

We've got some great news for you...

The Universe is going back into print!

– See pg 3 for more details



Surprise as Jesuit defends exorcism film - page 21



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Pope's relic gift to lead coronation procession

Extraordinary ecumenical sign hailed for showing strength of the relationship between the Holy See and Royal Family

Andy Drozdziak

A Welsh bishop has hailed the use of a processional cross during King Charles' forthcoming coronation, containing relics of the True Cross gifted by Pope Francis, as a sign of our "deep Christian roots."

The King's coronation procession on Saturday, 6th May will be led by a newly-made Cross of Wales which includes religious relics given to the monarch by the Pope.

Archbishop of Cardiff Mark O'Toole said: "With a sense of deep joy we embrace this cross, kindly given by King Charles, and containing a relic of the True Cross, generously gifted by the Holy See."

"It is not only a sign of the deep Christian roots of our nation but will, I am sure, encourage us all to model our lives on the love given by our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

The Cross of Wales is a processional cross presented by King Charles III as a centenary gift to the Church in Wales.

The relics within the silver cross are two small wooden splinters from the cross on which Christ was crucified, given to the King by Pope Francis to mark the royal occasion.

A Vatican official said the two fragments in the coronation cross came from a relic preserved in the Lipsan-

oteca Room of the Vatican Museums, adding that they were "donated in early April, through the apostolic nunciature, to His Majesty King Charles III, supreme governor of the Church of England, as an ecumenical gesture on the occasion of the centenary of the Anglican Church in Wales."

Mgr Ervin Lengyel, secretary of the Vatican nunciature in London, confirmed this in a tweet: 'In a significant ecumenical gesture, the Cross of Wales will incorporate a relic of the true cross, the personal gift of Pope Francis to His Majesty the King to mark the coronation,' he wrote.

Chris Trott, the British ambassador to the Holy See, said on Twitter that 'we are deeply moved and grateful to Pope Francis for this extraordinary gift.'

The gift of the relic, he said, reflects the strength of the relationship between the Holy See and Great Britain, a 'relationship that developed over the course of the reign of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, who met five popes.'

The cross is inscribed with words, in Welsh, of Wales' patron saint David. "Byddwch lawen. Cadwch y ffydd. Gwnewch y Pethau Bychain," which means in English: 'Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things.'

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Archbishop of Wales Andrew John with The Cross of Wales ahead of a blessing service at Holy Trinity Church in Llandudno, north Wales.

'Vile slurs' against St John Paul II dismissed as 'slanderous, rambling and laughable' - pg 17

Get out there and make a difference

The Big Help Out

Andy Drozdziak

Cardinal Nichols and Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski are encouraging Catholic communities to volunteer during the Big Help Out of the Coronation Bank Holiday on 8th May and to “give something back.”

The Big Help Out will take place on Monday, 8th May, a bank holiday. Its aim is to inspire and recruit a new generation of volunteers by showing how easy it is to get involved.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols said Jesus showed us the example to follow, and how doing so could lead to “real change.”

“Volunteering is so important and I encourage everyone to take part. Jesus himself came to the world, not to be served but to serve,” he said. “If we all lend a hand – at a local project, with a national charity the effect will be wonderful. Together, we can make a real change for the better,” he said.

He added: “There is so much to

look forward to over the Coronation weekend. On Saturday, the Coronation itself. On Sunday, celebrations in our communities. Then, on Monday, a chance to give something back through the Big Help Out.”

Eparchial Bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the UK Kenneth Nowakowski, paid tribute to the volunteers in the UK’s Ukrainian communities. “Time is very precious, it cannot be repeated and cannot be saved for later – it is the greatest gift one can give because once given you can never get it back,” he said.

“Hundreds of volunteers throughout our Ukrainian communities in the UK, be it in our parishes, our community centres or organisations, and most recently at our Ukrainian Welcome Centre in London, understand this and freely give their time. This gift allows us to do so much more than we could imagine.”

Bishop Kenneth added his thanks to King Charles for “highlighting the role of volunteers in the UK through



Cardinal Nichols pictured helping out at a foodbank in Westminster

the Big Help Out, a key part of the Coronation celebrations.’

The Passage homelessness charity in central London, which takes its

values and ethos from the teachings and example of St. Vincent De Paul and has Cardinal Nichols as its patron, hosted an event on Wednesday to en-

courage people to join in with the Big Help Out. The event was attended by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and leading figures from the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist communities.

Mick Clarke, Chief Executive of The Passage, is hoping the volunteering will make a real difference. “The Passage was thrilled to welcome a diverse cross section of faith leaders to The Passage as part of the Big Help Out, which we hope will inspire many people to make a real difference to the local community and get involved in the wide range of volunteering opportunities that are available across the UK,” Mr Clarke said.

“The Passage has an urgent need for more volunteers to support our work, and we hope many people will be inspired to get involved volunteering in our work.”

For more information about the ‘Big Help Out’, visit www.thebighelpout.org.uk

Universe’s return to print ‘good news’ for our Catholic community, says Cardinal Nichols

Andy Drozdziak

Cardinal Nichols has given his “wholehearted support” to the news that the *Universe Catholic Weekly* will be available in a printed version from 19th May – and is urging Catholics to support the new initiative and subscribe.

Since its relaunch in September 2021, the *Universe* has been released in digital format only. Due to popular demand, a printed edition will soon also be available.

Responding to the news, Cardinal Nichols, the paper’s first subscriber in September 2021, said: “I congratulate the *Universe* on extending this means of communication and also helping to stimulate conversation, reflection and prayer. I hope that even more Catholics will now be able to support this new initiative, which has my wholehearted support.”

The new printed version of the *Universe* will be posted directly to

print subscribers from Friday, 19th May. Its content will be identical to the digital version.

The Cardinal spoke of his “delight” at the recent announcement.

“It was with great delight that I learned that the paper will soon be available not just as a digital but also

Return of a printed version of the Universe is good news for Catholics says Cardinal Nichols



as a hard copy printed ‘paper’ – thus meeting the needs of many readers and prospective readers who prefer to have the paper in this format,” he said.

Following the announcement of the new format, many have already contacted the *Universe* to subscribe to the new format as Cardinal Nichols commented that the paper has gone “from strength to strength”

over the past 18 months.

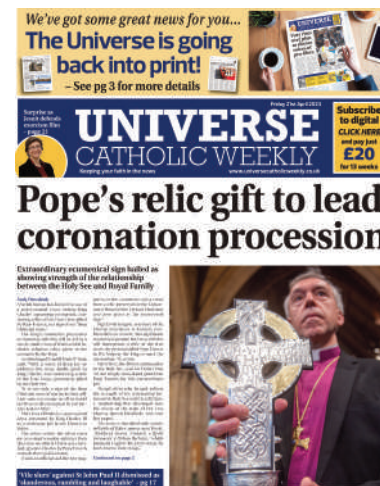
“It seems amazing to me that it is now over 18 months since I became the first subscriber to the new *Universe Catholic Weekly* digital newspaper,” he said.

