the coming weeks, and it may stop short of forcing clubs to drop gambling sponsors by law. Instead, the BBC believes, the plan is for the Premier League to agree to change the front of shirts voluntarily.

Under this arrangement, gambling firms would still be free to be involved in football, but links would be promoted on other parts of club shirts and Premier League stadiums.

Universe columnist Fr. Vlad Felzmann, who has condemned gambling 'as addictive as alcohol for alcoholics' and 'a scourge that has ruined so many lives,' says football fans should take to social media to embarrass those clubs that still wear gambling logos on their shirts.

"Shaming them might change their attitude, turning their policies from just making money into helping people live better lives," he said.

At the moment, eight out of the 20 Premier League clubs have gambling firm names on the front of their shirts.

CARE has called for gambling advertising should be far more restricted than currently.

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In brief

Four-day week trial a success

The biggest ever trial of a four-day working week has been declared a success. Some 61 companies across several sectors in the UK were involved in the pilot, which ran for six months from June last year. 56 out of the 61 firms that took part said they plan to continue with the four-day working week. Firms saw “productivity hold mostly steady and fewer employees quit”, said the Wall Street Journal.

BBC reporters told to ‘look dirty’

Reporters working on an upcoming BBC News channel have been told that looking “sweaty and dirty” on-air can make them appear more genuine to audiences, reported Deadline.

Speaking to staff, Naja Nielsen, director of digital, said that being “as sweaty and dirty as when we’re in the field is actually more trustworthy than if we look like we’ve just stepped out of an awards ceremony”.

A BBC News spokeswoman said: “Naja was stressing the general need for authenticity on screen, not issuing a dress code.”

It comes following a review into the corporation’s trustworthiness when it came to reporting on economics.

Domestic abuse crackdown

The government has announced that the most dangerous domestic abusers will be monitored more closely and electronically tagged. Police forces will be required to treat violence against women and girls as a national threat that is as important to tackle as terrorism.

Around 2.4m people in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the last year, with around one in five homicides related to it, according to the Home Office.

Campaign group Women’s Aid told Politico that some domestic abuse services were struggling to stay afloat amid soaring energy costs.

NHS ‘prioritises adults over children’

Hundreds of thousands of children are waiting for surgery as doctors warned that adult care is being prioritised over children’s.

Data which “lays bare the parlous state of paediatric medicine”, showed the backlog has “spiralled” by almost 50 per cent in two years, said *The Independent*. In December 2022, 364,000 children were waiting for treatment, and 200,000 more needed services such as speech and language therapy.

One year on, the West is still stood firmly behind Ukraine

Stefan Wolff & Tatyana Malyarenko

Ukraine undoubtedly remains on top of the global political agenda. Not only did it dominate discussions at the Munich security conference, but the surprise visit of the US president, Joe Biden, to Kyiv sent an unmistakable message to Russia, and the rest of the world: the West stands with Ukraine and will not let Vladimir Putin get away with his violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

What’s more, Biden’s visit also underscores that the West has every confidence that the Russian president will not win this war and is finally coming round to the idea of providing Ukraine with what it needs to defeat Russia.

One year ago, things looked very different. After a prolonged military build-up, and amid heightening tensions between Russia and the west, Putin gave the order to invade Ukraine in the early hours of 24th February, 2022. Three days earlier, he had recognised the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics that pro-Russian proxy forces had occupied for eight years, with significant military and economic backing from the Kremlin.

What Putin still calls a “special military operation”, which he expected to be completed swiftly, has gone anything but to plan. One year on, the war has ground to a very costly political, economic and, above all, military stalemate for both sides with no end in sight.

This situation on the ground is mirrored by a divided international community, albeit one in which Russia has few significant allies left. Ultimately, the outcome of the war will be decided as much on the battlefield as it will be in capitals from Beijing to Brussels and Washington.

Ebb and flow on the battlefield

Initial Russian gains in the early days and weeks of the war were unsustainable, as Ukrainians put up a determined defence of their country and were supported early on by western military aid. Russian attempts to take the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, had failed by April, and the Kremlin withdrew its forces from there, redeploying them to Donbas and south-eastern Ukraine.

This enabled Russia to establish a secure land bridge to Crimea, eventually taking the southern port city of Mariupol after a prolonged and bloody siege by the middle of May and capturing all of Luhansk region by early July. But as Ukraine received more advanced western artillery, Russian efforts to take all of Donetsk stalled.

Buoyed by more western military support, Ukraine launched a counter-offensive in August, regaining significant territory along the entire front and prompting a Russian retreat from Kherson in November.



Friends, forever?
President’s Biden and Zelenskyy

This was the most significant tactical defeat Putin had suffered since the withdrawal of troops from Kyiv seven months earlier and came despite a partial mobilisation in Russia at the end of September and an air campaign to cripple Ukraine’s critical national infrastructure.

A united front in the west

Ukrainians’ determination to defend their country was not the only surprise for Putin. The western reaction – unprecedented sanctions and massive military and economic support for Kyiv – must have been a similarly rude awakening, in particular as the western coalition has remained largely united despite the challenges it has faced.

Military support has been the most crucial. More than \$40 billion (£33.25 billion) worth of military assistance was offered to Ukraine by mid-November 2022. More than half of this support has been provided by the US, with the UK, EU institutions, and Germany being the next-largest contributors of arms, ammunition, equipment and training.

The EU, meanwhile, is on its tenth package of sanctions against Russia now. It has also give unprecedented financial assistance to Ukraine: 9 billion of macro-financial assistance were disbursed to Ukraine by early August 2022, a further 5 billion by mid-December, and the first 3 billion of a new 18 billion package were disbursed in January 2023.

While the bulk of the EU’s support has been financial and humanitarian assistance, there is also a significant military assistance component of more than 3 billion. This includes more than 100 million for the European Union Military Assistance Mission Ukraine, which will train some 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers over the next two years.

A not-so-divided international community

If the west has remained united in its response to the invasion, the rest of the world remains warily divided. But this hardly provides a ringing endorsement for Russia’s aggression. On the contrary, a closer look at voting patterns on the five resolutions in the UN general assembly to date shows that Russia remains relatively isolated with only the support of a handful of dubious allies including Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Nicaragua and Syria.

Three resolutions: on Russia’s aggression (on 2nd March 2022), on the invasion’s humanitarian consequences (on 24th March), and on Ukraine’s territorial integrity (on 12 October), saw only four countries voting with Russia against the resolution, while 140, 141, and 143 states, respectively, condemned Russia’s violation of key principles of international law.

In two other votes – on suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council (on 7th April) and on future prosecutions of war crimes and reparations (on 13th November) – support for Russia was somewhat higher with 24 and 14 votes, respectively, against the two resolutions. But more than six times as many countries voted in favour on both occasions.

Considering that no country has recognised the annexation by Russia of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions, Moscow is clearly on its own when it comes to its illegal land grab.

Most crucially, while China has repeatedly indicated sympathy for Russia’s decision to invade, it has remained steadfast in supporting Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity to date. Beijing has also warned Russia against meddling in

others of its neighbours.

Enabling Ukraine to win

Backing Ukraine against Russia “for as long as it takes”, has been the key message from western capitals for a year now – as the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, reiterated in her speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos on 13th January this year.

There can be no question that this is what the West intends to do. What is less clear, though, is whether this means just enough assistance aimed at preventing Putin from winning or providing Ukraine with the support it needs to defeat Russia. Until now, it seems, western strategy has been too focused on the former, driven by anxieties about further escalation.

This has come at a significant cost to Ukraine. At the front lines, Kyiv still lacks the artillery, ammunition and armoured vehicles to push back Russian forces more decisively again in a future offensive. And behind the front lines, the lack of advanced air defence capabilities has made the country vulnerable to the crippling Russian attacks against its infrastructure.

Western leaders should not become comfortable with a ‘forever war’. They must step up their support and enable Ukraine to defeat this Russian aggression and restore its full sovereignty and territorial integrity – two principles of international law that still enjoy the support of an overwhelming majority of UN member states.

Stefan Wolff is a Professor of International Security, University of Birmingham
Tatyana Malyarenko is a Professor of International Relations, National University Odesa Law Academy

New film celebrates the many graces inspired by St Bernadette relics' tour

The team behind last year's successful tour of the UK by the Relics of St Bernadette have released a new legacy film to commemorate the visit.

The Relic Tour reached one-in-four UK Catholics, with many thousands of people actively participating in the visit.

On Thursday 1st September 2022, the relics of St Bernadette Soubirous began a 11,500-mile journey from the Sanctuary in Lourdes to UK churches, cathedrals, a hospital and one prison, offering a once in a lifetime opportunity to people of all faiths and none to visit the saint's sacred relics at one of 52 public venues.

To commemorate the visit, and to offer a small glimpse of the many graces made possible during the pilgrimage, the team behind the Relic Tour have released a special legacy film on YouTube.

A spokesperson from the Relic Tour Team said: "The arrival of St Bernadette's relics to the UK was a great blessing particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic, offering a spiritually enriching opportunity for people in England, Scotland, and Wales to gather together at churches and cathedrals across three nations.

"We hope that this short film en-



Cardinal Vincent Nichols welcomes the Relics of St Bernadette to Southwark Cathedral. Photo: © Mazur/chcew.org.uk

courages people to reflect on the message of St Bernadette and consider visiting Lourdes themselves in the future."

The UK Tour marked the first time that St Bernadette's relics had visited the UK, with thousands of people

across three nations journeying in prayer to be part of the experience. A quarter of a million people directly participated in the pilgrimage and many more attended prayer services, vigils, and special Masses, online.

The life and legacy of St Bernadette

has touched the lives of many millions of people across the world; 160 years after the first pilgrimages to Lourdes began it remains one of the busiest Christian pilgrimage sites in the world, with the Church acknowledging 70 miracles as having taken place there.

At the time, Cardinal Vincent Nichols described the visit of the relics as an important step in recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"For many of us, the opportunity to enrich our faith through the experience of pilgrimage has been difficult over the last two years, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic," he said. The pilgrimage of the relics were a "welcome opportunity to bear active witness to our faith, joining with one another across to encounter God's love and find spiritual, emotional, and psychological healing and renewal."

One visitor to the relics said: "We are all here for different reasons, but we are all [experiencing] the wonder of St Bernadette, and that brings hope."

More than 500kg of prayer cards, written by UK pilgrims visiting St Bernadette's relics, were delivered to the Grotto in Lourdes by Relic Tour drivers Gerry O'Malley and Bob Lavery at the close of the pilgrimage in October.

See the film here

... just click this panel to watch the film on the relics' UK tour ...



Lawyer awarded knight honour by the Church

A leading lawyer in the diocese of Clifton has been awarded one of the Church's highest honours for his voluntary work.

Tim Rutherford of national law firm Stone King has been made a Knight to the Pontifical Equestrian Order of Saint Sylvester Pope and Martyr, in recognition of his work for the Association of Provincial Bursars (APB).

This award honours lay people who are actively involved in the life of the Church, particularly in the exercise of their professional duties.

Fr Keith McMillan SJ, Chair of APB, said: "Tim has been involved with APB for a long time and his continued and unwavering support has been of great value to our members.

"We are really delighted that we have received notification that this award has been granted, it is a fitting way to thank Tim for his great service and commitment to APB and its membership. Congratulations to Tim."

Tim has been working with APB for over 15 years and has been a regular presenter at its annual conference and other events over the years.

Together with Amanda Francis DSS, from Buzzacott LLP, Tim has been instrumental in producing two guidance handbooks for the members of the APB (*Embracing Change* and *Consecrated Journey*) which were followed up by a three-part video series in 2022, looking to share practical guidance on legal, financial and governance is-

sues with those involved in running Catholic religious order charities, entitled 'Walking In Partnership.'

Tim said: "I'm extremely humbled to be granted this honour and am touched and grateful that the Executive Committee at the APB asked the Bishop of Clifton to nominate me for this award.

"It is a privilege to work with the many members of APB, supporting them to navigate the challenges of operating as charities and through it I have personally learnt a lot, not just in a legal context."

Stone King has a strong tradition of supporting Catholic religious orders for more than 200 years and has built up considerable expertise in the unique requirements of these clients.



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Catholic Union

Forbes is right to defend her faith and views

James Somerville-Meikle
Deputy Director Catholic Union
In an interview with Nick Robinson for his Political Thinking podcast in May 2021, Kate Forbes said she often felt “guilty” for “tiptoeing around” her Christian faith.

It’s fair to say that nobody could accuse Ms Forbes of tiptoeing around her faith this week. Since launching her campaign to become leader of the SNP and Scotland’s next First Minister, the 32 year old MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, has found that questions about her Christian beliefs have dominated the conversation around her candidacy.

In an interview on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* earlier this week, Ms Forbes was asked seven questions – five on same-sex marriage and two on independence. Given the enormous challenges confronting politicians in Scotland at the moment, from NHS waiting times to the cost of living, it’s hard to see this line of questioning as being in step with most people’s priorities.

But to her great credit, Ms Forbes, who is currently on maternity leave from her role as Scottish Finance Secretary, tackled the questions head on. She stated that her belief, in line with mainstream Christian teaching, was that marriage was between a man and a woman.

She also said that rights should not be “mutually exclusive” – saying that she would “defend to the hilt your right to live and love free from harassment and fear, in the hope that you would afford me the same right as a person of faith.”

The questions and responses in that interview got to the heart of what it means to live in a free society. So often we hear about faith being “tolerated” or “accepted” in the public conversation, but we rarely engage in what this means in practice.

If we really want live in a pluralist society where all mainstream faiths and beliefs are respected, then perhaps we need something more dynamic than tolerance or acceptance. There needs to be an appreciation of our different views, in the understanding that if freedom of conscience and expression are weakened for one group in society, it is weakened for all.

As Kate Forbes said “If we are saying that high public office is barred to people of faith, or only to people with the right kind of faith or only to people with a socially accepted faith, then we’re moving into very dangerous days in Scotland.”

And they’re off! CAFOD’S Big Lent walks gets into its stride

Andy Drozdzia

CAFOD has started its Big Lent Walk – and it’s not too late to join in.

CAFOD’s Lent challenge is called the Big Lent Walk and it involves walking 200km over the 40 days of Lent, while raising money for families impacted by the climate crisis.

This year a particular focus is to protect vulnerable communities against the threat of extreme weather. The money will help people in Bangladesh protect nature by building seed beds and planting palm trees to protect crops from flooding and cyclones.

Jo Kitterick, CAFOD’s Director of Fundraising and parish participation, underlined the importance of helping ‘those in need’ during Lent.

“Lent is a time for reflection, which helps us to challenge ourselves, and a period where we think about others and what we can do to help those in need,” she told the *Universe*.

“That’s why I’m really excited about taking part in the Big Lent Walk. I’ll be using the walk each day to think about people working every day to overcome extreme global poverty and its causes.”

Pupils are joining friends and families to raise money for the charity by walking, cycling or other forms of exercise, to cover 120 miles.

Around 6,000 pupils from 12 schools in the North East have signed up to the campaign, which began on Ash Wednesday. Kaye Binney, deputy headteacher at St Charles’ Catholic Primary School in Newcastle, said: “We have chosen to support CAFOD as a way for our pupils to put their faith into



Children from St Charles Primary School in Newcastle show their support for this year’s CAFOD Lent appeal, the Big Walk

action. By raising money together, we will be supporting our brothers and sisters around the world and living out our school mission.”

Mark Maughan, CAFOD’s community participation co-ordinator in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, said: “The Big Lent Walk gives everyone the opportunity to help those in poverty, especially at a time when extreme weather is threatening livelihoods around the world.

“The website makes fundraising easy by managing your donations and

tracking your walking progress. It’s a great time to exercise, either by yourself where you can take time to reflect, or together with friends, family, or your school. If you want to do something for Lent, please sign up today and join us.”

CAFOD said: “When you receive your first donation, we will send you a pair of ‘Big Lent Walk’ laces. If you hit the target of £200 on your fundraising page, then we’ll send you a ‘Big Lent Walk’ Tote Bag.”

Participants are encouraged to share

their progress on social media, using the #TheBigLentWalk hashtag.

For those who want to clock the activity with something other than walking, CAFOD suggest a cycle ride for 15 minutes or a 35 minute exercise class.

Want to take part?

Just click in this panel for more details from CAFOD...



Eco-activist to speak to Flame 2023

Andy Drozdzia

A US activist who challenged the world’s largest corporation and whose story has appeared in a major Hollywood film is looking forward to telling young people at the UK’s largest Catholic youth event that one person speaking out can make big changes.

Rob Bilott has spent decades working on behalf of those injured by PFAS chemical contamination, for which he received the 2017 Right Livelihood Award. His story inspired the 2019 film *Dark Waters*, starring Mark Ruffalo as Rob.

He will be a keynote speaker at Flame, where he will speak to 10,000 young Catholics about environmental justice.

“I’m just really looking forward to being able to speak to young people,” Rob said. “They’re much more attuned to a lot of these issues than folks in our generation and I love to see that passion.”

“I love to see people who realise that they can make a difference. One person standing up, speaking out,



saying: ‘you know what, we can change this – it can happen.’”

Flame takes place on 4th March at the OVO Arena, Wembley, where 10,000 young people will take part in ‘an inspiring day of prayer, adoration, catechesis, reflection, celebration and praise.’

It is open to everyone from school Year 9 up to university students.

The theme of Flame 2023 is inspired by the theme of this year’s World Youth Day in Lisbon – “Mary arose and went with haste” – and crystallises it into the theme: “Rise Up.”

Speaking of the theme, Flame said: “Rise up after the pandemic, rise up as young Catholics, rise up – as Mary did – for the surprising and beautiful adventure that is our Catholic faith.”

Rob Bilott will be joined by a variety of speakers and musicians from the UK and beyond, including One Hope Project, rap favourite Guvna B, youth worker Jenny Garzón Saavedra from the Colombian Amazon and Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB from Australia.

Rob Bilott shared his hopes for young people to make a big difference. “I’m hoping that folks come away at least looking at this story, realising that here you had a farmer in West Virginia who went up against one of the biggest corporations on the planet, who went up against the entire US regulatory and legal systems, and was able to actually start something that led to laws changing internationally. Changes come from individuals standing up and speaking out,” he said.

There’s still time to get tickets...

Just click in this panel for more details...