“It was a sad moment when the old *Universe* had to close, but I have watched the new paper with great interest and have been thrilled to see it go from strength to strength.”

The Cardinal underlined the key role of the *Universe* in reporting what is happening in the Church and how it relates to world events.

“I said at the launch of the *Universe* that we Catholics need to be able to find out what is happening in the world on a regular basis – especially in that key relationship between our faith and the world,” he said.

“This is important not only for our own formation in faith, but also for our ability to spread the news of the great gift that we have received.”



Universe Editor Michael Winterbottom explained that the new format is being established to “fulfil the wishes” of its readers. “It is an exciting time for all of us at the *Universe* as we move towards the launch of a physical edition to

accompany the digital one,” he said.

“The digital has been very well received, but it’s now a pleasure to be able to fulfil the wishes of all the people who have told us that they would prefer to have a hard copy of the paper. In the future we will be able to supply what all of our readers want to see, either digital or hard copy, which must surely be what every newspaper strives to do.”

Those who wish to subscribe to this new format, or for further information, are advised to call Michelle Jones on 07436 617650, or they can email her at michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Want to know more?

Find out more about the new printed version by clicking here



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Just click anywhere to visit their site!





Let's light up the world with prayer

Andy Drozdziak

Cardinal Nichols is joining other Christian leaders in promoting a unique opportunity for Catholics to witness to their faith.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer initiative from the feast of the Ascension until Pentecost which invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. The event this year takes place between May 18th-28th May 2023, and is encouraging people to 'Light up the world in prayer.'

Resources for Catholics include a Pentecost novena, a Journey With Mary prayer reflection, a parish pack and Cheeky Pandas Family Catechesis.

Events due to take place include 24-7 virtual prayer rooms, family prayer and online church gatherings.

Thy Kingdom Come was created by the Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016, and is supported by Cardinal Vincent Nichols and other Catholic leaders.

"In prayer, we listen to the words of Jesus," Cardinal Nichols said. "Do make this week a prayer of listening," adding the words from a famous prayer by St John Henry Newman: 'I am a bond of connection between persons.'

"Perhaps our mission is very simple: when we are with people, to make a connection with them, to see the goodness in them, to show acceptance towards them. And in that way to help build those bonds of the Kingdom, which is so much a part of the message of Jesus," he said.

"To overcome hostility, to build community-that is doing the Master's work."

The aim of Thy Kingdom Come is to 'unite with thousands of Christians around the world, as we pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for others to come to know the Love of Jesus Christ.'

Archbishop Justin Welby underlined the importance of the movement. "In praying 'Thy Kingdom Come', we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities," he said.

"It belongs to God – it's His Kingdom and we're all citizens."

Freelance Catholic evangelist Teresa Carvalho, who previously worked for the Home Mission Office at the Bishops Conference of England and Wales and has continued her involvement in promoting Thy Kingdom Come, is encouraging Catholics to get involved. "Through our own encounters with Christ, we know that interceding for others with this intention is an act of love, one that will bring freedom, hope and joy," she said. "When we prepare to pray, it's to start to prepare our imaginations to the possibility that God can be on the move in our lives."

Want to know more?

Prayer resources can be found at:
<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/resources/resources-catholic-church>



Pope's relic gift to lead coronation procession

Continued from page 1

After the coronation, the cross will be shared between the Anglican and Catholic churches in Wales.

Archbishop O'Toole, who is also Bishop of Menevia, sees this sharing of the cross as significant for the Church in Wales, both on the coronation day and afterward.

"We look forward to honouring it, not only in the various celebrations that are planned, but also in the dignified setting in which it will find a permanent home," he said.

The Cross of Wales was blessed this week by the Anglican Archbishop of Wales, Andrew John, at Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno. "May this cross be sanctified that whoever prays before it in your honour, may find health and wholeness for body and soul, through the same Jesus Christ our

Lord," he said.

Designer Michael Lloyd took two years to make the Cross of Wales, involving more than 217,000 hammer blows to chase out its design.

Dr Frances Parton, deputy curator of The Goldsmiths' Company, who managed the commission, said: "Using the ancient craft of chasing silver, Michael Lloyd has created a beautiful object which combines a powerful message with a practical purpose.

"We are thrilled that the cross will both feature in the coronation and see regular use within the Church in Wales."



"May this cross be sanctified that whoever prays before it in your honour, may find health and wholeness for body and soul, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord..."



Great news - The Universe is going back into print!

THAT'S RIGHT: your favourite weekly Catholic newspaper is GOING BACK INTO PRINT.

Starting **May 19th**, all your Catholic news, views and faith articles will be available in a printed version.

We'll still be publishing **The Universe** in a digital format for those who prefer to read their news online, but for those who have asked if we can go back to having a printed version - **you asked, and we listened!**

The new printed version of **The Universe** will be posted directly to print subscribers from **Friday, 19th May**. It will be identical to the digital version, the only difference will be that it's a paper copy - just like it was before the pandemic!

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St Columb's pupil hails architects of peace deal



Former US president Bill Clinton speaks with St Columb's College student James Tourish. Photos: Liam McBurney

Andy Drozdzak

A pupil from Catholic school St Columb's College in Derry said that past achievements must be recognised before talking about aspirations for the future, in an event attended by former US president Bill Clinton to mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

James Tourish paid tribute to the agreement for bringing together sides which had been so vehemently opposed to each other together previously.

"Although things now are not perfect, gone mostly are the days of bombs and bullets that brought so much devastation to so many communities across the six counties and further abroad," he said.

"We must recognise that there is more that unites the people of this province than what divides us. As the youth and as the future, it is our moral duty and responsibility to ensure that this island never sees violence and conflict ever again."

St Columb's College, founded in 1879, is Derry's oldest and largest Catholic grammar school. The College said it was "so proud" of James for his speech.

Bill Clinton was given a standing

ovation as he arrived at the Guildhall for The Making Hope And History Rhyme event on 18th April. Organised by John and Pat Hume Foundation, the event included musical performances and readings, as well as an address by Mr Clinton, in which he paid tribute to those who came together for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998. He said the "gift of the agreement" was "lifting our lives, our children's and our grandchildren's."

A reflection from U2 singer Bono was played during the event via video, in which he paid tribute to the late John Hume and former first minister of Northern Ireland David Trimble, who were two of the main architects of the Good Friday Agreement.

Bono said that Mr Hume, a Catholic, "made all our lives bigger."

"We were looking for some superpowers and found clarity of thought, kindness. We were looking for a revolution and found it in the parish halls with tea and biscuits and late-night meetings. We were looking for a negotiator who understood that no-one wins unless everyone loses something," he said.

He called Lord Trimble 'a man with faith in the future.'



Bono gave an address by video link to the event



Mr Biden with Fr Richard Gibbons during his visit to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Knock

President moved to tears by historic visit to Knock shrine

American President Joe Biden become emotional during a visit to Knock shrine following a chance meeting with priest Fr Frank O'Grady, who gave the last rites to his son Beau Biden before he died of brain cancer in 2015.

Fr O'Grady received a call requesting that he meet the president, and later told RTE that the encounter was "like a reunion".

"We had a nice chat for about 10 minutes. He was delighted to see me and I was delighted to see him," he said. "He gave me a big hug, it was like a reunion. He told me he appreciated everything that was done."

He added: "I hadn't seen him really in eight years since Beau died. His son Hunter was there too, so we had a real reunion."

"He certainly misses his son. He

has been grieving a lot, but I think the grief is kind of going down a bit. We talked a little bit about how grief can take several years."

Mr Biden was given a tour of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Knock by the parish priest, Fr Richard Gibbons.

Recounting the emotional reunion between the US President and Fr O'Grady, Fr Gibbons said: "It was an extraordinary afternoon. I won't forget it, I can tell you that it was quite something else."

"He laughed, he cried, it just kind of hit the man, you could just see how deeply it all felt and meant to him,"

Fr Gibbons said Mr Biden had a private moment of prayer before receiving a piece of stone from the wall where the apparition of the Virgin Mary occurred.

His emotion-filled final day also saw Mr Biden visit the Mayo

Roscommon Hospice, where there is a plaque in memory of his late son.

Telling the crowd in Ballina about his visit to the centre, the President said: "I can tell you how special it is that a piece of his legacy lives here among his ancestors."

"Thinking about it I could hear my dad's voice again. He'd always say: 'Joe, remember family is the beginning, the middle and the end.' "The beginning, middle and end, that's the Irish of it."

Mr Biden's tour of Ireland saw him return to his ancestral roots, with visits to both Co Louth and Co Mayo. He also visited Belfast in Northern Ireland to mark the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday peace accord and became the fourth US president to address the Irish parliament in Dublin.

Catholic charity vows to give prisoners a voice in future

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic prison charity Pact is seeking to give a greater voice to prisoners and prison worker by launching two new social media channels on its 125th anniversary.

Pact spoke of the influence of Pope Francis' message on their new social media strategy.

"In his message for World Communications Day this year, Pope Francis called us to communicate from the heart in order to find 'the right words to dispel the shadows of a closed and divided world,'" Pact said.

"In this, our 125th year of supporting prisoners and their families, we are launching two new social media channels to help us respond more directly to Pope Francis' invitation: 'We have a pressing need in the Church for communication that kindles hearts, that is balm on wounds and that shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters.'"

Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust) is the national Catholic charity providing support to prisoners' and their families, and proposes that a more proactive role for families would save lives.

While the charity already has a range of social media channels, the new accounts will seek to share the charity's



Families visit loved ones in prison.
Photo: Andy Aitchison

work and 'amplify the voices of those we serve, using the language and articulating the values of our Catholic Christian heritage.' Pact believes it is a crucial moment for raising their profile.

"In a context of increasing inequality and division, raising the voices of Catholic people who call for justice and attention to those on the margins is more important than ever. We add our new channels in solidarity with all those already working to elevate

this public discourse forum," the charity said.

Pact's next in-person event is the Sir Harold Hood Memorial Lecture on 24th May at Maria Fidelis Catholic School, London, where the speaker will be Dr Chijioke Nwalozie, a senior lecturer in criminology and criminal justice at De Montfort University. Dr Nwalozie's lecture will lead into a panel discussion.

The lecture is described as 'an opportunity to consider together the in-

tersection of faith and criminal justice.' The evening will include music from the Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir and conversations over a canape reception.

"We look forward to unpicking together how the values of our faith can contribute to reshaping the broken criminal justice system," Pact said.

"To quote Pope Francis once more, communication ought to 'help people peacefully reflect and interpret with a critical yet always respectful spirit, the reality in which they live'."

For further information on the Sir Harold Hood Memorial Lecture, visit <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/Event/sir-harold-hood-lecture-2023>

Find Pact on Twitter and Facebook: @PactFaithAction



Cleverly calls for China nuance

It would be counterproductive for Britain to "pull the shutters down" on China, the foreign secretary has told *The Guardian*.

"I get why a number of my colleagues are hawkish", said James Cleverly, but he insisted that "we're not going to get them to completely redefine themselves" and "if we don't engage, we lose that influence".

Influential Tory MPs are encouraging the Government to take a harder line on Beijing and the head of the National Cyber Security Centre is expected to issue a warning over the "dramatic rise of China as a technology superpower".

Soup diet 'can reverse diabetes'

A landmark study has found that a "soup and shake" diet can permanently reverse type 2 diabetes.

In the latest findings from the Diabetes Remission Clinical Trial, patients who kept to an 800-calorie-a-day diet for three months, then kept the weight off, were free from symptoms five years later and no longer needed medication.

"This result is wildly important," said Professor Roy Taylor, of Newcastle University, who led the study. "I avoid saying 'cure' because it has not gone away completely," he added.

Scotland must not take the 'extreme option' on abortion

Andy Drozdziak

The Bishops' Conference of Scotland has called on the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government to reject proposals to decriminalise abortion in Scotland.

A petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to bring forward legislation to fully decriminalise abortion services in Scotland has been lodged with the Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee.

The petition by teacher Gemma Clark calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to fully decriminalise abortion in Scotland and make provisions to ensure abortion services are available up to the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy across all parts of Scotland.

But in their submission, the bishops urge the committee not to advance the petition and appeal to parliamentarians and political leaders to instead 'increase efforts to promote alternatives to abortion, to ensure support is available to women experiencing a crisis pregnancy, and to acknowledge and enforce equality of rights for the child in the womb, the first of which is the right to life.'

The bishops argue that decriminalising abortion would mean Scotland has one of the most extreme abortion regimes in the world, with abortion allowed up to birth for any reason, including on the basis of sex and for any disability of any kind, no matter how severe.

"The Scottish Parliament must reject the petitioner's proposal to decriminalise abortion," the bishops said. "The mark of a humane and compassionate society is to work through the difficulties women face in the case of a crisis pregnancy in a life affirming, not life destroying, manner."

The bishops also noted links between poverty and abortion, calling on political leaders "to promote alternatives to abortion".

"Statistics continue to bear out that women from the most deprived areas of Scotland are twice as likely to have an abortion than women from the least deprived areas," they said.

"This suggests that poverty plays a significant role in a woman's decision to have an abortion. There is an obligation on the state to support women and families that find themselves in such difficult circumstances and who feel that they have no other option."