Easter Gifts and St Patrick's Day Souvenirs

Universe Catholic Weekly readers' offers



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Easter Cards



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Easter Card pack – Blessings (Pack of 6)

Pack of 6 large Easter Cards. Gold foil, embossed, featuring floral designs and Easter Blessings message. Inside text: Design 1: 'To wish you peace and happiness at Easter.' Design 2: 'Wishing you every happiness at Easter'.

Ref: E0417 Price: £5.50

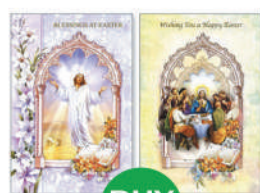
Easter Card pack – Christ

Pack of 12 small Easter Cards with Gold foil. Featuring 2 designs ft. Christ the Good Shepherd, and 1 with Christ knocking. Inside text: 'With Best Wishes at Easter'

Ref: E0121 Price: £3.95



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Easter Card pack – Last Supper/ Risen Christ (Pack of 6)

Pack of 6 large Easter Cards. Gold foil, embossed, featuring 2 designs: Risen Christ and Last Supper. Inside text: Design 1: 'God bless you at Easter and always'. Design 2: 'Wishing you every happiness at Easter'.

Ref: E0122 Price: £5.50

Easter Card pack – Risen Christ (Pack of 6)

Pack of 6 large Easter Cards. Gold foil, embossed, featuring Risen Christ Designs. 'Easter Blessings/God Bless you at Easter' on front. Inside text: Design 1: 'God Bless you at Easter and always'. Design 2: 'This brings an Easter message with a very special prayer, that God will always bless you and keep you in his care'.

Ref: E0415 Price: £5.50



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Greek wooden carved icon crucifix – 16 x 23 cm

Orthodox Icon Crucifix, with carved frame. Lithographic image of crucifixion on sturdy composite wood, with hand-painted detail, frame gilded with imitation gold-leaf with antiqued effect, with hook for wall hanging. Handmade in Greece, with certificate of authenticity on back. Size 16 x 23 cm (6.25 x 9 inches). See range on website

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ST PATRICK'S DAY



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Attractive card featuring St Patrick image. Inside text: 'To wish you peace and happiness as you celebrate this special day. Happy St. Patrick's day' On reverse, St Patrick's breastplate prayer. Gold embossed card, 7.5" x 4.25". Pack of six. Prayer on reverse: St. Patrick's Breastplate. Ref: E0210-6 Price: £6.50

Green St Patrick Rosary

Green St Patrick rosary beads. Metal St Patrick centre piece. Hand made in Italy. Strong wire, Celtic Cross crucifix. Shamrock imprint beads. Very tactile with smooth beads Supplied in Organza bag Ref: R6 Price: £28.95 (postage free)



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Irish Blessing Pewter Key Ring

Irish Blessing Pewter Key ring, with circular medallion, featuring Celtic Cross design on one side, and Irish Blessing on the reverse: 'May your troubles be less, your blessings be more, and nothing but happiness come through your door!' Ref: E0203 Price: £5.25



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In brief

Stamp set issued to mark pope's 10th anniversary

The Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office is marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' election with a series of four postage stamps.

"We want to celebrate some of the most significant moments of Pope Francis' pontificate," the office said. The stamps go on sale next week, a fortnight before the anniversary of the pope's election on 13th March, 2013.

The 1.20-euro stamp features a photo of Pope Francis praying during the Mass he celebrated to inaugurate his papacy on 19th March, 2013.

The photo on the 1.25-euro stamp shows Pope Francis kissing the Book of the Gospels and was chosen to celebrate the Sunday of the Word of God, a celebration Pope Francis decided in 2019 to add to the Church's calendar.

The third stamp, carrying a value of 2.40 euros, shows Pope Francis smiling during the sacrament of reconciliation and marks his institution of the '24 Hours for the Lord,' a Lenten observance in Rome focused on making confession widely and easily available.

The final stamp, with a face value of 3.10 euros, features a photo from Pope Francis' first pastoral trip outside of Rome, which was to the Italian island of Lampedusa, where he prayed for the thousands of migrants who had lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean and reach asylum in Europe.

Rome influence over key dicastery

After uniting two offices in June to form the Dicastery for Culture and Education, Pope Francis has named a full slate of 34 members and 40 consultants to man the office, which promotes human values in culture and education and works with Catholic schools and universities around the world.

The new members include 15 cardinals, 16 bishops and three laymen: Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication; Francesc Torralba, director of the ethics chair at Ramon Llull University in Barcelona; and Rafael Vicuña, a professor of molecular biology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in Santiago.

Most of the consultants – 19 priests, three religious sisters and 18 lay men and women – are rectors of Catholic universities or professors at Catholic-run institutions of higher learning in Rome. But they also include Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums, and Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, director of the Rome-based Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*.



Pope Francis signs a Ukrainian flag given to him by a child at this week's general audience. During the audience he again called for an end to the conflict, demanding to know if "everything concrete has been done to find an end to the fighting." See pg 16-17

Pope calls on Holy Spirit to avoid 'ideological divisions'

Cindy Wooden

"It is very sad to see the Church as if it were a parliament, which is what happens when Catholics rely more on their personal opinions than on the Holy Spirit," Pope Francis said.

"The Church is something else; it is a community of men and women who believe in and proclaim Jesus Christ, moved by the Holy Spirit and not by their own ideas," he said at this week's general audience at the Vatican.

The pope said it is natural for Catholics to have different opinions on all sorts of things, which is why, when making decisions about the life

of the Church, they must do like the early disciples did and seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts how the disciples were divided over the question of whether pagans who came to Christianity were required to follow Jewish law.

"They could have sought a good compromise between tradition and innovation: some rules are observed, others are left out," the pope said. "Yet the apostles do not follow this human wisdom, but adapt themselves to the work of the Spirit, who had anticipated them by descending upon the pagans just as on them."

"Despite having different sensitivities and opinions, they listen to the Spirit," he said. The Spirit taught the disciples something, "which is also valid today: every religious tradition is useful if it facilitates the encounter with Jesus."

Without listening together to the Spirit, he said, the Church runs the risk of falling prey to "ideological divisions" and arguments based on whether one considers oneself a "conservative" or "progressive," he said. "But where is the Holy Spirit? Watch out, the Gospel is not an idea or an ideology, it is a proclamation that touches and changes your heart. But

if you hide in an idea, whether it's of right or left or center, you are making the Gospel a political party, an ideology or a social club."

Pope Francis asked the thousands of pilgrims and visitors in the audience hall, "How many of us pray to the Holy Spirit? 'No, father, I pray to Mary, I pray to the saints, I pray to Jesus, sometimes I say the Lord's Prayer so I pray to the Father,'" he imagined some of them responding.

But it is the Holy Spirit "who moves your heart, who carries you forward, gives you consolation and the desire to evangelise and be a missionary," he said.

Church has to accept laity as the equal of priests

Laypeople are not 'guests' in the Catholic Church and priests are not the 'bosses,' Pope Francis said; rather all the baptised belong and share responsibility for its life and mission.

To fulfill its mission, the Church must "overcome autonomous ways of acting or parallel tracks that never meet: clergy separated from laity, or the Roman Curia separated from particular churches or movements separated from parishes" he said.

"The path God is indicating for the Church is precisely that of living more intensely and concretely the path of

communion and walking together," Pope Francis said as he closed a three-day conference in Rome sponsored by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life.

The meeting brought together more than 200 participants from 74 countries to talk about the theological basis of co-responsibility in the Church and practical steps to overcome the challenges to making it a reality.

Creating silos or divisions in the church is "the most serious temptation Catholics face today," Pope Francis told the group. "There is still a long

way to go for the Church to live as a body, as a true people, united by the one faith in Christ the saviour, animated by the same sanctifying Spirit and oriented to the same mission of proclaiming the merciful love of God the Father."

One of the aims of the forthcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality, he said, is to remind all the baptised that they are called to be missionary disciples and that the only way to be effective is to be united and to recognise and share the gifts and talents of all.

Co-responsibility, he said, "is not

learned theoretically; it is understood by living it."

"The need to value the laity does not come from some theological novelty, or the functional needs left by the diminishing number of priests," he said.

"Rather, it is based on a correct vision of the Church: the Church as the people of God, of which the laity are a full part along with ordained ministers," he said. "Thus, ordained ministers are not the masters, they are the servants; the shepherds, not the bosses."

Pope clarifies rules limiting celebration of pre-Vatican II Mass

Cindy Wooden

Diocesan bishops must have Vatican authorisation to allow the celebration of the pre-Vatican II Mass in a parish church, to establish a new 'personal parish' for devotees of the old Mass or to allow its celebration by a priest ordained after July 2021 when Pope Francis issued rules restricting the celebration, he said.

Any bishop who has granted a dispensation from those rules must inform the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 'which will assess the individual cases,' said a statement approved by Pope Francis during a meeting with Cardinal Arthur Roche, prefect of the dicastery.

The rescript of the meeting, signed by Cardinal Roche, was released by the Vatican this week.

In July 2021 Pope Francis promulgated his apostolic letter *Traditionis Custodes* (*Guardians of the Tradition*), declaring the liturgical books promulgated after the Second Vatican Council to be "the unique expression of the 'lex orandi' (law of worship) of the Roman Rite," restoring the obligation of priests to have their bishops' permission to celebrate according to the 'extraordinary' or pre-Vatican II Mass and ordering bishops not to establish any new groups or parishes in their dioceses devoted to the old liturgy.

At the time, Pope Francis said his decision was meant "to promote the concord and unity of the Church."

Many bishops granted temporary permission in the summer of 2021 for the liturgies to continue while they studied the papal document and consulted their priests and faithful.

Some bishops then granted dispensations to the rules, citing a paragraph of *Traditionis Custodes* that affirmed 'it belongs to the diocesan bishop, as moderator, promoter and guardian of the whole liturgical life of the par-



ticular Church entrusted to him, to regulate the liturgical celebrations of his diocese.'

In December 2021, then-Archbishop Roche published a formal *responsa ad dubia* – response to questions – asserting that it is up to his dicastery, "exercising the authority of the Holy See in matters within its competence," to grant requests from bishops wanting to give dispensations from the specific norms set forth in *Traditionis Custodes* regarding the use of parish churches for the celebration of the pre-Vatican II liturgy.

And he used the same language about the authority of the dicastery to require a bishop to seek the authorization of the dicastery before allowing a newly-ordained priest to celebrate the old rite.

In the new rescript, Pope Francis affirmed that 'these dispensations are

reserved in a special way to the Apostolic See: the use of a parish church or the erection of a personal parish for the celebration of the Eucharist using the *Missale Romanum* of 1962; and the granting of permission to priests ordained after the publication of the motu proprio *Traditionis Custodes* to celebrate with the *Missale Romanum* of 1962.'

'The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments exercises the authority of the Holy See in the above-mentioned cases, supervising the observance of the provisions,' it said.

The rescript added that 'should a diocesan bishop have granted dispensations in the two cases mentioned above, he is obliged to inform the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, which will assess the individual cases.'

Irish priest who worked with gangs to curb violence shot dead in LA

A 65-year-old man has been arrested after the death of one of the USA's most popular bishops.

Auxiliary Bishop David G. O'Connell of Los Angeles was found shot dead on Saturday in his home in the Hacienda Heights area of the city.

Bishop O'Connell, a native of Ireland, spent 43 years as a priest serving in LA's inner city.

Carlos Medina, the husband of a housekeeper who had worked at Bishop O'Connell's home, has been charged with his murder.

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles said the entire Church "was deeply disturbed and saddened by this news."

The archbishop said that in their last meeting he and Bishop O'Connell had just celebrated the annual Mass for the Sick together.

"We had a beautiful statue of the Virgin Mary on that side of the sanctuary," explained Archbishop Gomez. "So as he was starting the homily he went over there and prayed to the Blessed Mother. And then he turned around and said at the beginning of the homily: 'She told me to tell you that she loves you.'"

"That is who Bishop Dave was," continued the archbishop. "He had a wonderful sense of humour and a beautiful devotion to Our Blessed Mother. We all miss him very much."

'Bishop Dave', as he was known, was episcopal vicar for the archdiocese's San Gabriel Pastoral Region until 2015, when he was made an Auxiliary Bishop. He was described by his archdiocese as "a peacemaker with a heart for the poor and the immigrant, and he had a passion for building a community where the sanctity and dignity of every human life was honored and protected."

"He was also a good friend, and I will miss him greatly," continued Archbishop Gomez, who asked for prayers for the bishop and his family in Ireland.

Bishop O'Connell's death also drew messages of sympathy and mourning from his native Ireland, where he was known to visit family and friends regularly.

"The news of the tragic death of Bishop David O'Connell in Los Angeles has sent shockwaves across his native Diocese of Cork and Ross," said Bishop Fintan Gavin of Cork and Ross.

Bishop O'Connell was originally from Brooklodge, Glanmire in County Cork.

He studied for the priesthood at the former All Hallows College in Dublin and was ordained to serve in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1979. After ordination, he served as associate pastor in several parishes and as pastor at St. Frances X. Cabrini, Ascension, St. Eugene and St. Michael's parishes – all in south Los Angeles.

There, Bishop O'Connell ministered to a community afflicted by gang violence, poverty, broken families, as well as tensions between locals and members of Los Angeles Police Department and the LA Sheriff's Department that eventually boiled over during the LA riots in 1992 that followed the beating of Rodney King by police officers.

He would later testify before a panel on Capitol Hill in Washington about violence in urban America, describing how he returned home to find his parish's territory had been at the epicentre of the rioting.

Apart from aiding neighborhood recovery efforts, Fr O'Connell pushed to restore trust between the inner-city residents and law enforcement. He and other local faith leaders helped organise meetings with police officers in people's homes and provide opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation.

He was also the chairman of the interdiocesan Southern California Immigration Task Force, helping co-ordinate the local church's response to the influx of migrants from Central America in recent years.

Cardinal calls for Lent focus on charity

Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking out new paths to take with Jesus and for avoiding the traps of stagnation or impromptu experimentation, Pope Francis said.

"Jesus is himself the way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey (of Lent) and in the journey of the synod, the Church does nothing other than enter ever more deeply and fully into the mystery of Christ the saviour," the pope said in his message for Lent, which began on 22nd February for Latin-rite Catholics.

The pope's message focused on seeing Lenten penance and the synodal experience both as arduous

journeys that lead to the wondrous experience of Christ's divine light and splendor.

"Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross," he said.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, presented the Lenten message. He said Lent was a time "for Catholics to work on ourselves and understand that a change of mentality and the communal nature of human life are blessed labours, on which depends

something wonderful and surprising for this broken world," he said.

"If we want a Lent of charity, if we believe that prayer and fasting have real effects on the world," he said, "we must broaden the idea of almsgiving to something larger, namely the biblical idea of restitution."

"The path is the mission. And the mission is charity, which calls into question an organisation of the world and of the Church that may seem unchangeable, but is changeable, because it is the outcome of decisions, of freedom," he said.



Bishop Dave, talking to his flock on the streets of LA

In brief

Biden visit stiffens Ukrainian resolve

US President Joe Biden's unexpected visit to Kyiv on Monday, calmly walking alongside Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as raid sirens wailed in the capital, is being hailed as a surprise and a signal to the world, Ukrainian Catholic leaders said.

"We wouldn't expect that President Biden would come to the capital. Maybe Lviv, as it's safer, but Kyiv? It's really an amazing boost of hope and strength for us," Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia said. "People were shocked. ... somehow we all got the positive feeling that maybe war is finally coming to an end."

Biden and Zelenskyy laid wreaths at Kyiv's Wall of Remembrance. "One year later, Kyiv stands. And Ukraine stands. Democracy stands. The Americans stand with you, and the world stands with you," Biden said in an address.

With a renewed Russian offensive expected soon, Bishop Sobilo said Biden's visit was "like a movie scene – and we're hoping for a happy ending."

Ukraine walks out of group over Russian invitation

A meeting of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's parliamentary assembly has got under way without the Ukrainian delegation, which described the planned presence of Russian legislators as "an affront".

The two-day meeting of the usually low-key grouping has been overshadowed by controversy over the Russians' attendance. Austria granted them visas even though they are under EU sanctions and despite protests from 20 countries, including Britain, France and Canada.

The Austrians said that, as hosts, they were obliged to grant visas to representatives from all OSCE member states. Ukraine said it would not attend if Russia was present, as did Lithuania.

The Vienna-based OSCE, whose 57 member states include both Ukraine and Russia, was created during the Cold War as a platform for dialogue between East and West. It has a wide-ranging mission, including peace, human rights, arms control and other security issues.

Austria's parliament speaker Wolfgang Sobotka said that it is "our duty not to slam the door on diplomacy" but president of the OSCE, Margareta Cederfelt, said she sympathised "that some members find it unbearable to sit in the same room as the aggressors. But for those present, this is your opportunity to stand up for Ukraine and to confront the lies from the aggressors."

One year on, the Church is at the heart of Ukraine's resistance to aggression

On war's anniversary, Ukraine's Catholics are left reflecting on a year of suffering, says Jonathan Luxmoore

The first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a moment to take stock of the resilience shown by the victims. But it also puts a spotlight on a key role played by the Catholic Church in channeling humanitarian aid and sustaining morale.

"As a church, we'll remain aware of people's constant needs – but we'll also be encouraging people everywhere to fight against this evil with prayer," Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odessa-Simferopol told me.

"Everyone knows soldiers on each side will die when fighting on the battlefield. But this is a hybrid war in which no one knows where the missiles will strike next. We're left feeling the devil has simply wanted to destroy a whole nation for no reason. This is what causes the most hurt and sadness," he said.

The bishop spoke as European Union foreign ministers met to discuss stepped-up arms supplies to Ukraine, and as Kyiv's forces prepared for new Russian assaults for the war's anniversary.