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

— **COMMENT** —
 ‘Welsh name changes have more than a hint of virtue signalling about them’

It was announced this week that the Brecon Beacons National Park is to be renamed, in Welsh, to Bannau Brycheiniog.

This follows a decision last year to refer to Snowdonia as Eryri and Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales, as Yr Wyddfa.

If the point of these changes was to preserve the language, then there might be some justification to them, but it isn't. Certainly the area around Snowdonia has a high number of Welsh speakers, and 5,000 people petitioned the National Park to drop the English name after 1,000 years. But according to the 2021 Census, the proportion of the resident population speaking Welsh is about 18 per cent, which represents a slight decrease since 2011.

The Brecon Beacons appear to have proportionally even fewer native Welsh speakers, and here part of the rationale given for the change is environmental. The current name is said to be “out of step” with the fight against climate change because it incorporates the word ‘beacon’. But it is difficult to see how changing a name of a park will improve the climate.

Park officials said the name was being changed in “direct response to the climate and biodiversity emergency”. The symbol of a flaming beacon “does not fit with the ethos” of the national park as an eco-friendly organisation.

This sounds more like PR pandering than anything else and it could backfire badly. The confusion it creates is ultimately self-defeating if the parks want to attract more visitors, which is presumably one of the management's performance goals.

Does anyone else have a say in these matters beyond virtue-signalling park authorities with nothing better to do?

Labour's attack ads on Sunak: in the gutter – or smart politics?

Ana Ines Langer & Margaret Scammell

“I feel this is a sign that Labour is serious about winning, rather than a sign that they have lost their moral compass...”

This was the assessment of Steve Parker, former head of strategy at M&C Saatchi, the advertising agency most closely associated with Conservative political campaigns in the UK, when asked for views in response to Labour's controversial and personalised attack ad on the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak.

The image, tweeted from Labour's official Twitter account, depicted Rishi Sunak alongside the words: “Do you think adults convicted of sexually assaulting children should go to prison? Rishi Sunak doesn't.”

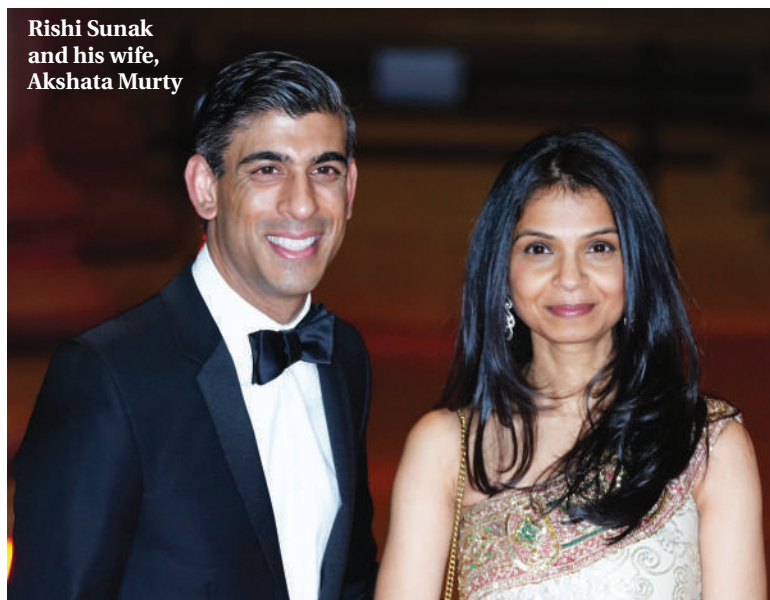
Since then, Labour followed this with another personalised Twitter ad, highlighting how Sunak's family has benefited from non-dom tax loopholes.

Others disagreed with Parker, arguing that negative advertising, especially of this personal kind, demeans political discourse and alienates the public. It might not actually work, and it might be bad for democracy if it does.

Parker's comments are a helpful way into the discussion. He has pedigree, after all. Saatchi created some of the most memorable attack ads in recent British history, ‘*Labour isn't working*’ (for the 1979 election) and ‘*Labour's tax bombshell*’ (1992). Parker also worked on the Conservatives' 2015 election ads, depicting Labour's then leader Ed Miliband literally sitting in the pocket of SNP leading figures Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon.

His view captures the predominant wisdom of political consultants around the world that negative advertising can be effective, certainly more so than positive ads. Attack ads are considered more memorable and more credible, and if pitched astutely can tap into voters' (often latent) doubts and fears about parties and candidates.

Labour's willingness to go negative can be seen a sign that it



Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty

has the stomach for the fight. After all, Sunak was happy to build his brand around his own image, claiming ownership of popular government policies.

He can't complain, the argument goes, if he is then personally associated with failures. Nor do the Conservatives have any moral high ground given former prime minister Boris Johnson's personalised attacks on Keir Starmer.

Clever politics or gutter politics?

The vast bulk of research on the effectiveness of political advertising comes from the United States. Much less is available in the UK, where paid TV advertising is banned (hence why this furore has sprung up around a tweet).

The US evidence is mixed. Attack ads, especially those dealing with issues, can motivate voter interest and engagement. But there is also some evidence that they can demobilise voters and lower political trust, especially among voters who don't have a strong attachment to a particular party.

Some studies suggest backlashes can be expected if attacks are perceived as untruthful or tastelessly aggressive. This is why official campaigns often outsource negative ads to other groups.

In general, however, the consensus is that advertising can have a significant impact. And even if effects are generally small and contingent, it can influence the public agenda and how issues are framed. This is especially the case for negative advertising, given its newsworthiness.

The findings from US research do not easily translate to the UK, where the amount spent on political advertising is massively lower and usually marginal compared to the news management strategies of the main campaigns, even if spending has grown in the digital era.

There has been some evidence from experimental research in the UK that positive news coverage had a higher impact on elections than negative news coverage. However, there is very little research and no clear evidence on the independent impact of advertising.

Full steam ahead

The lack of hard evidence has not stopped, and indeed has probably enabled, campaigners' own narratives of success and failure. In the absence of any definitive means to judge campaign effectiveness, practitioners develop plausible explanations which eventually may become the common wisdom of

how elections are won.

In the campaigners' world, it is negative campaigns that move the needle, influence the news agenda and then hopefully chime with or nudge public opinion. This is evident in the conflicting reports of how Labour insiders have reacted to the attacks on Sunak.

Some claim to be alarmed at the low politics, others delighted that the media has paid so much attention. A virtually free hit on Twitter has amassed millions of pounds worth of publicity.

It's also notable that Labour decided to use Twitter as its platform rather than, say, Facebook. This suggests the immediate target audience was precisely the political literati and not the public at large.

This is what hybrid campaigning and agenda setting looks like in the digital age. The main aim was not to directly persuade voters but to gain attention from the media and political influencers and to change the agenda and the tone of the political discussion.