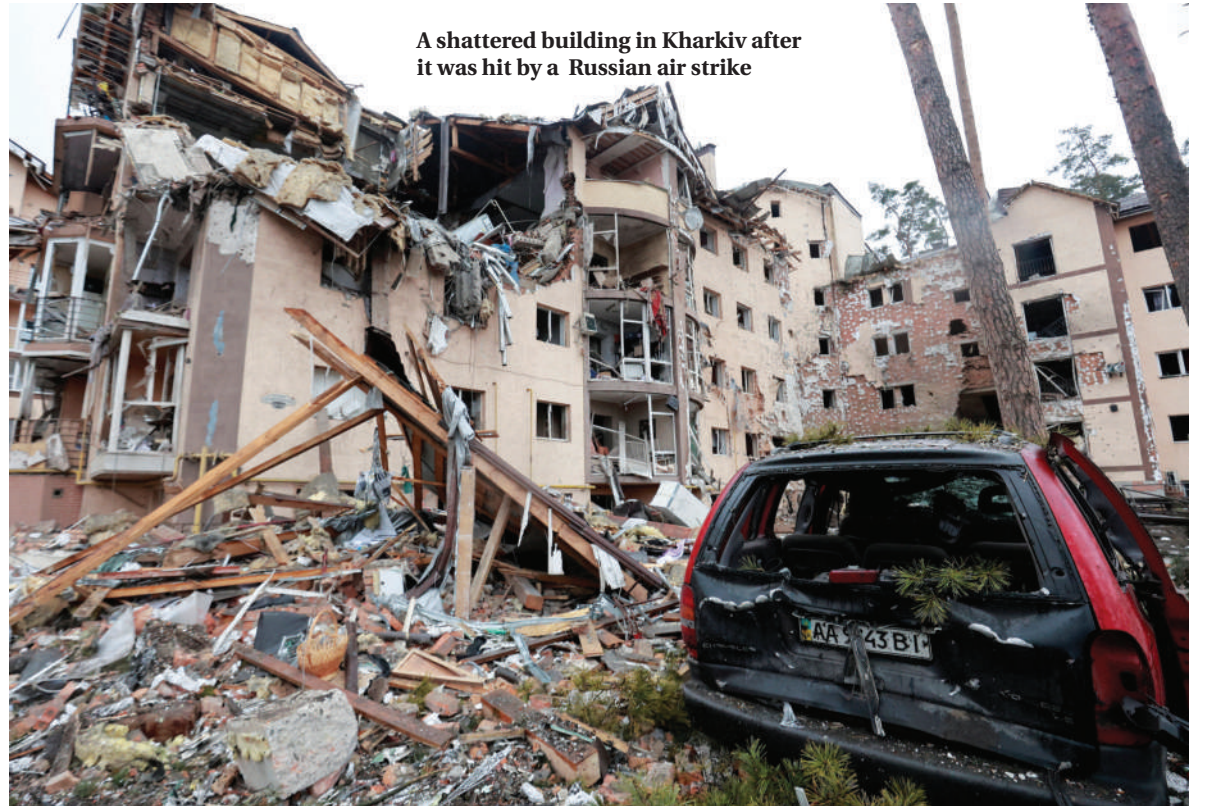
Bishop Szyrokoradiuk said the "reign of terror" marked by the random killing of civilians had stifled any lingering pro-Russia feelings, leaving all Ukrainians "united and patriotic."

Meanwhile, another Catholic bishop said the anniversary would be marked in a tense atmosphere because of damage to Ukraine's infrastructure and expectations of fresh Russian strikes, but he added that Ukrainians had revealed their determination to press on to victory.

"If there had been as much Western support a year ago as now, we would already have won this war," Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia said.

"But despite the damage still facing us, and threats to freedom wherever Russia's influence extends, there's a spiritual calm here – people are convinced peace will come sooner or later, with final destruction of the evil being directed against us," Bishop Sobilo stressed, adding that President Joe Biden's visit this week, and speech in Poland, brought much hope that "this is a beginning of the end of war."

In many ways calling 24th February the 'first anniversary' is obtuse:



A shattered building in Kharkiv after it was hit by a Russian air strike

Russia's campaign against Ukraine began eight years earlier, in February 2014, with the occupation and annexation of its Crimea peninsula and support for separatist rebellions in its eastern Donbas region. This more confined conflict exploded into full-scale war on 24th February 2022, with strikes against Ukrainian military facilities and a Russian ground invasion.

In his State of the Nation address this week President Vladimir Putin blamed the US and NATO for seeking control over territories historically 'belonging' to Moscow, and said the "special military operation would secure Ukraine's demilitarisation and denazification, while protecting Russian speakers

from humiliation and genocide."

It's a charge that carries little weight in the US, Europe and, more crucially, Ukraine.

With his country under illegitimate attack, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, declared martial law and a general mobilisation of male citizens, while the invasion triggered international sanctions and a UN General Assembly resolution demanding full Russian withdrawal.

Having expected a quick, decisive victory, Russian forces had retreated with heavy losses by April, while Western-backed Ukrainian counter-offensives later recaptured most of the northern Kharkiv and southern Kherson regions, forcing a standstill

amid artillery fire and trench warfare along a 500-mile front line.

This week Ukraine's General Staff claimed 142,000 Russian troops had been killed since the invasion, with hundreds dying daily, although military casualties on both sides remain unverified. At the same time the U.N.'s human rights office said it had recorded 7,199 civilian deaths and 11,756 injuries, but warned the actual figures could be much higher.

UN agencies registered 18.6 million Ukrainian border crossings during 2022, more than half to Poland. It has requested a further \$5.6 billion to help over eight million refugees currently dispersed across Europe, with up to six million more displaced within Ukraine.

Britton Buckner, European outreach manager with Catholic Relief Services, said the initial shock of the invasion had "quickly transitioned into prioritising immediate humanitarian assistance," adding that the efforts of Catholic aid organizations had ranked with those of national governments and the Red Cross.

"The whole global humanitarian community has mobilised for this crisis, with UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs all responding – but it's the Catholic Church, with its grassroots network, which has been most active," Buckner said.

Continue reading on next page



Church officials in Lviv move a priceless statue of Christ to protect it as the Russians advanced. The last time this statue was moved to safe storage was during the Second World War, as the Nazis invaded Ukraine...



Refugees mass at a railway station near the Ukraine/Polish border in an attempt to flee the fighting at the start of the war. Over eight million Ukrainians are now refugees



A woman clutches her few possessions as she looks at the shattered maternity hospital in Mariupol, in March 2022

“While Catholic social teaching has been a driving influence, the Church has long been a substantial presence in this part of Europe, and has been well placed, with its many donors, to give financial, physical, moral and emotional support to the millions in need.”

In Poland, where 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees are still registered, Caritas has provided help ranging from food and medicine to generators and wheelchairs, via 32 separate centres, working with CRS and Church agencies in Ukraine and abroad.

Other Catholic groups, such as the Knights of Columbus, have given life-saving assistance as well, working alongside Catholic organisations such as Renovabis in Germany, where over a million Ukrainians are currently sheltering.

“Over the past 30 years, we invested over 120 million euros in Ukraine for the construction of churches, parish centres and a Catholic university,” Renovabis’ director, Fr Thomas Schwartz, told Vatican Radio. “The war has now changed our support – we’re funding shelters where people can find safety when rockets or grenades are fired,” the priest said.

Polish priests and nuns are a substantial presence in the seven dioceses making up Ukraine’s Latin-rite Catholic Church, and many set up bank accounts for emergency donations in collaboration with colleagues back home, offering refugees protection at Catholic parishes, convents and monasteries.

The Church works closely with the larger Kyiv-based Ukrainian Catholic Church, whose leader, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, has recorded the destruction and suffering and praised the courage of Ukrainian soldiers, volunteers and clergy serving on the front lines.

Archbishop Shevchuk’s daily messages throughout the war – with their now-famous invocation, “Ukraine survives, fights and prays!” – have offered thanks to God for each new day of life, while reflecting on the challenges of being a Christian in wartime.

Bishop Sobilo says the Ukrainian Catholic archbishop has played an exemplary role. “His deeply spiritual

closeness to the nation, unambiguously supporting its right to defend itself, has sustained not only Ukrainian Catholics, but also Orthodox Christians, Protestants and others, irrespective of confessional loyalties,” the Kharkiv-Zaporizhia auxiliary said.

Gratitude also has been shown to the pope for his compassion for Ukraine’s “martyred and suffering people” in weekly peace appeals.

There have been moments of controversy, such as in August when

“

Until a just peace is achieved that does not reward land-grabbing or leave the Ukrainian people at the mercy of occupiers, it remains a human demand to stand by those who are attacked, threatened and oppressed...

Pope Francis told his Rome audience that Darya Dugina, an assassinated daughter of one of Putin’s closest collaborators, Alexander Dugin, had been one of “so many innocents” paying for “the madness of all sides,” and in September when, returning from Kazakhstan, the pontiff criticised the supply of arms to Ukraine if this was aimed at “provoking more war.”

The Vatican responded to criticisms, noting the pope’s words should be “read as a voice raised in defence of human life ... not as political stances” and insisting he had unequivocally condemned the war “initiated by the Russian Federation” as “morally unjust, unacceptable, barbaric, senseless, repugnant and sacrilegious.”

In recent days, as the anniversary approached, the Vatican’s stance has shown signs of hardening.

On 14th February, its nuncio in Vienna, Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana, accused Putin of “breaking international law, disregarding borders and

plundering land,” and told a gathering of diplomats Russia’s “brutal aggression” had ignored “all lessons the world has learned from two world wars.”

“Until a just peace is achieved that does not reward land-grabbing or leave the Ukrainian people at the mercy and violence of occupiers, it remains a human demand to stand by those who are attacked, threatened and oppressed,” Archbishop Lopez Quintana added.

Bishop Sobilo says he’s confident the pope is “showing solidarity with Ukraine” and “doing everything to end the war” with both prayers and material help.

Bishop Szyrokoradiuk agrees. “We don’t have to like everything that’s been said and done, and the pope doesn’t have to agree with everything asked of him – and maybe at the beginning he didn’t fully understand or wasn’t given the full truth,” he said.

“But Catholics here are deeply grateful for all the solidarity shown by those who’ve stood in our defence, which has been so important in showing we’re not alone and abandoned in this terrible situation.”

Ukraine’s Catholic bishops will mark the war’s first anniversary by meeting with the Vatican’s nuncio to Ukraine, Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas, at the historic central sanctuary of Berdychiv, as prayer services take place across Europe.

As Ukraine’s civilian population bears the brunt of the war, with 40 per cent now needing assistance and protection, Buckner, the CRS outreach manager, is confident the massive humanitarian response will hold up, as the world’s biggest armed conflict since World War II enters its second year.

“Contingency planning has been needed for various scenarios – for recovery and rebuilding if the war ends, and for larger displacements if it drags on,” Buckner said.

“Many European countries have faced refugee waves before. But the generosity being shown by people who’ve stepped forward to help those in need, by virtue of a shared history and humanity, has been inspirational,” she said. “Wherever there are people of faith, there’ll be people working in good faith to help others.”

In brief

MPs ask pope to help return abducted children to Ukraine

Members of Ukraine’s parliament have asked Pope Francis to help in returning thousands of Ukrainian children who are believed to be being held in Russian custody.

The MPs made their plea in a visit to Rome this week where they met senior Vatican officials including Cardinal Parolin and Archbishop Paul Gallagher. They also reiterated their support for a papal visit to Kyiv.

“We have seen the great impact of the Holy See’s help in prisoner exchanges, and so we would like to ask the pope’s help on the issue of the deported children,” said Yevhen Petruniak, one of the MPs, in a meeting with journalists at the Ukrainian Embassy to the Holy See on Tuesday.

“For Russia, international law does not exist, laws don’t work,” he said, “so these processes can only be assured through the intervention of highly influential international leaders or influential international organizations, like the pope and the Vatican.”

It is not known how many children are now in Russia but some analysts believe it could be as many as 6,000. Many are believed to be in ‘re-education’ camps in Russia-occupied Crimea and mainland Russia

Even more worrying is that Ukraine’s Ministry of Reintegration believes more than 16,000 children have been deported into Russia, many of whom have been adopted by Russian families.

“They are not adopted according to the laws,” Mykola Stefanchuk, a Ukrainian MP, said. “They live in horrible houses and the main thing is that they live without their families, so we hope that the pope will help us (get) back our children.”

The Vatican Secretariat of State worked behind the scenes to help arrange prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and Russia earlier in the conflict, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged its help in returning 1,762 captured Ukrainian soldiers.

Pope appeals for peace deal

Pope Francis asked, “Can the Lord forgive so many crimes and so much violence? He is the God of peace,” as the Vatican prepared to mark the first anniversary of the war.

At the end of his weekly general audience on Wednesday, and with Ukrainian parliamentarians seated in the front row, the pope noted that Friday marks “one year since the invasion of Ukraine, a year since this absurd and cruel war – a sad anniversary.”

Promising that Catholics continue to be close to the “martyred Ukrainian people

who continue to suffer,” the pope asked, “has everything possible been done to stop the war?”

“I appeal to all those who have authority over nations to commit themselves concretely to ending the conflict, to reaching a cease-fire and to starting peace negotiations,” the pope said. “That which is built on ruins will never be a true victory.”

“The record of deaths, injuries, refugees and displaced people, destruction and economic and social damage speaks for itself,” he said.

US Catholics attack FBI after memo links traditional Church views with hate crimes and terrorism

Catholics in the United States have reacted angrily after the FBI said it was placing a priority on investigating ‘radical traditionalist’ members of the faith.

Such a move technically places some members of the Church in the same grouping as radical Islamists – despite the fact that radical Muslims have carried out a series of terror attacks in the West in recent years, while there is no evidence of a threat of any kind from ‘radical traditionalist Catholics.’

According to the FBI, despite no evidence or threats being posed, there were fears traditionalist Catholics pose threats of racial or ethnically motivated violence.

The comments were made in a briefing written at the end of January and subsequently leaked to the media. It stated that ‘radical Traditionalist Catholics’ are ‘typically characterised by the rejection of the Second Vatican Council.’ The memo said such advocates can amount to an ‘adherence to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, anti-LGBTQ and white supremacist ideology.’

As evidence for its theory, the memo names far-right personality Nick Fuentes, who publicly self-identifies as Catholic and whom the memo says has ties to ‘white Christian nationalism.’

However, the memo distinguishes ‘radical traditionalist’ Catholics as ‘separate and distinct from traditionalist Catholics who ‘simply prefer the Traditional Latin Mass and pre-Vatican II teachings.’

Unsurprisingly, the leaked FBI memo generated everything from unease over its contents to outrage from some quarters alleging the FBI was labelling all Catholics a threat.

The uproar was such that after pressure the FBI retracted the memo, but its original views offer a worrying insight into the mindset of America’s principal anti-terror body. Rick Garnett, a professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, said the fact that the memo was written in the first place was “deeply troubling.”

“The memo echoes an ugly, and long-standing, tendency in the United States of seeing Catholics as somehow disloyal or particularly problematic,” Garnett said.

Robert A. Destro, a professor of law at The Catholic University of



America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, agreed, saying that the memo “overstepped the agency’s realm of authority.”

Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, was among leading clergy to express alarm at the memo’s contents.

“People of all faith groups have a right to find refuge in the constitutional protections of our great nation,” he said. He pointed out that some of the groups named in the memo are not in full communion with the Church, adding, “If evidence of extremism exists, it should be rooted out, but not at the expense of religious freedom,” but “a preference for traditional forms of worship and holding closely to the Church’s teachings on marriage, family, human sexuality, and the dignity of the human person does not equate with extremism.”

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York said: “Let me first be clear: Anyone who espouses racism or promotes violence is rejecting Catholic teaching on the inherent dignity of each and every person.”

The Church “roundly condemns such extremism and fully supports

the work of law enforcement officials to keep our communities safe.”

But he found the leaked memorandum “troubling and offensive” in several respects – such as in its religious profiling and reliance on dubious sourcing. He said he was glad to hear it had been rescinded though noted an apology had not been offered. “We encourage federal law enforcement authorities to take appropriate measures to ensure the problematic aspects of the memo do not recur in any of their agencies’ work going forward.”

Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares, alongside attorneys general

from 19 other states, sent a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray and US Attorney General Merrick Garland condemning the memo as “anti-Catholic.”

Miyares said that “The leaked memo is unacceptable, unconstitutional, and un-American. Frankly, it’s what I would expect from Communist Cuba.”

“As attorney general, I’m responsible for defending Virginians’ rights, and religious freedom is the bedrock of the constitutions of the United States and of Virginia. Virginians should not and will not be labelled ‘violent extremists’ by their government because of how they worship, or because of their beliefs.”

Somewhat ironically, the same FBI memo noted that ‘deep-seated anti-Catholicism remains a characteristic of many far-right white nationalists’.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which monitors hate groups, said “there is a stark difference between traditionalist Catholics – who celebrate the Latin Mass and rebuff many of the liberalising reforms of the Second Vatican Council – and the radical traditionalist Catholics tracked by the Southern Poverty Law Center.”

“The latter group is made up of a handful of organisations that not only reject many of the modern Catholic Church’s teachings and practices, but openly embrace antisemitism,” as spokesperson for the centre said. “The radical traditionalist Catholics groups we identify as hate groups promote Holocaust denial and argue that the reforms of Vatican II were part of a sinister Jewish plot, in addition to other racist, bigoted, and conspiratorial beliefs. These are groups that teach hatred of people based on their religious beliefs, and for that reason we consider them hate groups.”

SPLC identified nine organisations as “radical traditional Catholicism hate groups,” including the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary located in Richmond, New Hampshire, which is not canonically recognised by the Catholic Church.

SPLC added that radical traditionalist Catholics “subscribe to an ideology that is rejected by the Vatican and some 70 million American Catholics” and “may make up the largest single group of serious antisemites in America.”

It is hard – and very unfair – to link these people with the Catholic Church, as the FBI appears to have done.”

Religion is dangerous, but not for the reasons the FBI claimed

Fr. Patrick Briscoe

The FBI memo has been described as a “threat to religious liberty,” and at stake is the integrity of Catholic teaching, our right to live our faith in peace and our reputation among our fellow citizens.

Bishop Knestout said that, “a preference for traditional forms of worship and holding closely to the Church’s teachings on marriage, family, human sexuality and the dignity of the human person does not equate with extremism.”

And here we are, facing a real difficulty. Our religious faith does not now, nor has it ever, conformed to secular cultural values and

norms. We will continue to be at odds with a world that does not recognise Our Lord.

Today, that confrontation between what we believe and our society is principally concerned with the value and fundamental dignity of every human life and human sexuality. In the past, Christians embraced death rather than offer sacrifice to pagan idols.