These attacks suggest that Labour might be concerned about the direction polls are taking, with Sunak improving his ratings and the Conservatives reducing a huge Labour lead. Some studies have found that negative ads are more often deployed when the gap between candidates is narrowing.

We should expect more of these ads to come. Labour seems set to take the fight to Rishi Sunak on questions of competence and good government. By a logic of reciprocity that is well known in politics, the Conservatives are bound to respond.

One thing we do know is that attack ads are more likely to be used by candidates who are attacked by opponents.

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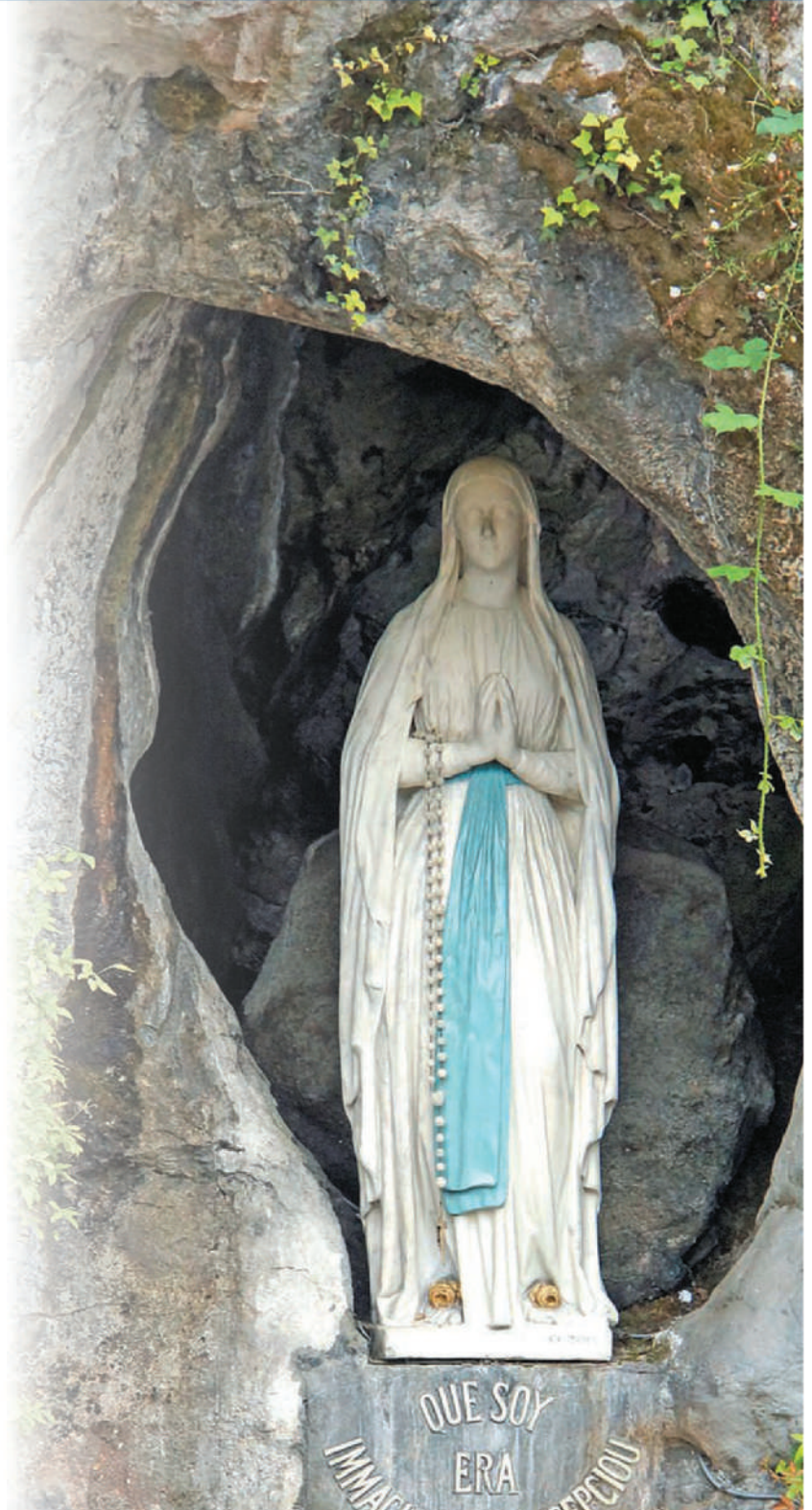
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Long view, local action

Sir John Battle



Perhaps the biggest challenge in politics is similar to that baffling Einstein in physics: he couldn't connect his little theory to the big one. His quantum theory explaining the inner relationship between atoms would not fit with his theory of relativity, looking at the development and working of the universe. Ever since, physicists has been struggling to find a unifying theory to draw them together.

The climate change crisis presents a similar challenge, not least as millions of micro-responsible personal efforts by individuals and local communities go unmatched by Government and international actions, despite the evidence before us of stronger storms, harsher winter floods and deeper droughts. In reading Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction*, which describes five previous cataclysmic wipe-outs of life on earth, we might at first sight presage our own final apocalyptic human ending, but at the same time the fact that we are still here at all is strangely reassuring. Moreover as Psalm 32 encouragingly puts it 'The Lord looks on those who reverence him, on those who hope in his love to rescue their souls from death to keep them alive in famine'. God is true to his promises and keeps the remnant going.

Last month the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a devastating warning that the world is failing, despite attempts by UN COP conferences to intervene with modest pledges, as annual global emission of greenhouse gases continue to rise.

More recently, Simon Sharpe's work *Five Times Faster: Rethinking the Science, Economics and Diplomacy of Climate Change* is more encouraging, pointing out some progress. The world's economy has become less intense by about 1.5 per cent a year, reflecting a growth in the expansion of renewable energy and energy efficiency. But Sharpe argues for action five times faster than today's to reach that net zero target by 2050 and avoid a destabilising rise in global temperature of more than 1.5 per cent.

Sharpe, a British civil servant economist participant in UN climate summits, is critical of climate scientists' inability to properly persuade politicians of the realities. He cites the lack of emphasis on the fact that whole regions of the world will soon become uninhabitable, something he says needs real governmental risk assessment. He also criticises the clinging to unrealistic economic models that assume the continuance of the worldwide system of supply and demand of good and services, and echoes Pope Francis's prescient call in *Laudato Si'* to treat our planet as an eco system linking 'care for the earth and care for the poor' together.

Noting actually how quickly coal is being phased out and electric vehicles introduced, he points to a tipping point when zero carbon technologies become cheaper than fossil fuels and will replace them. In other words, Sharpe is optimistic about new technologies generating emissions progress.

The emphasis now in a world of fragmenting geopolitical tensions should be on political diplomacy focusing literally on how we share our planet.

In the meantime as the late Dominican priest and theologian Fr Herbert McCabe said: "We are not optimists. We do not present a lovely vision of the world which everyone is expected to fall in love with. We simply have, wherever we are, some small local task to do on the side of justice for the poor, and that includes eco conversion."



Rupert North wears a majestic robe created using an array of flowers and leaves, which will form the centrepiece of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show. This year the show celebrates the coronation of King Charles III. The Harrogate Spring Flower Show at the Great Yorkshire Showground opened on Thursday and runs until Sunday, 23rd April.

Channel 4's shallow show does nothing for body positivity

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



Channel 4 is currently courting controversy with a show entitled 'Naked Education' which involves a diverse group of adults stripping naked in front of teenagers aged 14-16 and discussing their life stories.

The show's producers and defenders bill it as encouraging body positivity, claiming that an entire generation of children and young people are learning lessons about the human body via pornography and social media. A counter-balance is necessary, so that they don't learn a distorted view of what bodies should look or develop body dysmorphia.

Those who object are simply messed-up prudes or religious fundamentalist who think that nudity is somehow dirty or forbidden.

As Adam and Eve found to their peril, the most plausible and dangerous lies are those which distort a kernel of truth, and this is at the heart of every effort to sexualise children and teenagers. The first thing that 'educators' do is to concoct a pressing problem which they say can only be fixed by education. First it was the teenage pregnancy strategy which poured £280 million into ensuring children had easy access to contraception over ten years, with little effect on the pregnancy rate, then it was the idea that there is a pressing problem with bullying of LGBT children in schools, and now, there is a problem with pornography and body positivity which needs formal education to counter.

The truth of the matter is that sex education agendas and curricula are devised by liberal progressives who have little time for a Christian or secular traditional view of sex and marriage, and who believe that the world would be a better place if everyone could have as much consequence-free sex as they like, with as many people as possible. Folk like me are simply crusty old reactionaries attempting to impose our allegedly outdated religious values on the rest of the population and stop everyone's fun.

There is undeniably a problem in terms of how easy it is for young people to access pornography on the internet, but this can be solved in a myriad of ways, such as, for example, by internet providers, who need the full force of the law to make them behave in a moral and responsible fashion. While I am far more familiar than I would like to be with the issue of children and teenagers spending too much time on electronic devices, I know for a fact that my children have not accessed pornography or sexually explicit content, simply because we have put the means in place to prevent them from being able to do so. Not only are their devices equipped with various filtering and monitoring software we also have a system of spot checks, meaning that the children know that they can be asked to surrender their devices at any time so that we can have a look at exactly what is being said on various messaging applications. Any evidence of anything being deleted, or inappropriate, then privileges are lost.

For those who would say it would be better if we didn't give children access to technology, this is almost impossible when the curriculum has use of tablets embedded into it and where every child is provided with their own personal device. We have to teach our children responsible use of such devices and instill in them good habits, such as not allowing devices in the bedroom at night.

When it comes to the issue of children being able to access pornography, both parents and internet providers need to do more. The idea that children need to be subjected to adult naked bodies to counter any unrealistic impressions they may have gained from the internet, is a bit like forcing someone who has been binge-eating fast food or chocolate, to binge eat a slightly healthier food instead. Children who have been exposed to pornography have already been exposed to significant harm which has potentially altered their brain chemistry. Showing them a different type of naked body is not going to somehow de-programme or de-sexualise them.

Ironically, many of the bodies on display in *Naked Education* are those which have been cosmetically altered, such as on this week's

episode, which featured a woman who had had a double mastectomy and phalloplasty in order to appear male. Quite how that fits with the idea of body acceptance, is beyond me, and also, going from the reaction on social media, most of the public.

As the late St John Paul II observed, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much, but that it shows too little. We only see an objectified body and not the entire human person. Nudity is not dirty or disgusting but it is deeply intimate; the phrase 'private parts' was coined for a reason. To be naked is to be exposed and vulnerable which is why most of us are reserved about displays of public nudity and are only seen naked by our nearest and dearest.

Naturism is deeply intrusive as it forces the clothed person into the act of voyeur and violates our own natural boundaries as we are confronted with the intimate parts of total strangers.

Naked Education is all about breaking down of boundaries and acclimatising young people to seeing others get naked and to become comfortable about getting naked themselves. It is essentially a form of grooming.

Adam and Eve covered up, not because their bodies were naked or dirty, but because having eaten from the tree of knowledge they believed that God, who made and loved them in His image, now viewed them in the same lustful light as they suddenly saw each other. They projected themselves on to God. Just as God made us not to be ashamed of our bodies but to accept ourselves as wonderfully made, He also made us not see each other purely in terms of sexual pleasure or as utilitarian lumps of flesh.

Body positivity is not a bad thing, but all of us need to remember that, perhaps counter-intuitively, there is so much more to sexual relationships than outward appearance. If Channel 4 was serious about ensuring that people retain healthy and pleasurable sex lives, they would realise that over-exposure to nudity is the same as any kind of over-indulgence.

It dulls the senses and loses the ability to delight.

SPUC to remember victims on anniversary of abortion act

Andy Drozdziak

Pro-life group SPUC has promised that ‘the victims of abortion will not be forgotten’ as it slammed the ‘UK’s catastrophic abortion regulations’ on the 55th anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act.

Next week, on Thursday, 27th April, marks 55 years since the Abortion Act was introduced in the UK.

“Marking this anniversary ensures that the victims of abortion will not be forgotten,” SPUC’s Grace Browne told the *Universe*. “These unborn children were unique and precious human lives with a lifetime of potential ahead of them. Their inherent right to life was snatched away by abortion, and countless mothers, fathers and families have suffered.”

Protesting against abortion has become a major political issue since Catholic charity worker Isabel Vaughan-Spruce and others have been arrested for praying silently outside abortion clinics in Birmingham and Bournemouth. The new Public Order Bill also contains a clause which criminalises a range of activities, such as prayer, thought, peaceful presence, consensual communication and practical support, within a 150m perimeter of an abortion facility, otherwise



known as a ‘buffer zone’.

Grace Browne urged pro-lifers to “positive action” in response to the anniversary and in light of the new restrictions.

“Pro-life people should use this time to determine what positive action they can take to help make abortion unthinkable, and protect unborn chil-

dren and mothers from its violence,” she said.

“The pro-life position is very simple. Life begins at conception, and every human life is valuable and worthy of protection.

“The challenges the pro-life movement face are very great. But we know that we have science, and the truth

on our side. We will continue to proclaim these facts, and to stand up for unborn babies and their mothers.”

As reported in last week’s *Universe*, March for Life UK will hold a candle-light vigil on 27th April to mark the anniversary from 7.30 – 8.30pm at Westminster Cathedral Piazza, outside the front doors of the Cathedral.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce is helping organise the event.