But the greatest contest for believers is not between the world at large and the Christian faith. The greatest conflict is fought in our own tortuous hearts.

Christianity is not dangerous because it harms people – quite the

opposite, actually. In Christ, all are changed and freed. That work of liberation can be a messy affair, which is why, no doubt, some balk at it. The process of conversion is constant, even violent. But in Christ we become more fully who we were made to be.

We have to take seriously unjust aggressions like the recent FBI memo. We should fight to overturn them. But they shouldn’t surprise us. This memo is just one more line in the history of a world that neither now nor then knows the God who loves it. The one thing we do know is that we must cling to the Lord. He alone is good.



“The memo echoes an ugly, and long-standing, tendency in the United States of seeing Catholics as somehow disloyal or particularly problematic”

Professor Rick Garnett, University of Notre Dame.

TALKING POINT

DAVID MILLS

Abusers benefit from the Church's downward spiral of shame

Temptation works like gravity. When you're trying to walk uphill, it pulls you downhill. Worse, at the bottom of the hill are places you think you want to go and at the top of the hill are places you don't want to go – you want the place with the great ribs rather than the gym. It's easier to go downhill, and you want to go downhill.

You can say that societies have their own temptations that work the same way. Huge numbers of people all making small decisions for themselves, usually in their personal best interest, as a group tend to go downhill as a matter of course. That's why to understand the Church today, we should understand how people in groups work.

We have a sad example in our own Church's sex abuse scandal. The pain of publicly dealing with a predator could be avoided by not dealing with him, by not removing him from office and by not telling his people and possible victims – and therefore the newspapers and all the Church's enemies – what he'd done.

Everyone who covered for him could tell themselves that he'd just made a mistake, he'll change, psychiatrists can cure him, it was really the victim's fault, he's a good priest we can't afford to lose, we can make sure he doesn't do it again. And most of all: Dealing with the problem in public will hurt the faithful.

They had lots of good-sounding excuses for hiding the abuse away.

They all walked downhill. The effect of all those people walking downhill for decades and decades was a crash at the bottom. Which

was perfectly predictable, had anyone thought about the kinds of temptations the Church faced, whether in the UK, Ireland, the USA or, as we see below, in countries like Portugal.

Here's one way this worked. Look back a hundred years or so.

The Church formed communities, gave people their identities, their way of understanding the world. In the Catholic neighbourhoods where most Catholics lived, it basically created a whole life. It was the institution binding together people who were economically marginalised and often religiously oppressed.

Catholics felt a bit 'us-versus-them', the Catholics versus mainstream society – particularly in countries like the UK and the USA. They were the underdogs. They had to stick together. They had to protect the Church.

At the same time, dioceses had grown bigger and bigger, and their hierarchs had grown loftier and loftier. The Church, whose ideal is a pastor-with-his-people, a shepherd-with-his-flock, became a system with lots of moving parts. It began to live by impersonal processes and rules, with the bishop several layers of people away from the flock.

That's all natural. You have a body that big, that's the way it has to work. The bishop can't possibly make every decision and deal with everyone. And the body eats money. Parishes need new roofs, need to get the boiler fixed, need to pay and insure staff. Hospitals need new equipment. Seminarians need training. Missionaries need support.

Here's just one of the ways such a system almost invites extensive sexual abuse and the cover-up after.



(There are several others.) The system demands a continuous supply of clergy – for years demanded a growing supply. In any institution, that much need lowers quality control, unless the people who run it are very alert and careful.

And most of the time they're not. Certainly, when we look back at the red flags, the Church wasn't.

At the same time, the Church – particularly its schools – offered predators what the military calls a target-rich environment. People trust their priests. They can't imagine their priests would do anything that bad. That creates an institution to which molesters are attracted because of what they

perceive as 'built-in' protection.

And if an institution doesn't know this and doesn't have ways of keeping predators, which the Church didn't, they'll get in. When someone caught an abusive priest, the people responsible for dealing with him had many reasons to deal with him quietly. Which is to say, not really deal with him at all.

Because that roof needs to be replaced, no matter who or what the priest. The schools need funding no matter what the diocese's clergy do. And the Church can't afford the scandal. People might leave us if they find out, and then where would they be?

The bishop and his staff felt

gravity's downward pull. They could rationalise walking downhill. At the top of the hill was public shame and cascading problems. At the bottom was (they thought) peace and quiet. Though stewards of the body of Christ, they did what the world pushed them to do. Not just because it was the easy way, but because they didn't understand how the world works well enough to avoid temptation.

So down they went. Eventually, there came the inevitable crash. Now that we see this, we need to learn from it.

David Mills is a freelance writer who works with OSV News

Cardinal pays tribute as abuse victims lead fight for justice

An independent commission's report on the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church in Portugal "points to the urgent need to combat whatever fosters silence from those who have been impacted by abuse," said Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston.

Silence "impedes effective prevention and the administration of justice," said the cardinal, who is president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

In a statement released at the Vatican, Cardinal O'Malley thanked the commission members and the Portuguese bishops who launched the study, but mostly the victims

and survivors who came forward, many telling their stories for the first time.

"Our concern should first and foremost be with the victims, whose right to justice and to adequate care needs to be a common priority," the cardinal said.

The commission's report examined cases from 1950 to 2022; all dioceses and religious orders were asked to carry out a survey of abuse cases in their archives, then commission members visited those archives. But they also relied on interviews with victims and family members who phoned a dedicated line for reporting abuse.

Based on interviews with 512

victims whose statements were "validated," the report estimated there were at least 4,300 victims of child sexual abuse by Church workers, mostly priests, during the 72 years covered by the study. And, it said, 48.2 per cent of the 512 interviewed said it was the first time they were telling anyone about their experience of abuse.

The survivors were asked what the Church could do to make amends, the report said; the responses made it clear that "there is no possible reparation to the victims for what happened," although a high percentage did ask for a formal apology from the Church and for a commitment to

preventing future abuse.

Commission members also interviewed all but one of the Portuguese bishops and all the superiors or superiors general in the country.

It pointed out in the official English summary of the report that "the volume, intensity and seriousness of signals from the victims found no echoes in the testimonies of these elites" and that many of them said they had had no direct experience of handling accusations.

In his statement, Cardinal O'Malley thanked "the men and women who have given voice to decades of silence and have paved

the way for a new moment in our Church and in our society. We join in expressing sorrow to all those harmed by such a violation of human dignity and encourage anyone who has experienced similar crimes not to hesitate to report them to the competent authorities."

"Ensuring that robust policies are implemented throughout the Church and that we can verify good practice and adequate codes of conduct for every bishop, priest, religious sister or brother, or catechist will provide a more secure environment for children and a more credible witness to the Gospel," the cardinal added.

HEART OF THE MATTER

Holy Land tourism begins a slow comeback despite Ukraine war

After a few false dawns, tourism is at last picking up in the Holy Land. Tom Tracy reports

This December, a series of traditional Christmas tree lighting ceremonies in towns and cities across the Holy Land finally pointed to a return toward normalcy for pilgrim visits and tourism to Israel, following the global pandemic and lockdowns beginning in 2020.

But the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has presented other setbacks to the local tourism economy and – as in so many other places worldwide – the pandemic changed daily living and livelihoods for many throughout the Holy Land, according to the regional director of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), an agency of the Holy See.

As Israel lifted all bans and restrictions connected with COVID, the country has witnessed a gradual return of tourism, especially in the last quarter of 2022, said Joseph Hazboun, a Palestinian Catholic of the Latin Rite, who has served CNEWA for more than two decades.

“It will take some time before the numbers reach peak levels of 2019, yet this slow return is encouraging, as hotels and pilgrim homes are back in business, hiring or rehiring staff and souvenir shops are back in business, as well as the hundreds of small olivewood factories that have suffered greatly in the past couple of years because of the lack of tourism,” Hazboun said from his office in Jerusalem.

He added that as hotels and pilgrim homes open back up for business, other parts of the economy flourish.

While Christians in Israel are a minority within a minority – Arab Israeli Christians count for approximately 2.4 per cent of Israel’s total population – the Church’s social service institutions are numerous and impact all segments of society, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, according to CNEWA.

In an area that suffers a high rate of unemployment in general, the tourism reboot has affected the lives of tour guides, especially students who graduated right before or during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Hazboun, who pointed out that some of those graduated are now seen entering the Jerusalem-based Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center to accompany and guide tourist groups.



Ethiopian Orthodox Christians pray at an Orthodox chapel near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The region is finally seeing an uplift in tourism, post-pandemic. Photo: Tom Tracy

“Souvenir shops in Bethlehem and Jerusalem are welcoming busses of tourist groups again. Restaurants, food industries, handicraft workshops are all back in business, with sales up between October and December,” Hazboun said. “There are reservations for tour groups and pilgrims visiting the Holy Land for February and beyond.”

Hazboun said his brother, a manager of a Christian family souvenir shop in Bethlehem, is once again waking up as early as 6 am to

welcome the groups who started returning around last August.

“Relatives and people we know, who owned olivewood factories, and who stopped working during COVID, are now back in business and earning their living with dignity. Hotels are hiring and more young graduates are finding employment,” he said.

Hazboun contrasts that with the dark days of the pandemic, when CNEWA and its partner agencies arranged an annual ‘day of

solidarity’ for 20 religious and monastic congregations, selling their handicraft and food products to locals and international nonprofit entities present in Israel.

“This year, we were told that since pilgrimages are back, and international volunteers are coming back, there is no need for a special day of solidarity this year,” he said.

Still, the tourism outlook is not as robust as it was in 2019, and now the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has created a new challenge for the pilgrimage industry in Jerusalem.

Hazboun said he has noticed a reluctance among many Europeans, including German groups in particular, to travel at this time.

“German pilgrimage groups are cautious and reluctant to travel, including visiting the Holy Land, which has a knock-on (domino) effect for all German-based pilgrim homes here, such as the Pilgerhaus in Tiberias and the Paulushaus in Jerusalem,” Hazboun said. He also sees a nervousness from these islands: “The British are also reluctant to go on pilgrimages at this time.”

Other European countries find it very risky to invest thousands of euros in pilgrimages when the gas bills have tripled since the Ukraine war began, he said. In addition, Russian and Ukraine pilgrims, once a significant piece of the tourism market in Israel, are now on hold.

There also are lingering impacts of the three years without pilgrim visitors and tourists: Some local handicraft and souvenir workshop owners in the Holy Land who lost their income during COVID-19 are now working as day laborers on

construction sites in addition to other manual labour jobs in Israel.

Hazboun worries many tradesmen are unwilling to reopen their souvenir businesses now that they have a stable income working in the construction sector at a time when the cost of gasoline, heating fuel, gas, electricity and water, in addition to basic food supplies, has increased significantly and continues to rise.

“In the Palestinian territories, the cost of medical care or emergency medical conditions is a horrifying concern for the impoverished as all medical expenses are out of pocket,” he added, noting that a serious illness can result in families selling major assets or property.

The annual pilgrimage of the Holy Land Co-ordination group, which includes bishops from the UK and Ireland, noted that many young Christians, despite facing significant social and economic challenges, remain resolutely committed to enriching both Church and society.

“We encourage pilgrims from our different countries to come and encounter these Christian communities” in the region, the statement read, which was signed by Christian leaders from around the world. “Praying with and learning from the country’s Christians – its ‘living stones’ – will serve to expand and strengthen pilgrims’ own faith.”

“We commit ourselves to continued prayer and advocacy for our sisters and brothers across Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and the wider region, trusting in God’s promise for all who dwell in this land,” the letter stated.



A pilgrim group with a Russian flag make its way to a Russian Orthodox Christian chapel in Jerusalem’s old city. Russian and Ukrainian pilgrim groups have been a significant part of the tourism economy here in recent decades, and their absence at the moment is keenly felt

VATICAN LETTER

JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

Holy See ambassadors agree that trust has been lost – but little else

A series of deadly raids by Israeli authorities in the West Bank and attacks on Jewish civilians in the first month of the new year have made the goal of a lasting peace in the Holy Land seemingly unattainable.

The raid in the West Bank city of Jenin on 26th January, which resulted in the deaths of 10 Palestinians, including an elderly woman, as well as the shooting to death of seven people near a synagogue in Jerusalem by a Palestinian gunman, prompted a heartfelt appeal by Pope Francis for both sides to lay down their arms.

“The spiral of death that increases day after day does nothing other than close the few glimpses of trust that exist between the two peoples,” the pope said during his Sunday Angelus address three days later.

“From the beginning of the year, dozens of Palestinians have been killed during firefights with the Israeli army. I appeal to the two governments and to the international community so that, immediately and without delay, other paths might be found that include dialogue and a sincere search for peace,” he said.

Both sides view the conflict in very different ways. The Israeli government views its actions as a legitimate defence against ‘terrorists’ in the region that seek to destroy the Jewish state, while Palestine considers Israel’s frequent incursions in Palestinian territories as an ‘illegal occupation’.

Yet both sides wholeheartedly agree on one thing, which Pope Francis touched upon: The sense of trust between the two sides is at its breaking point.

Ambassadors to the Holy See could see his point. “I believe that this [loss of trust] is a very central element,” Ambassador Raphael Schutz, Israeli ambassador to the Holy See, said. “It’s very difficult to build peace when there is no trust.”

His counterpart from Palestine, Ambassador Issa Kassissieh, also agreed with the pope, noting that, “unfortunately, the situation is deteriorating more and more.”

“We see an escalation of the situation on the ground rather than seeing de-escalation on the ground,” Kassissieh added.

However, both ambassadors offered contrasting views as to how the conflict has reached this point.

Citing the synagogue attack, as well as an attack on 11th February that killed two Israeli boys and a young man in Jerusalem, Schutz said violence against Israel by Palestinians is part of a “culture of



Mourners carry the body of Palestinian Naseem Abu Fuda, who was killed by Israeli security forces, during his funeral in Hebron, West Bank, on 30th January.

Photo: Mussa Qawasma, Reuters

hate” and claimed that the Palestinians allegedly celebrated in the streets “and were bragging about this ‘act of heroism’, as they called it.”

The Israeli ambassador to the Holy See also said that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas “doesn’t condemn such attacks.”

“They are not taking responsibility for anything. And they are also not saying out loud that they recognise, at the end of the day, the right of Israel to exist as the nation state of the Jewish people,” Schutz added.

He said that there was a time where he felt hopeful for a peaceful future in the Holy Land after the signing of the Oslo Accords, a historic series of agreements that

saw the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization’s recognition of the state of Israel.

“Back in ‘93, I was not only happy, I was also very much optimistic about the future. And right now, I must confess that I am less optimistic, especially because of the lack of trust,” Schutz said.

For his part, Kassissieh said that such attacks by individuals against Israeli citizens are “unacceptable” but it also is important to look at the roots of such incidents.

“I would ask, who is the occupier, who is the oppressor and who is under occupation? From here we (must) start. And when people are in despair and they’re crushed,

unfortunately, individuals out of frustration act not in the right way or appropriate way.”

Noting that former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon condemned the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, Kassissieh said it has a negative effect for both sides.

“Occupation corrupts and many, many Israeli security agents talked about the negativity of occupation in Israeli society. And you cannot be proud and talk about your democracy while you are controlling the lives of other people against their will,” he said.

The Palestinian Authority, he added, recognises the state of Israel. But, “it’s time for the Israelis to look at us equally as human beings, (as)

people that have the very basic right of self-determination, the very basic right as humans to be an equal part in dealing with each other.”

Yet, despite the grim prospect of peace in the Holy Land and a two-state solution, both ambassadors said that not all hope is lost.

“Well, you know, as a principle, I say we should never give up, and we should always try to find a common denominator and speak with each other,” Schutz said, adding that he is “a very strong believer that peace will come when Israelis and Palestinians will sit together.”

“I think that right now, again, what we should try to see is to find ways to speak with each other, because this lack of dialogue is really among the principal disadvantages or factors that make the situation on the ground worse,” he said.

Kassissieh expressed his hope that Israel will one day “look at us not as a threat, but as partners for the future, for generations to come.”

“When it comes to negotiations, I personally believe that if both sides are in the room alone and there is a will, they can strike a deal and they can finalise the issue,” he said.



Left, Israelis stand at Ateret Abraham synagogue near the scene of a shooting attack that happened the night before, in Jerusalem on 28th January.

Photo: Ronen Zvulun, Reuters

■ ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY, TWICKENHAM

JOANNA MARIE S. OLIVA



Putting true Catholic values at the forefront of our education systems

Here in the United Kingdom, if you are looking to catch up with someone from the Philippines, there are two places I'd suggest you start looking: either your local NHS, where they will be working, or in your local parish, where they will be an active part of the parish.

Many Filipinos have left our country in order to provide a better life for their families and a better future for their children.

While education is supposed to be a right, unfortunately many families in the Philippines can't afford to send their children to school due to financial constraints – especially after the elementary stages. This makes a full primary and secondary education the preserve of the few, rather than a right. It is all the more difficult for parents to obtain a high-quality education for their children as that is usually only offered by privately owned educational institutions, many of which are Catholic schools. Contrary to Church teaching, however, Catholic schools do not receive the same support from public funds as state schools.

My parents worked really hard in order to send all their children to good Catholic schools and universities in the Philippines. We were told that this may be the only thing they can give us to secure our future. Simultaneously, they constantly reminded us that not all are lucky enough to benefit from the quality education we have received. They strongly advise us that we do not use what we have gained from our excellent Catholic education solely for our own benefit but that we should use our education in the service of others – especially the less privileged.

The Philippines is the biggest Catholic nation, in terms of population, in Asia, with an estimated 83 million baptised Catholics. Our Catholicism is deeply embedded in our culture which is evident from our views on major social issues, such as the sacramentality of marriage and the sanctity of life. The Philippines is one of the last two countries in the world that does not legally accept divorce: the other nation is, of course, the Vatican City. The 2015 study conducted by Pew Research Centre states that "Filipinos overwhelmingly view having an abortion as immoral (93 per cent); no country among the 40 surveyed is more universally opposed to abortion on moral grounds."

However, despite the deeply rooted Catholic culture, there is also



a huge problem of corruption in the country. In the 2021 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI), corruption in the country was shown to have worsened further. The Philippines ranks 115th of 180 countries. The 2020 CPI report highlighted the impact of corruption on government responses to COVID-19.