“We want as many people as possible to come and join us in prayerfully remembering the lives lost to abortion and all those who have been wounded since the passing of this act,” Isabel told the *Universe*.

She added that, although the evening will be Christian and prayer-filled, those without religious beliefs would be welcome to join in with “a time of peaceful reflection.”

Sacked CBI boss ‘destroyed’ by dismissal rumours

The former boss of the CBI admitted that his reputation “has been totally destroyed” after he was sacked over complaints about his behaviour.

Acknowledging that he had made some staff feel “very uncomfortable”, Tony Danker said: “I apologise for that.” However, he insisted that his name had been wrongly associated with separate claims, including rape, which allegedly occurred at the business group before he joined.

The CBI said he was dismissed on strong legal grounds.

Tory backlash against alert plan

The Government has urged the public not to deactivate the new emergency alert system on their phones following a backlash from Conservative MPs.

Mobile phones across Britain will produce a loud 10-second blast at 3pm on Sunday in a test of the new electronic warning, intended to notify the public of major emergencies.

However, Jacob Rees-Mogg, the former business secretary, told *The Telegraph* that he had disabled the alert on his phone because he did not want to be “shouted at by the government”.

Want to know more?

For further information, visit marchforlife.co.uk

or email: info@marchforlife.co.uk



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In brief

'Zombie knives' to be banned

Machetes and so-called zombie knives will be banned in England and Wales under a series of proposals to close loopholes in the law.

Blades that are "designed to look menacing" will be made illegal unless they have a "practical use" under the measures to be announced today.

A new offence will also be created that would cover those who carry knives in order to "cause fear of violence". Labour said the government "have dragged their heels" and the weapons should have been banned years ago.

Railways face more delays

Britain's "teetering" railways face more delays and cancellations due to lack of funds, according to a leaked presentation obtained by The Independent.

The government's funding plans for the next five years will not allow Network Rail to "operate, maintain and renew" the railway at its current level of reliability, concluded the internal report, intended for rail industry bosses and marked 'official-sensitive-commercial'.

The Department for Transport has denied the claim, saying it has pledged a "record" £44.1bn for Network Rail.

Nurses may strike until Christmas

Nurses have threatened to keep striking until Christmas and the NHS believes they might join forces with doctors for "months of rolling walkouts", said The Times.

When the next planned strike ends on 2nd May, nurses will be "immediately" consulted over new six-month mandate for action, which "will mean further strike action right up until Christmas", said Pat Cullen of the Royal College of Nursing.

Polling for YouGov shows that the majority of voters continue to back the strikes, despite one in 10 people having treatment disrupted.

Business confidence bounces back

Business confidence in the UK has seen its sharpest rise since 2020, Deloitte said. Finance chiefs at the UK's biggest companies said their concerns about energy prices and Brexit problems are easing, and now 25 per cent more chief financial officers say they are feeling better about the future than worse, compared to 17 per cent three months ago.

Our gravest sin: denying clean water to millions

WORLD AFFAIRS

Tahseen Jafry



Leaders and authorities recently gathered in New York for the first UN water conference in decades. The hope was that there would be some landmark breakthroughs to ensure that everyone had access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The UN secretary-general, António Guterres, called for member states to "bring the water action agenda to life" through developing resilient infrastructure, water pipelines and waste water treatment plans and putting in place early warning systems against natural disasters.

But if such pledges are not supported by guaranteed funds as well as legally binding legislation – and they aren't – they risk undermining the energy and enthusiasm required to achieve the UN's own sustainable development goal of making access to clean water a human right.

Climate change and related droughts, hurricanes, floods and other extreme weather events are making it harder to access water for human consumption. In some parts of the world such as the Horn of Africa, the wells have run dry and there simply isn't enough rain any more. The region is experiencing its worst drought for 40 years.

In places where floods are a bigger risk than droughts, such as the US state of Mississippi or parts of Kenya, supplies of fresh water have been contaminated by floodwater filled with agricultural pollutants and industrial chemicals.

Water insecurity – including everything from a lack of drinking water to the threat of homes being swept away – can have serious implications for people's wellbeing. Flood victims in Pakistan have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder, for instance. All this means clean water has become a source of widespread climate injustice, especially in the most vulnerable countries.

Alarming there are more people now without access to clean water than there were three decades ago. In 2022 the State of the World's Drinking Water report by the WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, noted that one-quarter of the world's population is left without access to safe drinking water. People in sub-Saharan Africa haven't benefited from investment and have the lowest levels of access.

In many poorer countries, access to drinking water is not recognised as a basic human right. Research I published with colleagues on water



access in two of those countries, Malawi and Zambia, found that water was neither privatised nor a state provision.

People in these countries instead relied on development aid and donor funding to sink bore holes or provide water pumps in rural areas, and if there was no aid they had to organise clean water themselves on a small community basis. Many pumps and wells do not work, or they are vandalised, and as a result many find themselves drinking unclean water.

In such countries there is lots of wrangling between politicians, traditional leaders and communities over who actually owns or should govern water points. Many different actors are involved, including public and private organisations, NGOs, faith-based organisations and donors. This all makes the job of providing water even less straightforward, and coordinating these different actors is paramount.



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This lack of co-ordination, combined with an over-reliance on donors and a lack of local input in decision-making leads me to wonder at what point will access to water actually become a national priority in water insecure countries.

Governments need to take a leading role by facilitating long-term investment in the sector and promoting initiatives which incorporate the right to water access. Solutions to water access should be part of a broader socioeconomic development model which promotes awareness around rights and responsibilities.

Ultimately the management of water resources lies with the governments, who retain a sovereign duty to ensure the human right to safe drinking water. The water crisis is a climate justice crisis. What is needed is commitment in terms of real funding, not just pledges, to ensure that these basic human rights are exercised with support

from the United Nations.

Some good news did emerge from the conference in New York, including calls for the UN to appoint a special envoy for water, and a Water Action Agenda containing 700 commitments. Member states, development banks, large companies and NGOs have all pledged to direct millions of pounds to the water sector.

But just as a village in Malawi might suffer from a lack of co-ordination between different actors who want to develop a local well, the same problem risks happening on a global scale. What's really needed is strong leadership so all sectors work collectively to ensure everyone in the world really does have access to clean water.

Tahseen Jafry is a Director at the Mary Robinson Centre for Climate Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University

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In brief

Greggs ready for legal 'showdown'

Greggs is warming up for a "court showdown" with Westminster Council after the bakery was banned from selling late night snacks from its flagship Leicester Square store.

The sausage roll chain was refused permission to keep its doors open from 11pm until 5am at the central London location after Westminster Council called the application "half baked" and police argued that the location would become a hotspot for "crime and disorder".

However, a three-day appeal hearing is set for next month, said the Evening Standard.