Sadly, many of our leaders in the Philippines whether in politics, healthcare, business, the environment or justice systems are educated in Catholic schools. One may start to question if there is a gap between the values that we ought to teach our students – the future leaders of the country – and what they truly gain during their formative years in Catholic educational institutions.

As a lecturer in a leading all-female Catholic educational institution in the Philippines, this inquiry made me desire to discover more about Catholic education. It has led me to pursue further studies outside my country to enable me to gain a wider international perspective on Catholic education and its role in the society. I took a

Masters in Catholic School Leadership at St Mary's University, Twickenham which led me to understand more about the distinctive nature of Catholic education. The United Kingdom has thousands of quality educational institutions, but what sets Catholic schools apart from high-quality secular schools is their Catholic identity and mission.

Educators and leaders of Catholic educational institutions play an important role in building the character and honing the values of their students. Here at St Mary's, I learned the importance of developing the whole person and forming our students to practise the values and virtues they have acquired in the service of society. For my Masters dissertation, I have conducted research on the role of Catholic school leaders in promoting the common good.

My education and research at St Mary's University allowed me to be heard not only in the institution where I was teaching; it also opened doors for me to enter a dialogue with Catholic Education Association of the Philippines (CEAP) and the

Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). My research was also presented in the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI).

St Mary's University also opened opportunities for me to pursue my PhD as one of the All Hallows Scholars under the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E) project. This research project is a long-term collaboration with five partners: Boston College in the United States, the University of Notre Dame in Australia, Mary Immaculate College Limerick in Ireland, Saint Mary's University Twickenham in the United Kingdom and the International Office of Catholic Education in Rome.

There is a growing demand and clamour for greater equality of the sexes in societies in general and for more participation by women in the Catholic Church. This was evident in the recent Continental stage working document and report for the Synod on Synodality released by the General Secretariat of the Synod in October 2022. There is a desire from all continents to recognise and

value the love, charisma and contributions of women in the Church and in society. It is an opportune time to explore the formation of women leaders.

The Philippines was ranked the eighth most gender equal nation in the world in the 2018 World Economic Forum report, which makes it a good starting point to research the formation of women leaders. For my PhD, I am currently researching the extent to which Catholic Education affects and influences the formation of women leaders in the Philippines. My research aims to identify the strengths and potential gaps in the formation of female leaders who studied in Catholic schools and universities during their formative years. Hopefully, this research will serve as a contribution to the bigger mission of Catholic Education in pursuing the common good and help to create a more inclusive and just society in which men and women can each play their full part without discrimination.

Joanna Marie S. Oliva is a PhD Student, All Hallows Scholar St Mary's University, Twickenham

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

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

We're in trouble the second we stop thinking that Satan is out there

Whenever you don't agree with something the Church teaches, are you sure you're being honest and not just using excuses, or could it be Satan urging you to think in this way to help you lose your eternal soul?

How often do we hear comments by Catholics such as 'I don't agree with that, because things have changed, and the Church hasn't kept up with the times'? There are things within the Church that can change and will change with the times, but never the ones told to us by Jesus Christ, or some which are true no matter what time period we're in.

In simple terms, we cannot and should not change things initiated or agreed to by Jesus Christ, as his wisdom is infinite. Human beings on the other hand are far from perfect and can be susceptible to Satan's efforts in making us believe in our excuses.

What the Church initiated can be changed, and often is, when and if necessary. We do see, every year, the Church making changes to things to bring it up to date. A spectacular one was the changes to the Mass, from a global Latin version to one which used the local language.

Whenever we don't agree with anything in the Catholic Church, we

should first determine if it is something that Jesus initiated or agreed with, such as the seven sacraments.

Some people like to believe that some of these are no longer necessary, such as confession, which was instituted by Jesus Christ, but we should always remember that it's the only time that sceptical human beings know for sure that God has forgiven their sins. Getting people to ignore this sacrament must be a major target of Satan's.

Another major excuse is people not agreeing to go to Mass at least once a week. They argue that modern life is such a busy one, that finding time to go to Mass can be difficult.

Is taking their children to football classes more important than the eternal soul of their children? Do they prefer to look good in front of their non-Catholic friends rather than help their children know and understand the Catholic faith? Is a game of golf more important than their own eternal souls? Satan is always very busy in all these excuses. All these are tiny lifetime things, but our souls are for eternity.

Remember, the Church's overall ambition is to help people make

sure that their souls get to be with God in Heaven for all eternity when they die. Satan's is to make sure a person's souls gets to Hell for all eternity when they die. Be very wary that the things you don't agree with are not just excuses.

Satan has many names; others include The Evil Spirit, The Devil, Old-Nick, Beelzebub, there are more. The one thing we do know about Satan, whatever he's called, is that he is obsessed with acquiring the souls of mankind by showing and urging them how to offend God.

He's intelligent, persuasive, and relentless in pursuit of all souls and uses whatever he thinks is the most appropriate for his quest. As we've seen, a major one is helping people to come up with excuses for not believing in some things the Church teaches.

Another of the greatest threats from Satan was described very clearly in that great gangster film *The Usual Suspects*. In it there's a discussion about the possibility of a particular fearsome gangster not actually existing. When asked if this could be possible, one of the men responds by saying:

"The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world that

he didn't exist".

Today, many people believe that the Devil doesn't exist, and it's this kind of belief that is making Satan's work easy. The greatest proof that he exists is in the casting out of 'evil spirits' from possessed people. There's real evidence from thousands of such cases that have been witnessed and documented throughout the ages, making Satan a reality.

Watch out for Satan, he exists and tirelessly tries to persuade us to sin

every day of our lives in many ways. As we've already seen, a major one is persuading us to use excuses for not believing in some of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Never forget that we do have two great weapons in our arsenal to help us overcome all of Satan's temptations; the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.

Go to these sacraments regularly to make sure that Satan doesn't stand a chance of winning your eternal soul.

Statue of St Michael
vanquishing Satan



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CREDO

FR HUGH DUFFY



Do not be afraid to share, as Christ did

For anyone struggling to make ends meet these difficult times can be stressful. During tough times, we tend to look a little closer to home and to become a little tighter ourselves with what we have to share.

But the miracle of the loaves and the fishes (John 6) helps to free us from the anxiety of material concerns because it celebrates the way Jesus found enough to share with everyone, even during a time of great scarcity and hardship.

Families teach us a lot about sharing, not only abundance but whatever little they have. Have you ever noticed how a mother of a large family can multiply the family's food, to stretch a meal so as to accommodate one or more at the table? I've witnessed this generosity often in large extended families.

Any time is a good time to learn from this gospel message in John 6 :

11-14. It is important to understand the point of this message: we must feed the hungry and share with those in need. We need faith to look outward towards those in need: the sick, those in prison, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked and the homeless (Matthew 25). We need hope from above which recognises that enough is a good deal and that, no matter what, there will always be enough to share (Matthew 6 : 26). We need the love of Christ to propel us to make this possible by loving one another the way He loves us (John 13 : 34).

Jesus fed the multitude by multiplying the loaves and fishes. He took care of the physical hunger of the people, and so he wants you to follow his example. But he also took care of the spiritual hunger of the people afterwards by giving them the bread of life, himself, in the Eucharist.

John is writing for the Christians

of his day. So he intentionally set the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes in the context of the Eucharist, the bread of life. The Jewish feast of the Passover was near, making the message of the loaves and the fishes an integral part of the Last Supper (the first Eucharist) which, forever, was to be celebrated 'in memory' of Him (1 Corinthians 11 : 24).

Thus you cannot separate the new commandment of Jesus to love one another the way he loves you (and that means feeding the hungry) from the celebration of the Eucharist. If you have anything against your brother, the Lord says, go first and be reconciled with him before you approach the altar (Matthew 5 : 23-24).

It is not enough then to go to Mass every Sunday if you ignore your brother and sister in need. It is not enough to say, "I have fulfilled my

duty" by attending Mass if you do not see Christ in your neighbour, especially "the least amongst us". Many people, sorry to say, go to Mass but ignore the message of service to others which Jesus demonstrated in the miracle of feeding the multitude, in the washing of feet at the first Eucharist, and by his example throughout his entire life on earth.

It would behove those, who criticise others as unworthy to receive the Eucharist, to devote their efforts to putting into practice the example of service to others that Jesus commands.

When we receive the Eucharist, and nobody is really worthy to receive it, by trying to love others the way he loves us, we become extensions of Christ in our world, in our societies, and in our homes. The reception of the Eucharist means we take Christ into our lives, and we

take Christ at his Word by feeding the hungry.

So do not be afraid to share the blessings of the Lord. In the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, He demonstrates how important it is to feed the hungry. In the celebration of the Eucharist that followed this miracle, he satisfies our spiritual hunger. Service and celebration are interconnected.

Perhaps this is a good time to read, in its entirety, the sixth chapter of John's gospel. John is not obtuse but he is deep. The teaching of Jesus about service and celebration in this chapter is profound. It makes sense to give it time to sink in.

The miracle of feeding the multitude is an integral part of the miracle of the Eucharist wherein the living bread, come down from heaven, tabernacles himself within us whenever we love one another the way he has loved us.

Building a social media-savvy family life

Sister Nancy Usslemann

When teenagers are asked what they need to do to live well with their media, many of them reply "to limit time spent on their screens". Others said, "Be purposeful instead of using them to fill time." Still others insightfully commented that they "avoid what makes them feel uncomfortable."

They recognise the need to balance time with their screens with other meaningful activities and relationships.

Catholic parents can be heartened by that, especially as they grapple with the unprecedented challenges of navigating the gadget-filled lives of their children, and teaching them how to use media in accordance with the values of our faith.

To build a media-smart family, here are four tips based on the cardinal virtues:

- **Temperance:** Locate computers and devices in a central area of the house. Temperance is the virtue of self-control. We want to use and create media without

letting it rule our lives or lead to addiction. Positioning all media in central areas of the house is one way to hold each other accountable. That means putting phones on the kitchen counter at night to charge or using all laptops and gaming consoles only in public areas. Leaving space in our lives for other activities requires temperance in our digital media use.

- **Prudence:** Discuss online safety and behaviours.

The online world breeds scammers and predators. Talk to children about how scammers install ransomware for identity theft, and how to avoid them. Recognising the red flags of predation in online relationships is essential for kids, so they can alert parents to what makes them feel uncomfortable. Open communication leads to cautious online behavior and prudent actions. Prudence also means no double standards. If you have rules or protocols for your children, follow them

yourselves. Modelling good digital behaviour is one of the best ways to help your children make good choices when it comes to their own media.

- **Justice:** Discern together what is appropriate technology and screen time.

Justice is the virtue of moderation between having more or less than one's share. It is realising the fulfillment of our needs in relation to our obligation to others. Children may ask for smartphones at a young age because their friends have one, but that doesn't mean they should have them.

Parents make the judgment of what is reasonable and fair while considering the ability of the child to obey the family rules on technology use. This goes for screen time, too. Talking together – and allowing children to express their thoughts – is appropriate and will help them become discerning citizens but parents always make the final decision.

- **Fortitude:** Question the values in media messages.

Being courageous in the media culture often means going against the cultural norms. Evaluating media messages according to personal and Gospel values can be the determining factor of whether the family engages in a particular television program or video game. We can always ask ourselves: How does our relationship with Jesus affect our daily media choices?

- **Digital family plan**

Living virtuously with our media requires communicating together to become a media-smart family. Making a pledge or plan makes these choices concrete, so we encourage you to make a 'digital family plan', whereby each member holds the others accountable to what is agreed upon. Post the plan on the refrigerator door as a reminder.

Begin today being virtuous media consumers and creators.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Christ and Adam show us two sides of temptation – and how to respond

26th Feb 2023 – 1st Sunday of Lent (A)

During Lent we may reflect on our Baptism as a sharing in the life of Jesus. Our growing in the image of God has an aspect of dying to self and another aspect of rising to God's new life of love. The seed of this movement or growth was planted in us when we were first reconciled to God in the grace and sacrament of our rebirth.

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7**How sin came into our world**

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Responsorial: Psalm 50: 3-6, 12-14, 17

Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.

In your compassion blot out my offence.

O wash me more and more from my guilt

and cleanse me from my sin. (R./)

My offences truly I know them;



my sin is always before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned; what is evil in your sight I have done. (R./)

A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, nor deprive me of your holy spirit. (R./)

Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervour sustain me. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise. (R./)

Romans 5:12-19

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned – sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass,

much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.

And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is

written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Shun not the struggle

A reflective way of looking at life is to see it as a struggle between sin and grace, selfishness and holiness. Our time on earth will be successful in the measure that we put aside sin and try to live by the grace of God. Today's scriptures show two contrasting reactions to temptation. The first humans, Adam and Eve, are imagined as preferring their own inclinations to the will of God. Jesus, the Saviour, on the contrary resisted temptation, remaining faithful to what God the Father required of him. St Paul reflects on how these

Carved relief of the Temptation of Jesus in the desert by Dionyz Stanetti, 1744-1751 in the preserved medieval town of Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia.

choices affect ourselves: Adam's sin brought trouble on all, but we are saved and offered new life because of the fidelity of Christ.

An old priest who was blind for many years before his death, liked to urge his penitents to renew their efforts with these inspirational lines:

"We are not here to play, to dream, to drift. We have good work to do, and loads to lift. Shun not the struggle. Face it. Tis God's gift."

Temptation in one form or another is an unavoidable part of life. If we honestly examine our daily experience, we can find many aspects of temptation: impulses or tendencies counter to the right way of doing things. To rationalise away these temptations, so that they become socially acceptable and politically correct – is itself an insidious temptation. We want to dictate for ourselves what is right and wrong, to draw for ourselves the boundaries of "acceptable" behaviour, unencumbered by any notional commandments of God. This is rather like Adam demanding to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Our real growth to Christian maturity comes by acknowledging and accepting the vocation of struggling against temptation, to achieve the kind of behaviour and attitudes Jesus expects. We must submit our behaviour to his gospel.

Christ and Adam show the two opposite reactions in face of temptation: Adam, archetype of sinful, evasive, self-seeking humanity, finds plausible reasons to yield to it, and rebels against God's will. Jesus, archetype of the new God-seeking man, resists temptation even repeatedly. It can only be conquered by this blend of patience and loyalty, supported by trust that what God requires of us is what is best for us.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH FR DOYLE

Lent questions – and the Last Rites

Q. On Ash Wednesday, after receiving ashes on our forehead, we were told: “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” With Catholic teaching about an eventual resurrection after death, why are we told such a seemingly morbid and fatalistic thing? Why not simply say something like: “These ashes are a sign of repentance?” The emphasis should be on the fact that, although we are stained by sin, we will live again. Could you comment?

A. In recent years, there has been an option with regard to the distribution of ashes. Those administering them may say the traditional “Remember that you are dust ...” or they may opt instead to use this formula: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

I always choose the latter, for some of the same reasons that you have cited. The “dust” line does, though, remind us that we are both human and mortal, and it is taken directly from the Book of Genesis (3:19).

Q. As we enter Lent, we will often hear from many sources (homilies, meditation guides, etc.) that Christ came “to free us from sin and death.” Good Friday is seen as the time when Jesus ‘died for the sins of the world.’ Generally, that notion is just presented without any explanation of its meaning. This is confusing since, in reality, we do sin, and we do die. Could you help me understand?

A. Perhaps the best answer to your question is found in the New American Bible, in a footnote to the early verses of Chapter 8 of Paul’s Letter to the Romans. There we read: “Through the redemptive work of Christ, Christians have been liberated from the terrible forces of sin and death. ... At the cross God broke the power of sin and pronounced sentence on it. ... The same Spirit who enlivens Christians for holiness will also resurrect their bodies at the last day.”

One of the reasons we have for Lent is to prepare our hearts to welcome the saving work of Jesus on the cross—that he really did give his life for us, to free us from our sins and to enable us to receive eternal life in the footsteps of the risen Jesus. As we read in one of the Good Friday readings: “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

So you are right: We do sin, and we do die; but Jesus, by his own suffering and death, offers us the path to ultimate happiness. If we are sorry for our sins and seek forgiveness from the Lord, we are assured of joy and life that are eternal. That is wonderful news.

Pope Francis, dressed in Lenten purple, opens Ash Wednesday services at the Vatican



Q. Why do some religions say that the Sabbath day is Saturday while others – including Catholics – say it’s on Sunday?

A. No, Catholics do not say that the Sabbath is on Sunday. The Sabbath is on Saturday, as it was in the Old Testament when God rested from all the work he had done in creation (Gn. 2:2-3) and as it is observed by Jews today.

Christians, though, celebrate Sunday instead, because that is the day on which Jesus rose from the dead and the day on which the Holy

Spirit came upon the apostles.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains: “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath. In Christ’s Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man’s eternal rest in God” (No. 2175).

What Christians are celebrating instead of the sabbath is “the Lord’s Day,” and that has been happening since the first century. As the Acts of the Apostles relates: “On the first day of the week, when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them” (20:7).

So for Christians, Sunday is the preeminent holy day of the week, the day on which we refrain from

servile work, devote ourselves to the Eucharist, to prayer and family gatherings.

Around 110AD, St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch and disciple of the apostle John, proclaimed: “Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days.”

Q. Protestants believe in the rapture, and this was never really discussed in Catholic school. What is the Catholic Church’s belief? It would be wonderful to know that we will not have to live through the tribulation.

A. If, by the “rapture” one understands that, at the second coming of Jesus, all the faithful, living and dead, will undergo a bodily assumption into Heaven – then, yes, I would say that Catholics

do believe this.

But there are other elements in what is sometimes understood as “rapture theology” that are not consistent with Catholic teaching – especially the notion that there will be a “secret” coming of Christ where he will snatch believers up to Heaven and leave others behind to experience a period of severe tribulation.

Supporters of this view point to the passage in Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians, which says, “For the Lord himself ... will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (4:16-17).

The Catholic understanding of this passage is simply that those believers who are alive at Christ’s second coming will not experience death, but will be transformed in glory and join the saints already with the Lord. Catholic theology finds no evidence to support a belief in a subsequent period of tribulation and chaos.

Q. My husband has dementia. We got married 34 years ago and he converted to Catholicism, but was not keen on going to confession. He comes to Mass with me on Sundays, after being away for some time. Due to his mental state, I’m not sure he could go to confession now. Does this mean he can never receive the Eucharist again? How, then, can he receive the Last Rites?

A. Here’s what I think you should do. Ask your parish priest (or another priest whom you know) to visit your husband. Explain to the priest, ahead of time, that your husband is dealing with dementia and may well not be able to confess his sins.

When he sees your husband, if the priest agrees with your assessment, then the priest can give him absolution simply by asking if he is sorry for any sins. After that, of course, your husband is free to take the Eucharist. I’m assuming that he recognises that this is “special food” that somehow connects him with God – and I would be very generous in making that determination.

And as for the “Last Rites” (I prefer to call it the sacrament of anointing of the sick, because it can and should be administered when anyone is seriously ill, not just at death’s door), that one is even easier.

The anointing of the sick can be administered to any Catholic who asks for it, not just someone in the state of grace. And if the person is willing but unable to confess serious sins by number and kind, the priest can absolve him anyway.

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



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Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days.

St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Please listen to Our Lady's message

This is the first of a Lenten Course on prayer called, 'Our Lady's teaching on Prayer'

Part I - The Fatima Secret

We did not have a youth club in our parish so when I heard there was a thriving club in the next parish I went there like a shot.

They seemed to have everything I wanted: billiards, table tennis, football, hiking, camping and they even put on plays at Christmas.

Bill Haley and his Comets had not yet brought rock 'n' roll into the country and the Beatles were over a dozen years away, so music wasn't really on the agenda. But there was more than enough for us to enjoy.

A Vision of Our Lady

This was a youth club with a difference because it was run by a young man in his 20s who said he had seen Our Lady of Fatima in a vision. She did not say anything nor did she leave a message for him as she had already said many things to the children in Portugal many years before. As far as he was concerned, her message was that we should all say the rosary, so nothing ever began at the youth club without the rosary.

Leon Morris, for that was the youth leader's name, later became a priest, though he is now dead, sadly.

With hindsight I have no reason to doubt that he did have a brief vision of Our Lady of Fatima. One thing is for sure, he inspired me with the message of Fatima and made the rosary the daily prayer of choice for me for many years.

San Sebastián de Garabandal

But above all else the would-be Fr Leon filled me with a longing for the fateful year of 1960 when a secret that came to be known as the 3rd Fatima Secret would be opened by the Pope in Rome and revealed to the world. When the time eventually came the secret was opened and read by the Pope and by many subsequent Popes, but it was never shared with people like me.

However, Our Lady would not be thwarted, even by Popes, so in 1961 she appeared to four little children in Spain at a remote hamlet called San Sebastián de Garabandal.

Eventually after well over 2,000 appearances, she told one of the girls called Conchita what she told Sr Lucy at Fatima, and what was still a secret as far as the rest of the Church is concerned. The girls were so simple that they did not even know what the word 'perdition' meant, and so when they said Our Lady foretold the time when many priests, bishops and cardinals would



be going to perdition and taking 'many souls' with them, they did not know what was meant, but the bishop did, and so did subsequent bishops.

It was no wonder they would not give their approval for the visions and most particularly for the fateful message of what was to come, if nobody listened to Our Lady this time.

The latest ecclesiastical position is that the visions and therefore the messages given by Our Lady are not condemned by the Church, but the question about their authenticity is still awaiting approval as it has been for many years now.

After much study and investigation it seems to me that the message of Our Lady of Fatima is that if we do not return to the full and proper practice of our faith soon, then there will be frightening consequences.

It was the same message originally given at Medjugorje too, although what is happening there now seems to me deeply questionable.

However, three very good and reliable friends of mine have been to Medjugorje, and they all had a similar experience. The last of them was a Jesuit priest from Farm Street in London.

Medjugorje

He was a hard-nosed canon lawyer who admitted he was forced against his will to lead the parish pilgrimage to Medjugorje as a fellow priest became ill. He telephoned me

to tell me how he had, like my other friends seen the Sun dancing in the sky. He told me that he fell to his feet and wept as he had never wept since he was a child. I heard of this phenomenon from a close Portuguese friend of mine many years before. He told me how with over 70,000 others, his father had watched this same phenomenon for about 15 minutes at Fatima during the first world war.

However, what is the point of all these appearances, the strange phenomena that surround them, and the miracles associated with them? There is no doubt that they, more than anything else, are responsible for wave after wave of pilgrimages that still set out for these destinations. But if people are only looking for dramatic spiritual phenomena to enthrall them and the friends whom they later entertain with their experiences, then they have missed the point.

Conchita, the spokesperson for the other children, who now lives with her family in New York, said, and still says, that we are to forget the visions and all that surrounds them, as what is important is the message.

Our Lady's message

The message which is almost identical to those associated with all the appearances of Our Lady in modern times, is reduced to four essentials. They are: return to the

faith that God has given you by practising repentance, sacrifice, prayer, and participation in the Eucharist. When one rainy afternoon in the little mountain village of Garabandal, Conchita delivered this message to a large crowd outside the parish church, you could almost hear the yawn from the multitude. That is not what they wanted to hear; they wanted to hear about exotic prophecies, miracles and mystical phenomena. Well, I have good news for all our

spiritual butterflies who are forever looking for the wonderful, the exotic, and for prophecies of dramatic future events. Both Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Garabandal made it quite clear that if her message is not heeded then dramatic and world-shaking events will happen to bring people to their senses. If they do not, then more terrifying events will ensue to 'chastise' the heedless for their present state of spiritual bankruptcy, and the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern world, that has completely lost its way and found solace in unspeakable crimes and misdemeanours.

I doubt whether you will ever hear about them in the Fatima secret, which is kept under lock and key somewhere in the Vatican well out of harm's way. But knowing this, Our Lady gave the final message of what will happen if we do not change our ways to the spokesperson of the little girls, Conchita, who is still alive and recently celebrated her 74th birthday. That the day of reckoning is very close is certain but only she will announce when.

If you think this is all tommy rot then you have every right to your opinion, but I for one believe her, and so did St Padre Pio. That is why he left her a glove that covered his stigmatised hand, the cloth that covered his face before his burial, and his own personal rosary, that she has to this day.

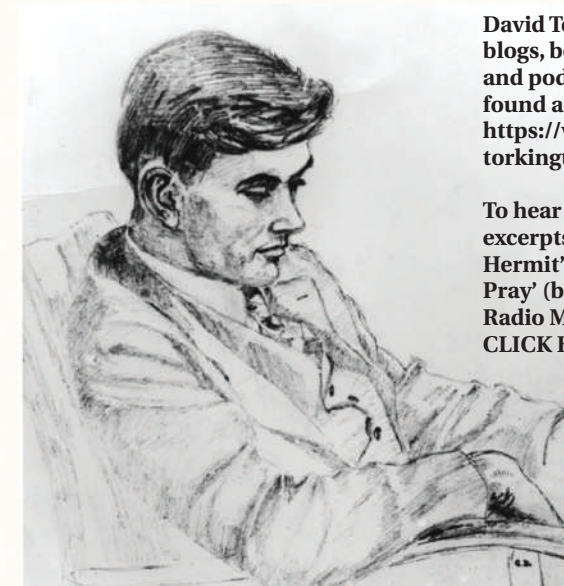
If you want to know what you should do, then do as Our Lady suggests, take out your rosary and start using it again daily.

For those who have forgotten how, then the course that follows is to remind you how.

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

David Torkington reads from The Hermit - Episode 1

by David Torkington | Jan 18, 2021 | Mystical Prayer, Podcast | 10 comments



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AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Cardinal asks faithful to make their Lent one with Christ at its heart

Cardinal Vincent Nichols gave a homily to help all prepare for Lent. In the pastoral letter for the seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time below, the Cardinal urged Catholics to 'place Jesus at the heart of your lives' during Lent and beyond, and to 'fix our eyes on the Lord' in the journey towards Christ's passion death and resurrection at Easter.

“ I write today to give you every possible encouragement to use these weeks of Lent to refresh and deepen your faith.

As we have just heard from the Book of Leviticus: 'Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy' (Leviticus 19:2). This is a heartfelt plea. While there are so many challenges facing us all at this time, our faith underpins everything we do. The gift of faith gives our lives an enduring purpose and stability. A faith that is refreshed and deepened helps us to be gracious, steadfast and even robust in every circumstance.

I put before you today three ways of refreshing and renewing your faith. They are these: a renewed focus on Jesus; a fresh readiness to bear witness to him; and, thirdly, a conscious effort to build community and compassion wherever you may be.

Let me speak about each one.

First, during these weeks of Lent please do all you can to place Jesus at the heart of your lives. Our relationship with him is the foundation of all we strive for, our abiding strength and our source of hope and joy. Without this relationship our faith loses its heart and warmth, becoming a matter of outward observance rather than inner wonder.

There can be no friendship with our Blessed Lord unless we give him space in our hearts. We need a time of prayer every day when we can simply talk to him, bringing him our worries and our joys.

When and where you pray doesn't matter; just whatever suits you. Pray in a style that appeals to you, whatever that may be. But, please, do it! And encourage each other to do so, whether in family prayer or with friends, in each other's company or even over Zoom. Jesus is there, waiting to embrace you, to rejoice in your achievements, to comfort you in your trials. Please give him space in your day, every



day. After all, St Paul reminds us: 'You belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God' (1 Corinthians 3:23).

Now the second aspect of the renewal I hope you can find is this: please let this faith, this relationship with the Lord, express itself when you are with other people.

I am certainly not asking you to find a soapbox or in any way to force

your faith onto others. No. But there are many moments when speaking of the goodness of the Lord is quite appropriate. For example, when someone is sharing with you their sorrow or distress, please don't hesitate to tell them you will pray for them. Or when you come across a person who is feeling alone or neglected, please do speak to them of the love of the Lord and the consolation you find in his presence.



When someone is sharing with you their sorrow or distress, please don't hesitate to tell them you will pray for them. Or when you come across a person who is feeling alone or neglected, please do speak to them of the love of the Lord

overcome. We can appreciate more deeply that we are, each of us, made in the image and likeness of God. He has an embrace for everyone. He excludes no one. He offers an invitation to each person to come and follow him. As we respond to that invitation, we become aware of a need for a change of heart and behaviour, in one area of life or another, even though each of us makes progress in his way only gradually, step by small step.

The third thing I ask of you this Lent is to refresh in your lives the way you put faith into action.

Here I want to highlight just one thing: in every circumstance, whether at home or school, at work or leisure, strive to be 'a bond of connection between persons' (St John Henry Newman).

Building for others a sense of being accepted is a genuine first expression of the life that Jesus offers. When we recognise and respect the goodness in every person we meet and strive, however simply, to reach out to them, we put faith into practice.

Can we echo in our actions just a little of that truth in today's Psalm that 'The Lord is compassion and love'? Building community, breaking down hostilities is doing the work of our Blessed Lord. It is a work so much needed in our troubled world. Every day will bring opportunities to do this.

I hope that in the days of this Lent, each of us will make an extra effort to put our faith in the Lord into practice in this special way. This is the appeal of today's Gospel message: a generous love that overcomes hostility.

One of my favourite saints is St Francis of Assisi. There is a lovely story, or maybe a legend, about him that I want to tell. It is said that towards the end of his life, when he was near to death, he gathered his followers together. Looking round he said to them: 'Brethren, let us begin to love the Lord because so far we have made little progress!' Well, if such a great saint can say those words, so can each of us.

My appeal to you, then, is very simple. This Lent, try to make a little more progress in prayer, in speaking of Our Blessed Lord to others, and in being a bearer to others of his compassion and love.

And please pray for me, as I will most certainly pray for you.



God's cascading grace brings solace at times of despair

On the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Bishop Peter Collins celebrated a Mass at St John's Cathedral, Norwich, with the anointing of the sick.

Fr Alan Hodgson, the Dean of the Cathedral, and other priests joined the bishop for the annual event, which this year took place on 11th February. Daniel Justin led a range of music, and there were refreshments afterwards in the Cathedral Narthex.

In his homily, Bishop Peter spoke of life as a feast to be savoured. This did not mean, he said, that it could be defined as the pursuit of self-indulgence, nor a journey that could be miraculously free of obstacles.

On the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, he prayed for insight to understand the true nature of human life, including suffering.

He expounded the idea of "God's cascading grace" in the reading from Isaiah, a river that consoles "on days when all seems well, and on days

when despair threatens". He contrasted the "sweet taste of fulfilment" which comes from this with "the stone jars of false expectation" which could never be filled.

While recognising that earthly life will always hold pain and loss, he said that we are duty bound to strive for healing. In doing so, we had to rely on the cascade of abundant grace, for "without Christ, we will run out of wine".

He encouraged his listeners to hunger only for what is authentic. "Dig down into the earth until you find the cascade of water," he urged, "into the soul until you find the flow of grace, into the pain until you find the healing balm."

"We must discover," he concluded, "that now is the time to taste and see that life is a feast to be savoured. Now is the time for healing."

"The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy is His name."



Pictured, Bishop Peter Collins anointing the sick at St John's Cathedral.

Sacred Heart swimmers make a splash – again!

Pupils at a Coventry Catholic primary school have retained the top prize at one of the largest school swimming competitions in the West Midlands.

A capacity crowd of parents, teachers and classmates watched on as 288 pupils from 16 Coventry schools raced for glory at the 2023 Catholic Schools Swimming Gala at Pingles Leisure Centre.

Boys and girls from years 4, 5 and 6 took part in 25m breaststroke, backstroke and front crawl sprints, 50m distance races and 3x25m relay heats during the morning session, with the highest scoring eight schools from across the morning qualifying for the finals – which included all three strokes as well as the 3x25m relays.

Sacred Heart Catholic School, which is part of the Romero Catholic Academy, capped a string of strong performances in the afternoon session with victory in the

boys' 3x25m relay final to secure first place by one point.

The school also claimed first place in the boys' front crawl finals, second in the girls' relay, as well as podium finishes in the girls' front crawl and girls' and boys' backstroke.

Six other schools from the Romero Catholic Academy also competed, with Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School claiming second place with victories in the boys' backstroke and breaststroke.

Kornel in year 5 said: "The whole school did really well, especially as it was the first time competing for some of us."

Sophie in year 6 said: "Everyone should be really proud, as it's not easy competing in front of lots of people."

Sophie Newman, PE Teacher at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, said the school was "thrilled" by the result, which came after months of hard training.





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Applications: To be submitted by **24th February**

Interviews: Week commencing **6th March**

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- The post would suit a practising Catholic who would oversee the mission and ethos of the school.

The role

The Deputy Head Academic will be accountable to the Headmaster and will work closely with him and the Deputy Head Pastoral to provide strategic leadership for the School. They will play a critical operational and organisational role in the efficient running of St Edward's, and work with the Deputy Head Pastoral and Assistant Heads in driving academic excellence and guiding the outstanding pastoral and enrichment provision so that everyone in the community can thrive and flourish.

About you

You will be highly organised, a strong communicator and effective problem solver, and positive in your approach to leadership. You will be collaborative and keen to build relationships across the school community and command the confidence of pupils, parents and colleagues, and model kindness and warmth in line with the school's Catholic ethos. In addition, you will be an excellent classroom practitioner and effectively engage with pupils and colleagues.

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- Very well-resourced, welcoming and supportive environment.

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Stunning intercultural Mass brings all Catholic communities together

An Intercultural Mass was celebrated at Holy Trinity, Newcastle-under-Lyme, on Saturday, 18th February, the Chair of St Peter.

Mgr Daniel McHugh, the co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese, recalled the beginning of the West Indian Chaplaincy in 1974, launched by the then Archbishop, George Patrick Dwyer. This was because the people had drifted away from the Catholic Church to set up their own Churches, where they felt more at home; many had been attracted to Pentecostal communities.

The success of the chaplaincy led to young people taking their steel band to Westminster Cathedral to play at Mass on the World Day of Migrants.

Fr Paul McNally, parish priest and area dean, welcomed Bishop Stephen Wright, the priests and the congregation at the beginning of the Mass, saying how much pleasure it gave him to see the wonderful gathering of our diverse community present in Holy Trinity church.

In his homily, Bishop Stephen endorsed this, recalling his experience of visiting Rome recently as one of the many new bishops from across the world.

He spoke, too, of the impression a pilgrimage to the Sea of Galilee made on him, where Peter made his profession of faith in Jesus as the Christ, leading to him being made head of the Church.

Mass was very well attended, a joyful occasion which was marked by contributions from many different ethnic communities, singing in different languages with music from many cultures:

The Gloria was sung in Igbo, a language spoken in Eastern Nigeria; the Apostles' Creed was sung in Ukrainian; the Marian anthem was deivered in Arabic, a language used in the Chaldean Liturgy; and the Offertory hymn was made in Lingala, a language from Central Africa.

In addition there were contributions in Tagalog, a language of the Filipinos; in Aramaic by Dr

“

The Holy Communion Hymns were in Malayalam, sung by young people from the Syro-Malabar community.



Subhi Zora, a sub-deacon in the Chaldean Community, and the Holy Communion Hymns were in Malayalam, sung by young people from the Syro-Malabar community.

intercessions were said in different languages by pupils of St John Fisher secondary school.

After Mass, the celebration continued in the parish centre with foods and entertainment provided by the different ethnic communities.

A group of children from the Syro-Malabar Community did an especially beautiful series of dances: they had clearly practised hard.

It was especially pleasing to see priests from the different ethnic communities concelebrating the

Mass, and present afterwards.

Bishop Stephen had highlighted the presence of a priest from the Ukrainian Eparchy who had travelled from Liverpool. Mgr McHugh welcomed him, especially in the week when we recall the invasion of Ukraine, and the role of the Ukrainians here in outreach to those fleeing the war.

Thanks to Fr Paul McNally and parishioners of Holy Trinity for welcoming the different communities. Holy Trinity Catholic church has long been a place where the waves of immigrant groups have been welcomed.

At the end of the celebration on Saturday, Fr Fretch, the Filipino chaplain, spoke of the wish of the Filipino Community in Birmingham to host the next Intercultural Mass.

They had not experienced this celebration before, and had come to Holy Trinity church to highlight the part of Filipino faith and culture in the life of the Church today.

Fr Michael Pulijc, the chaplain to the Royal Stoke University Hospital, hopes with the help of Fr Fretch to begin a quarterly Mass for Filipinos, many of whom work in health care, as a way of supporting them and their Catholic faith.



St Dominic's pupils held a mini-marathon (below)



Pupils at The Painsley Catholic Academy, in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, have raised an impressive total of over £16,000 for CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) the international development charity. The Staffordshire-based school started their fundraising in December by selecting the CAFOD World Gifts campaign. A series of fundraisers followed, from Christmas jumper days to cake sales,

non-uniform days and creating luxury hampers to be raffled. Children at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School in Stone took part in a mini-marathon and older students at Blessed William Howard Catholic High School, Stafford, organised a giant game of musical chairs in the sports hall.

Pride of place goes to Zac Byrne from St Thomas' Catholic Primary School, who raised an amazing £300 with a sponsored head shave.



Zac Byrne's head shave raised £300



Parents and inspectors unite to deliver 'outstanding' report

St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Darlington, has gained an 'Outstanding' from the Catholic Schools Inspectorate.

Highlights from the report included pupils clearly expressing an understanding that they are valued and cared for, and feeling happy, confident and secure.

Parents spoke highly of the provision at St Teresa's, knowing that it is a school where their children are safe and, 'parents and children grow together'.

"The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school is outstanding because the mission statement at St Teresa's is

clear, inspiring, known, lived and witnessed throughout the school," the report said, singling out the part staff play in helping the school live out its mission statement to 'do the little things well.'

"Staff live out the mission statement and implement it throughout the whole life of the school. This is evident in their care, compassion, pastoral support and the quality of their relationships with pupils, parents and each other. This embedded culture means that the school celebrates and values everyone in its community without exception.

"Staff go the extra mile to ensure

they understand individual needs and are committed to supporting the most vulnerable.

"Through carefully considered actions, with Christ at the heart of the school, staff fully embrace inclusivity and provide exceptional support for all. Staff consistently bear witness to the school's Catholic life and mission and are exemplary role models for the pupils."

Headteacher Paula Strachan said she 'was delighted that the dedication of the staff team shines throughout the report', adding that the school shows 'how doing the little things well can have a big impact.'

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GARDENING

Roses are red....

The science behind flower colours



Everyone has their favourite colour, especially when it comes to flowers. Some gardeners like to seek out the rarest flower colours, while others have their personal favourites regardless of how common they might be.

So, how do flowers get their colour? Which are most common and most rare?

The secret of flower colouring

The science behind colour involves both physics and chemistry, light and chemical compounds. Light is energy, an electromagnetic wave made up of particles called photons. Each photon carries a certain amount of energy. Molecules, chemical compounds made up of atoms, also have varying amounts of energy.

When light strikes an object, the photons are either absorbed by or bounce off it depending on the energy

levels of the photons and the object's molecules. If the photon bounces away, it can enter the human eye, where we perceive it as a specific colour.

When you look at a flower, you are seeing the light it reflects and not the light it absorbs. A marigold, for instance, reflects a pattern of wavelengths of light we see as orange. It absorbs other colours.

As they evolved, plants used colour to their advantage. They developed colourful flowers to attract pollinators. Two important types of chemical compounds, with many individual varieties, make up petal colours: carotenoids and anthocyanins.

Different combinations of these compounds give us all the beautiful and varied shades of flowers. A flower that has neither compound is white and reflects all wavelengths of light at once.

What is the most common flower colour?

There really is no concrete answer to this question. Pollinators love bright colours within their range of vision. That range varies by species and is a little different from humans' range of colour perception. Hummingbirds, for instance, can see colours past red and into the infrared range.

The most common flower colour has not been defined but varies by region. For instance, often overlooked pollinators, like flies, prefer paler colours. They are attracted to light coloured and white flowers. In regions where flies are the predominant pollinators, white flowers are more common.

Rare flower colours

To make blue and purple, flowers need forms of anthocyanins that are

somewhat unstable. This is why these colours are the most rare. It's easier to utilise carotenoids and stable anthocyanins to produce orange, red, yellow, and pink shades. These colours are more common.

Also rare are green flowers. Chlorophyll is the molecule that makes plants green and that is responsible for photosynthesis, the process by which plants make food. Flowers can be green too, but this coloration makes it more difficult for pollinators to distinguish between blooms and leaves. This is likely why it's rare.

Many flowers also reflect ultraviolet light, a type of light that is out of the range of human vision. Honeybees can see this colour, so flowers that produce it attract more pollinators.

Some flowers have colours so rare that they don't actually exist in nature. For

example, black flowers are entirely creations of human cultivation.

Paint them black

A black flower, which is really a very deep purple, would be difficult for pollinators to see. Even among cultivated varieties, this is a rare colour.

It's difficult to create something that requires such a high concentration of the unstable anthocyanin compounds, but it has been done.

You can find tulips, hellebore, calla lilies, petunias, pansies, and orchids in striking shades of human-created near-black.

Flower coloration is a complicated and fascinating subject. While no one can fully answer the question of the most common or rare colour, there are obvious colours that dominate the flower world, all based on getting pollinated and reproducing.



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HEALTH

HEALTH

Manal Mohammed



Norovirus: what to know about this bug as northern hemisphere countries face outbreaks

Recently there has been a sharp rise in cases of norovirus, sometimes called the winter vomiting bug, in the UK. According to the UK Health Security Agency, cases in England are 66 per cent higher than the average for this time of year, and at their highest level in more than a decade. Surveillance data shows norovirus outbreaks have increased in hospitals, schools, and particularly in care homes. The majority of reported cases are in people over 65.

There have also been more norovirus infections reported than usual in Scotland, while the US and Canada are similarly recording increasing cases.

So what do you need to know about norovirus?

Norovirus was first identified in 1968 as the cause of an outbreak of gastroenteritis in Norwalk, Ohio. The virus is the most common cause of gastrointestinal symptoms, responsible for about one in five cases of gastroenteritis globally.

Norovirus generally causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach pain. Although in most cases the infection clears in a couple of days, it can take longer. The symptoms can lead to dehydration, sometimes requiring hospitalisation, especially in people with weakened immune systems, older adults and children.

In rare cases, people can die from norovirus. It's been estimated that norovirus is responsible for roughly 699 million infections and over 200,000 deaths worldwide each year, with the largest proportion of deaths occurring in children from lower-income countries. Poorer sanitation and access to safe drinking water in developing countries compared with developed countries are important factors.

Norovirus is highly contagious

People with norovirus are most contagious when they have symptoms, and even during the first few days after they recover.

Norovirus spreads via the faecal-oral route. This means you catch it by accidentally getting tiny particles from



Oh, it's my stomach!

the vomit or faeces of an infected person in your mouth. This might happen, for example, if the virus particles land on surfaces you touch, contaminate the food you eat, or if you have direct contact with someone who is infected.

Norovirus can also contaminate food if the food is grown or harvested with contaminated water, for example if fruit and vegetable crops are irrigated with contaminated water or if shellfish are harvested from contaminated water (shellfish can accumulate norovirus in their bodies).

Noroviruses are relatively resistant in the environment. For example, they can survive for long periods on different surfaces, and at high temperatures.

Unfortunately, there are no approved vaccines or antivirals to combat norovirus, despite significant research efforts. Notably, there are many different strains of norovirus, and its genetic diversity makes the development of effective solutions more difficult.

- That said, there are some preventive measures you can take to reduce norovirus transmission.
1. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before preparing food, eating and after going to the toilet.
 2. Wash fruit and vegetables well. And thoroughly cook shellfish to an internal temperature of at least 62°C (steam

"Noroviruses are relatively resistant in the environment. For example, they can survive for long periods on different surfaces, and at high temperatures. Unfortunately, there are no approved vaccines or antivirals to combat norovirus, despite significant research efforts"

- cooking may not heat it enough to kill norovirus).
3. If possible, people who are infected should isolate from others until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have passed. They should not be involved in any food preparation.
 4. If someone in the household has gastrointestinal symptoms, routinely clean surfaces and any objects that are touched, such as kitchen counters, doorknobs and remote controls. Gloves should be worn when cleaning and disinfecting. It's also advisable to wear a

- mask if cleaning an infected person's vomit.
5. Thoroughly wash clothes or linen that may be soiled with the vomit or faeces of someone who has been infected.
- Hot water and detergent should be used for washing at the maximum available cycle length, before machine drying at the highest heat setting.
- If you do catch norovirus, it's important to drink plenty of water or electrolyte drinks to prevent dehydration. This is especially true for people who are vulnerable.
- Fever-reducing medications (such as paracetamol) and anti-nausea medications may help relieve symptoms. If symptoms become severe or you are concerned, seek medical help.

Manal Mohammed is a Senior Lecturer, Medical Microbiology, University of Westminster



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FOOD

CHICKEN PIE WITH MUSHROOM AND SPRING ONION



This is a truly wholesome dish which provides a great way of using up left over chicken. It's a nice warming and filling meal, accompanied with a healthy serving of creamy mash. Using a bread mix is an easy way to produce a delicious crust without making pastry.

INGREDIENTS

- 250g mushrooms
- 1 bunch spring onions
- 1 cube chicken stock.
- 500g mascarpone cheese
- 15g plain flour
- 50g grated Parmesan cheese
- 500g Naan Bread Mix
- 290g Water
- 300g chopped, **cooked** chicken
- 3 knobs of butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 220C.
2. Slice 50g of the mushrooms and chop the rest. Clean and chop the spring onions, and fry both lightly in one of the knobs of butter.
3. Stir in the crumbled chicken stock cube and leave to cool slightly.
4. Spoon the mascarpone cheese into a bowl, add

the plain flour and most of the grated parmesan cheese (saving a small amount to sprinkle over pie later). Blend all together until smooth and adjust seasoning to taste.

5. Prepare the bread mix following instructions then roll out a bit more than half the dough to line the base and sides of a greased 30cm flan tin.

6. Fill with the chicken, mushrooms and spring onions then loosely dot over with the mascarpone mixture.

7. Roll out the remaining dough and use this to top the pie, ensuring the edges are well sealed.

8. Brush top with the second knob of butter, melted, and sprinkle with remaining grated Parmesan cheese. Pierce the top with a fork in a few places to make some steam holes.

9. Bake in lower half of the oven for 25-30 minutes until bubbling and golden brown.

With the ultimate fun treat to follow, chocolate cupcakes!



Cupcakes of all varieties are so popular now that they can be seen nearly everywhere. These chocolate versions are easy to make, and are great for baking with kids. They'll love the bright colours and tasty flavours, and they make an ideal – and inexpensive – treat after tea.

INGREDIENTS

- 165 g all-purpose flour
- 9g baking powder
- 1g baking soda
- 65g unsweetened cocoa powder
- 0.8 g salt
- 45g butter, softened
- 300g white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 4 ml vanilla extract
- 235ml milk

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 175 degrees C.
2. Line a muffin pan with paper muffin cups. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cocoa and salt. Set to one side.
3. In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well with each addition, before stirring in the vanilla extract.

4. Add the flour mixture alternately with the milk and continue to beat well. Fill the muffin cups until they are three quarters full.

5. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes in the preheated oven, or until a small knife inserted into the cake comes out clean.

6. Serve on their own once cool, or with icing and decoration of your choice. Enjoy!

“These chocolate versions are easy to make, and are great for baking with kids.”

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CINEMA

Confusing title, confusing plot: Looks like Ant-Man’s lost his way

As suggested by its rather cumbersome title, there’s a lot going on in *Ant-Man and The Wasp: Quantumania* (Disney). Unfortunately, the film, while free of gore and any really problematic material, ultimately adds up to less than the sum of its parts.

In this visually imaginative but dramatically flat third installment in their joint screen adventures, romantically linked superheroes Ant-Man, aka Scott Lang (Paul Rudd), and The Wasp, alias Hope Van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly), become the victims of a dangerous experiment.

Scott’s grown daughter Cassie (Kathryn Newton) has invented a device to communicate with the subatomic Quantum Realm where Hope’s mother, Janet (Michelle Pfeiffer), the original Wasp, was trapped for decades. Instead, the invention becomes an unwanted—and irresistible—portal to this other world.

Thus all four characters, along with Hope’s dad, Hank (Michael Douglas), find themselves unwillingly transported to Janet’s former place of exile. They also become separated in the process.

Before the quintet can regroup and find their way home, they get drawn into the struggle between a band of rebels led by fierce warrior Jentorra (Katy O’Brian) and the tyrant who’s oppressing them, Kang the Conqueror (Jonathan Majors). Janet, it gradually develops, knows more about



Paul Rudd and Jonathan Majors star in a scene from the movie *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*.

Kang and his nihilistic cosmic ambitions than she’s initially willing to say.

As scripted by Jeff Loveness, returning

director Peyton Reed’s extension of the Marvel Comics–based franchise pits the protection of loved ones against broader, more altruistic goals and showcases intergenerational family unity and teamwork. The screenplay also tries to

make a point about the mistreatment of indigenous people, though the effort is a rather feeble one.

These thematic endeavours notwithstanding, most of the running time is taken up by standard-issue action sequences with only Majors’ malignant gravitas and the occasionally effective comic relief adding much of interest. Though generally inoffensive, *Quantumania* feels scattered, shallow and unsatisfying.

Despite that, its stars loved playing the roles Paul Rudd spoke recently, in an interview with Marvel Entertainment, of his fondness for the character of Scott Lang, after portraying him for almost 10 years. “It’s been almost a decade now that I’ve been playing this part. I’ve loved it and I feel protective of Scott Lang and Ant-Man,” he said.

“It’s really nice coming back. I still..can’t believe that I’m sitting there and it’s like ‘wow, there’s Michelle Pfeiffer and there’s Michael Douglas.’...it’s really nice to not get used to working with legends.”

The film contains frequent bloodless violence, fleeting references to possible adultery, brief anatomical humour, at least one use of profanity, several milder oaths and some crude language.

While suitable for most children, younger ones may find some content a little worrying.

LIFESTYLE

How to find the right match for you ... in a therapist

According to a recent Forbes Health poll, improving mental health was cited as one of the top New Year’s resolutions for 2023.

For those seeking a mental healthcare provider, finding the right one can feel much like dating – overwhelming to find someone who shares the same values, meets your needs, and with whom you feel a connection.

However, finding an attentive, caring and knowledgeable therapist can pay dividends on your mental well-being.

“Working with a provider with whom you have a strong and trusting relationship can have a significant impact on the success of mental health treatment. That’s why it’s important to find someone who aligns with your needs and makes you feel comfortable and heard so you can make progress in your mental health journey,” notes Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, associate chief of behavioural health at virtual care provider MDLIVE.

Whilst finding the right provider can seem daunting, according to Dr. Espada-Campos, there are a few simple things to keep in mind that can help you find the right match.

1. Understand your needs first

When it comes to your initial search, look for a provider that meets your basic needs. First, determine whether you need a psychiatrist or



therapist. While psychiatrists and therapists can provide treatment for many of the same issues, psychiatrists are doctors who can diagnose psychiatric conditions and prescribe medication, while therapists are licensed providers who can assess and support emotional or behavioural health concerns through talk therapy.

Once you know the type of professional you’re looking for, do some digging into what a potential provider offers. Does their experience and speciality areas meet your needs? Do they offer night and weekend appointments? Doing the research upfront to determine compatibility at the base level will help minimise unexpected issues later.

2. Location doesn’t have to be a dealbreaker

Virtual care has become an increasingly popular option for mental health services, as it provides private and convenient access to quality care in a timely manner.

In fact, many health plans and employers have expanded benefits to cover virtual mental healthcare services. This has allowed for the dating pool to expand, meaning it’s easier than ever to find a provider that fits your needs—even if they’re in a different area. Building an ongoing relationship with a virtual therapist or psychiatrist is just as meaningful as it would be with an in-person provider.

3. Dig deep on the first date

Once you’ve found a provider that meets your needs, the first visit can help illuminate further. Just like on a first date, you may be apprehensive of coming on too strong by asking lots of questions, but doing so offers the perfect opportunity to see whether the therapist is a match for you both on and off paper, which can lead to a trusting and healthy relationship in the long run.

Some questions that may help gauge your compatibility include: What is your training and background? Do you have experience with the issues I am facing? How can we work together to achieve my goals? What does a typical session look like?

4. Recognise when it’s time to move on

As with any relationship, the initial stage may be enjoyable, but then you start to get a nagging feeling that something isn’t working. The same can be said for working with a therapist.

Sometimes, a provider is not the right fit – and that’s OK. If you find that sessions are not making you feel better generally, you’re not making progress with the goals you established together, or you feel they are not making adequate space for you, it might be time to find a different provider.

No one should be forced to settle in any relationship, romantic or otherwise, if it doesn’t feel quite right.

5. Breaking up isn’t hard to do

There are many fish, er, mental health providers in the sea, so you shouldn’t feel pressured to stay with one simply because you chose them originally. When you do feel it’s time to cut ties with your therapist, it’s important to be transparent; simply explain to your provider that you plan to end your treatment with them in your next session.

This offers an opportunity to evaluate your work together and may also help you reflect on what you might need in a future provider.

Recognising your wants and priorities in a mental health therapist can help make the process of finding the right one a bit more seamless.

The big quake of 1114 is still the one Turkey and Syria remembers

HISTORY

Beth Spacey

The catastrophic earthquakes of 6th February 2023 in Turkey and Syria are so far known to have claimed the lives of over 46,000 people. This number will likely grow as rescue and recovery efforts continue.

The region has known earthquakes before. In the past century alone, Turkey has seen nearly 20 earthquakes of a magnitude 7.0 or above.

Seismic activity is so frequent in this area because it sits on three continually grating tectonic plates. This means the region has a history of earthquakes that stretches far beyond the previous century.

While we might expect that the voices of those who survived these earlier earthquakes have been lost to history, this isn't strictly true. Some have survived.

The earthquake of 1114 CE

One of the cities that has been hit hardest by the 2023 quake is Antakya in southern Turkey.

This is not the first earthquake to devastate Antakya. It was struck by another deadly tremor just over 900 years ago, in the early hours of November 29 1114 CE, or 508 AH in the Islamic calendar.

This earthquake is now known as the Marash earthquake, named for one of the worst-hit cities. One contemporary, an Armenian priest called Matthew of Edessa, estimated it killed 40,000 people in Marash alone.

Antakya is roughly 160km southwest of Marash and also suffered devastation. Much of what we know about the earthquake comes from texts that were either written in Antakya or name the city as one that was most significantly affected.

At the time of this quake, the geopolitical map of the region looked very different from today. It was the Middle Ages, and Antakya – then known as Antioch – was the capital of the Principality of Antioch.

Written accounts from medieval West Asia record several earthquakes. The quake of 1114, however, stands out both for the impact it had on people at the time, and for its continued importance for decades after.

Even at a distance of 900 years, accounts of the 1114 earthquake reveal historical societies went about recording natural disasters in terms that remain poignantly resonant.

In the aftermath of the 1114 earthquake, Christian and Muslim chroniclers in the region set about



The earthquake at the opening of the 6th seal
14th century manuscript
British Library

committing the disaster to writing.

In this period, to write something down was to make a serious statement: this is important and needs to be remembered. Writing was, and remains, a powerful tool.

Walter, chancellor of Antioch in the first half of the 12th century, recorded how the quake struck in the dead of night.

He describes a scene that seems horrifyingly familiar: of people trapped in collapsed buildings as they slept, others who couldn't be found, and survivors in the streets who raised their hands to the heavens and cried out in despair.

He wrote: 'In the streets, in courtyards, in gardens, in groves, and in other deserted dwelling places, [the people of Antioch] took tents for homes.'

In present-day Jerusalem, 500km to the south, Fulcher of Chartres – the chaplain to King Baldwin I – wrote his own description of the quake.

It was, Fulcher says, the worst earthquake anyone had ever known:

'[The earthquake] shook the region of Antioch so that it demolished to the ground most of the towns, either whole or in part, houses as well as walls, and in the collapse some of the people perished, suffocated.'

Between Antioch in the north and Jerusalem in the south lies the city of Damascus in present-day Syria. In 1114, it was ruled by the Turkish governor Tughtakin.

According to the Damascene administrator Ibn al-Qalnis, who lived and worked in the city, the

quake shook the earth and terrified the people.

Remembrance across space and time

The 1114 earthquake and its impacts were not quickly forgotten. It became infamous far beyond the area where it had struck. This is probably thanks in large part to the efforts of those who recorded it in the aftermath.

In the early 13th century, nearly 100 years later, the great chronicler Ibn al-Athir was composing his *al-Kmil fit-Trkh* (The Complete History) in Mosul, more than 600km east of Antioch.

Ibn al-Athir described the 1114

earthquake in his chronicle: 'In this year [508 AH] in Jamada II [the month of November], there was a strong earthquake in Al-Jazira area, Al-Sham and others, causing a wide destruction at Al-Ruha, Harran, Samsat, Balis and others, and many people killed under debris.'

As far away as England, 13th-century chroniclers such as Roger of Wendover continued to record the 1114 earthquake. Roger briefly noted that in 1114: 'An earthquake destroyed part of the city of Mamistra, not far from Antioch.'

The historical accounts of the 1114 quake give us a rare insight into human responses to natural disasters 900 years ago, especially processes of recording and remembering. Then, as now, their impact could make an indelible mark on a region's collective memory.

Beth Spacey is an Associate Lecturer, The University of Queensland



'In the streets, in courtyards, in gardens, in groves, and in other deserted dwelling places, [the people of Antioch] took tents for homes.'

Walter, chancellor of Antioch

Kick your football into touch and get into the noble art of chariot racing

FAITH IN SPORT

Fr Vlad Felzmann

As I suspect you know, football is the country's most popular sport, followed by cricket, tennis and rugby. A number of modern sports were codified in England during the 19th century, among them cricket, rugby union, rugby league, football, field hockey, bandy, squash, tennis, and badminton. To broaden your horizon, what about the rest of the world? For us in the UK, here are a few 'exotic sports'.

Chariot racing

Possibly the oldest equine sport, and believed to be the sport that started the ancient Olympic Games, chariot racing was made famous in modern times by the 1959 epic film, *Ben Hur*.

In Greece, chariot racing played an essential role in aristocratic funeral games from a very early time. With the institution of formal races and permanent racetracks, chariot racing was adopted by many Greek states and their religious festivals. Horses and chariots were very costly. Their ownership was a preserve of the wealthiest aristocrats, whose reputations and status benefitted from offering such extravagant, exciting displays. Their successes could be further broadcast and celebrated through odes and other poetry.

In standard racing practice, each chariot held a single driver and was pulled by four horses, or sometimes two. Drivers and horses risked serious injury or death through collisions and crashes; this added to the excitement and interest for spectators. Most charioteers were slaves or contracted professionals.

In Rome, chariot racing, staged at the massive Circus Maximus arena located between the Aventine and Palatine hills, gave spectators an opportunity to watch daring chariot drivers and their teams of horses on a long sand track, where they hit top speeds of close to 40 miles per hour.

Many people would be surprised to learn that chariot racing is alive and well today. Events are held in the US states of Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Colorado from January to March.

Not surprisingly, chariot racing requires participants to be tough and dedicated. What is the appeal? Just like ancient chariot racing, the sport is rife with danger, excitement, and adrenaline. Each team has two horses pulling a chariot, and two or three teams run a straight quarter-mile race in about 22 seconds, or at roughly 50 miles an hour. There are



no purses to win, but 'Calcutta betting' is permitted. Calcutta betting allows racers to bet on themselves and, if they win, they receive a percentage of the pool that was bet on the race.

Quarter Horses, Paint Horses, and Appaloosas dominate the sport because of the short racing distance, and their breed associations have approved chariot racing as an activity that earns points and recognition within their breeds.

But in the races themselves, all three breeds compete against one another. Chariot racing also gives retired sprinters a second chance to participate in racing.

Ostrich Racing

Here's another exotic sport: ostrich racing. It is common in South Africa and in the United States particularly in Chandler, Arizona. In Jacksonville, Florida, an ostrich farm

was opened as a tourist attraction in 1992 and was one of the most visited and known attractions in the state.

People ride on the backs of ostriches in a similar style to horses, but with special saddles, reins and bits. It is said that it is harder to ride an ostrich than to ride a horse.

Ostriches are extremely fast; they can run at a maximum speed of 43 miles per hour and maintain their speed for very long distances. This ability allows them to make up for their inability to fly and escape predators, while also making them among the fastest animals in the world. As a matter of fact, ostriches run faster than horses. Even better, a male ostrich can also roar like a lion. The only animal that can outrun an ostrich is the cheetah.

An adult ostrich can carry up to 198 pounds (86kg) on its back, but the weight restriction for riding is set to be lower by ostrich farms in order

to minimise the risk of injury.

Most farms in Oudtshoorn put a limit of 165 pounds (75kg) for people to be able to ride ostriches, making the activity particularly suited for children. Please do not lie about your weight or attempt to ride an ostrich if you are heavier!

Camel racing

The minimum age of racing camels is three years and bulls are allowed to race as long as they are not in season.

The racetrack is a U shape, with camels racing clockwise. 18 is the maximum number of camels per race. The sport is not without its dangers, and jockeys must wear protective head gear.

The sport is generally limited to running the single humped dromedary, whose name is derived from the Greek verb *dramein*, "to run" rather than the twin humped Bactrian camel, which is shorter and heavier than the one-humped dromedary camels found in Africa and the Middle East.

Camel racing is as old as history itself. On the Arabian Peninsula, the native habitat of the dromedary, it can be traced to at least the early Islamic period, in the 7th century AD. Although traditionally overshadowed by horse racing in that region – the peninsula is home to the Arabian horse – the racing of camels was long a folk sport practiced by the local population at social gatherings and festivals.

This tradition of impromptu and informal competition continued in Arabia and elsewhere until the final three decades of the 20th century, when interested parties began to organise camel racing into a formal sport, similar to that established for thoroughbred horse racing.

Organisations were established to govern and control camel racing events and to formulate rules and regulations. In countries as diverse as Kenya, Sudan, Egypt, India, and Australia – but particularly in the Arab countries of the Middle East – the sport became extremely popular, spawning its own training, breeding, and research industries.

Rules governing racing vary from country to country. In the UAE, where camel racing takes place from October to April (the coolest time of the year), a race is generally between 25 to 30 registered entrants.

Courses are laid out over distances that vary depending on the age of the camels, which begin their racing career at two or three years of age and race until they are eight or nine – although an exceptional animal may have a racing life twice that long. Distances range from 2.5 miles (4 km) for younger animals to 6 miles (10 km) for older beasts.

Because of the weight difference between male and female camels, they generally race separately, as do geldings and studs. Females are the preferred mount and are raced more often. A mature racing camel can reach speeds of 20–25 miles (32–40 km) per hour at a gallop.

Buffalo Racing

Thai farmers raced their water buffaloes at a muddy annual race to mark the beginning of the new rice growing season at the start of the monsoon weather, in a tradition dating back to the 1800s.

In India, Kambala holds an annual buffalo race. Traditionally, it is sponsored by local Tuluva landlords and households in the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod of Kerala, a region collectively known as Tulu Nadu.

Kambala is performed on two parallel race tracks, filled with slushy water. Buffaloes are usually raced in pairs and the best buffaloes can cover a 140-metre race track in less than 12 seconds.

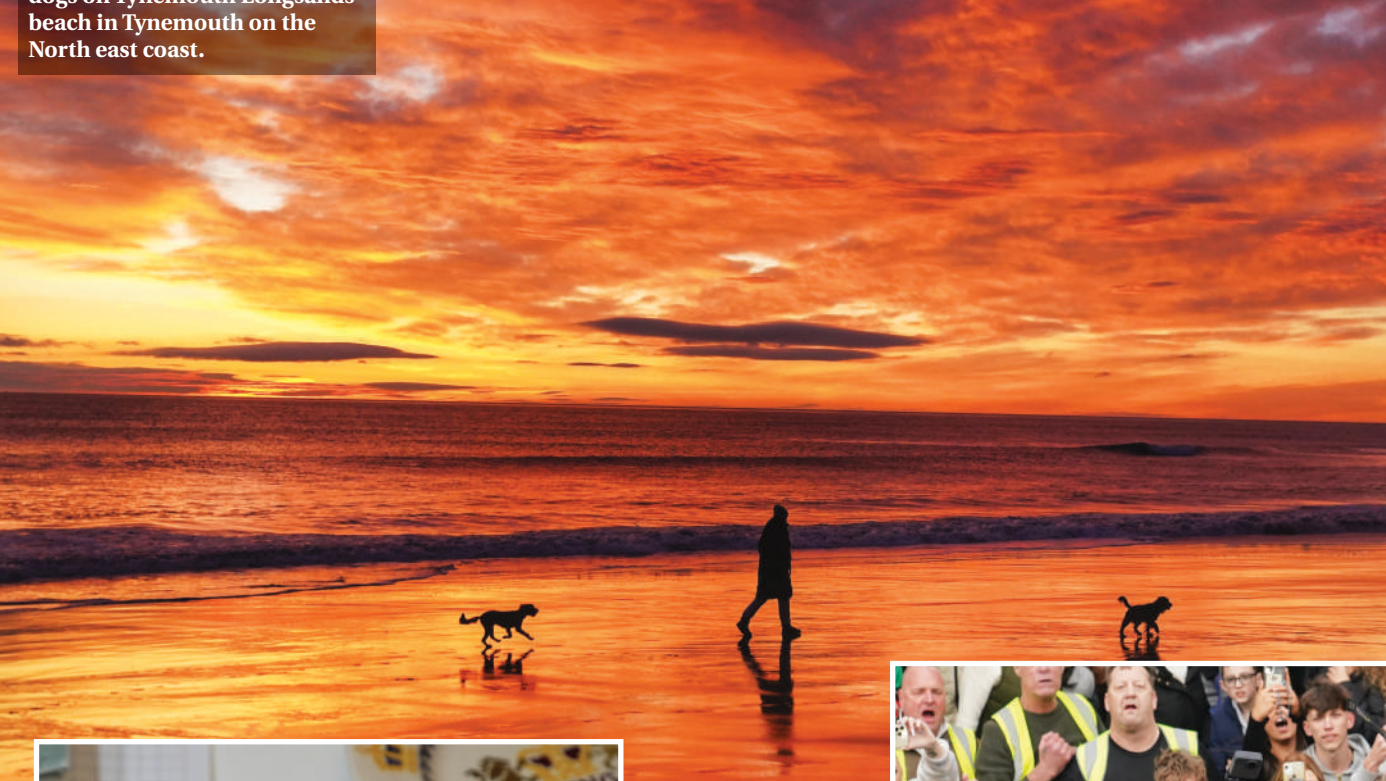
The 'jockey' commanding the buffaloes races along with them. Only most athletic youth can handle massive beasts. The runner stands on a wooden plank (known as halage) supported to the setup that holds two buffaloes together (called Negilu). He controls the buffaloes with a whip or ropes, entertaining spectators by splashing water as high as possible during the race.

Two teams of buffaloes, along with their jockeys, race towards the finish line on the two parallel race tracks. Races go on all day and winners qualify for next rounds. Besides reaching the finish line first, prizes are also given for splashing water high till a target set above (known as kolu).



A pictorial round-up of the past seven days...

Stunning colours before sunrise as people walk their dogs on Tynemouth Longsands beach in Tynemouth on the North east coast.



Below, a rare pine marten inspects a new denning box in Kielder Forest. Pine martens, one of the UK's rarest mammals, are strengthening their presence in England's biggest forest after many feared they had become extinct due to hunting and destruction of their natural habitats.



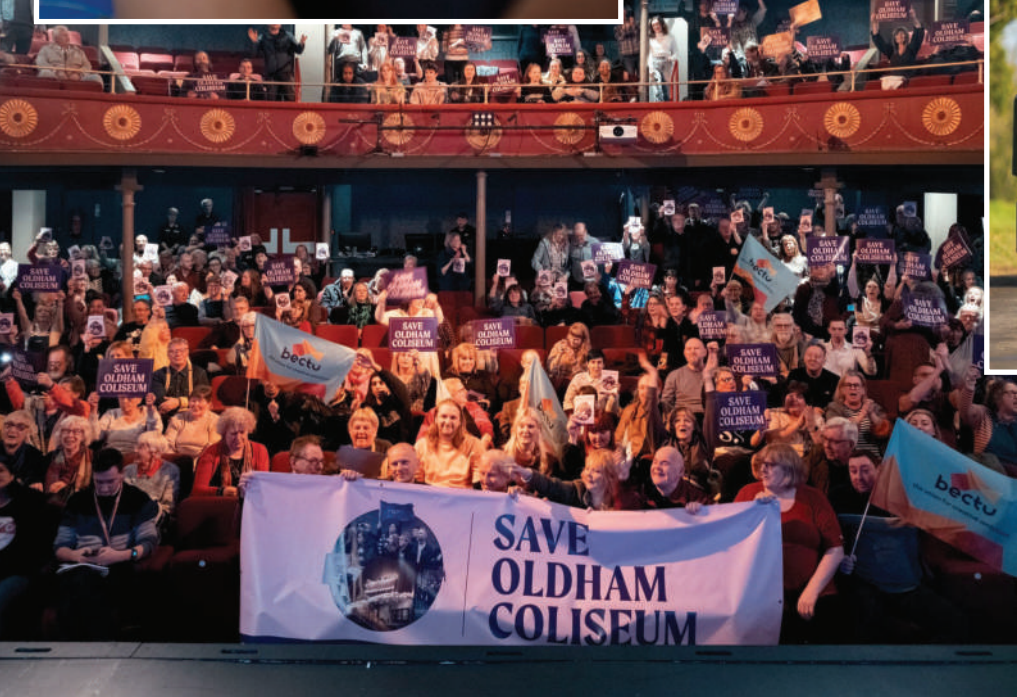
Players take part in the 823rd Atherstone Ball Game in Atherstone, Warwickshire. The game honours a match played between Leicestershire and Warwickshire in 1199, when teams used a bag of gold as a ball.



A King Charles III themed plate during the production of hand-decorated pieces from the forthcoming Coronation collection, at the Emma Bridgewater Pottery Factory in Stoke on Trent. The sought-after pieces are being decorated and fired at the Staffordshire factory



Below, the audience at a public meeting to save the historic Oldham Coliseum in Greater Manchester, which is being threatened with closure after the Arts Council England cut its funding



Left, this Land Rover Defender, first used by the Duke of Edinburgh, will be looking for a new owner at the Silverstone Auctions this weekend.

Below, a collectable £2 coin at East Lancashire Railway in Bury ahead of its release by The Royal Mint, in collaboration with the National Railway Museum to celebrate the centenary of the world's most famous locomotive, the Flying Scotsman.



LITURGICAL CALENDARS


Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I
Sunday, 26th February: First Sunday in Lent: Gen. 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Ps. 51:3-6, 12-14 17 r. 3; Rom. 5:12-19; Mt. 4:1-11
Monday, 27th February: St. Gregory of Narek, Abbot and Doctor of the Church, Lev.19:1-2, 11-18; Ps. 19; Mt.25:31-46
Tuesday, 28th February: Weekday of Lent, Isa.55:10-11; Ps.34; Mt.6:7-15
Wednesday, 1st March: St. David, Bishop, Patron of Wales, Phil. 3: 8-14; Ps. 1:4, 6, r. Ps. 39:5; Mt. 5:13-16
Thursday, 2nd March: Weekday of Lent, Esth.4:17; Ps. 138; Mt.7:7-12
Friday, 3rd March: Weekday of Lent, Ezek.18:21-28; Ps. 130; Mt.5:20-26
Saturday, 4th March: Weekday of Lent, Deut.26:16-19; Ps.119; Mt.5:43-48

Extraordinary Form Calendar

Extraordinary Form Calendar according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)
Sunday, 26th February: First Sunday in Lent, 2 Cor. 6:1-10; Mt. 4:1-11
Monday, 27th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated
Tuesday, 28th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated
Wednesday, 1st March: Ember Day (In Wales: St David) Ex. 24:12-18; 3 Kgs. 19:3-8; Mt. 12:38-50
Thursday, 2nd March: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated
Friday, 3rd March: Ember Day, Ezek. 18:20-28; Jn. 5:1-15
Saturday, 4th March: Ember Day, Deut. 26:12-19; Deut. 11:22-25; 2 Macc. 1:23-26, 27; Wis. 36:1-10; Dan. 3:47-51; 1 Thess. 5:14-23; Mt. 17:1-9

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One year on...

**St Olga of Kyiv,
Patroness of
Ukraine,
pray for us...**

**as we remember all
those who have lost
their lives in this
appalling conflict**



ВОЛНКА КНИГНИ
ОЛЬГА