Prepayment meter ban for over 85s

Forced instalment of prepayment energy meters in homes of customers over 85 in Britain will be banned under new rules from Ofgem. The regulator has also ruled that suppliers will have to give all customers more chances to clear their debts before making their switch.

However, campaigners said the new rules did not go far enough and vulnerable people could still face forced installations.

An investigation by *The Times* earlier this year found debt collectors working for British Gas had forced their way into the homes of vulnerable customers.

Bank says end of cash is nigh

Cash will become "less useable" as high streets go contactless, the deputy governor of the Bank of England said. With consumers flocking to online shopping and stores increasingly rejecting bank notes, Jon Cunliffe said that it will become harder to spend physical money.

That's why, he said, the Bank should launch an electronic version of sterling, or digital pound, to underpin future confidence in the financial system.

Food prices soar up to 80 per cent

The price of food basics such as cheddar cheese, white bread and pork sausages has soared by up to 80 per cent over the past year, according to *Which*. The consumer group found that an 180g pack of Dragon cheddar cheese in Asda was priced 80 per cent higher than a year before. Porridge oats topped the price increase ranking among a basket of British basics, with prices up by an average of 35.5 per cent. The shadow environment secretary, Jim McMahon, said British families are "having to fork out even more for tomatoes, carrots and cauliflower".

Premier League clubs to drop betting firms from shirt fronts

Andy Drozdziak

Premier League clubs limiting betting sponsorship on the front of football shirts from 2026 is a "small step in the right direction," according to sports chaplain Fr. Vlad Felzmann – but football needs to wake up from its "moral hangover" over its connections to gambling.

Premier League clubs have collectively agreed to withdraw gambling sponsorship from the front of match-day shirts voluntarily, but this will only come into effect at the end of the 2025-26 season. Eight Premier League clubs currently have gambling companies as their front-of-shirt sponsor.

"This is a step, a small step in the right direction. Gambling is an addiction whose outcomes are all too often more destructive and far worse than heroin or cocaine," Fr. Vlad told the *Universe*, adding that football "needs to find income from healthier sources if it is to stay attractive to people with decent ethical views. As it stands, the beautiful game looks like having a serious moral hangover. A shame."

The move means the Premier League will become the first sports

league in the UK to take such a voluntary measure to curb gambling advertising.

However, logos from gambling firms will still be permitted on shirt sleeves and in stadiums. Clubs will also still be allowed to secure betting sponsorship up until the deadline.

Fr. Vlad called upon the Government to support those affected by gambling.

"Maybe a decent Government, which sooner later is likely to appear, will do its duty to help the worst off, often the greatest gamblers, to level up and enjoy not just football, but life," he said.

John Myers from Huyton, Merseyside, whose son Ryan took his own life in 2014 when he was 27 after becoming addicted to gambling, described the move as a "small victory".

"It's a start. It's a small thing but it's something... small victories can help to win big wars," Mr Myers said.

"It could have gone further but we'll keep on going and see what we can do about the rest of the gambling adverts around football."

However, some campaigners expressed disappointment that the changes do not go far enough. James

Mildred from Christian charity CARE said that while this action was welcomed, what was needed was "a total ban on betting sponsorship."

"On the one hand, it's good to see the Premier League take some action to curb betting advertising," Mr Mildred told the *Universe*.

"But the reality is this action falls some way short of what's needed. Given the influence football clubs have, especially on young fans, what's really needed is a total ban on betting sponsorship which is muddying the beautiful game."

The UK Government is due to publish its gambling White Paper imminently after its review of gambling legislation.

CARE has called for wholesale changes to gambling laws, including a 5% mandatory levy which would mean betting firms giving a proportion of their income to research and treatment for gambling related harms.

Right, West Ham and England star Declan Rice, wearing a training top emblazoned with the club's sponsor, Betway. Such high-profile ads will be dropped from the start of the 2026-27 season



Public backs tougher curbs on the gambling industry

A new Savanta poll by CARE (Christian Action, Research and Education) has shown that the public backs tougher curbs on the gambling industry.

The poll found that two in three believe there are too many ads during TV matches, while nine in 10 want advertising in UK football regulated.

The poll asked about gambling-related issues as the Government prepared to release its long-awaited White Paper on gambling reform.

Two-thirds of respondents who expressed an opinion said there were "too many" gambling adverts during televised football games, while a whopping 87 per cent said gambling advertising in UK football "should be overseen by a regulator". There are currently no limits on betting ads in football.

CARE's gambling policy lead, Tim Cairns, said it was clear "the public wants to see advertising in football properly regulated. It's striking that nearly nine in ten want a regulator to ensure that gambling during football matches is safe and doesn't lead to more harm."

"During the average Premier League match a person sees 300 impressions of gambling companies. Two-thirds of the British public think that is too much. Change is needed."

There was also strong support for curbs on the gambling industry, which has come under heavy fire in recent



months for failing to protect vulnerable customers.

More than 8-in-10 respondents agreed that a portion of gambling companies' profits should be used to help people facing addiction, while the same number backed checks to prevent people in financial difficulties from placing bets.

And 6 in 10 respondents (66%) said that gambling companies should be prohibited from offering controversial 'VIP promotions' to customers.

The Government's gambling White Paper, a review of the Gambling Act 2005, has been consistently delayed in recent months amid rumours of intense rows over its content.

But CARE said its study demonstrates public support for tougher regulation of gambling.

"The public supports tough measures such as a levy on gambling company profits, better oversight of advertising in sport, and an end to unethical promotions," Mr Cairns said.

"The gambling industry has a powerful lobby that is working hard to prevent meaningful reform, but it is wrong to allow the interests of a few wealthy companies to take precedence over the welfare of millions of people.

"People's lives will depend upon reform. Failing to deliver on behalf of vulnerable Brits after so many delays and setbacks would be inexcusable."

Eilish racing for Mary's Meals

Scottish Catholic charity Mary's Meals has teamed up with champion runner Eilish McColgan for its latest fundraising challenge – and she says there is 'still time' to support the world's poorest communities.

Commonwealth gold medallist Eilish said: "As a sports person, I am really passionate about helping people to enjoy keeping fit. That's why I'm delighted to support Mary's Meals' new active challenge, From Dalmally to Malawi."

Eilish, who broke Paula Radcliffe's 21-year-old British 10,000m record in March, is encouraging participation in the challenge, which involves taking part in a virtual challenge from Dalmally, a village in the Highlands where Mary's Meals was founded, to Malawi – a distance of 7,000 miles.

Either by walking, running or swimming, participants can take part in any way they choose, and the money raised will be donated to some of the world's poorest countries.

"There's still time to sign up and help feed children in some of the world's poorest communities.

"All you need to do is pledge to complete a number of miles in April and ask friends and family for sponsorship," Eilish said.

See www.marysmeals.org.uk for details of how to take part.



Historic Catholic vestments to star in Isle of Wight treasures book

A Catholic vestment said to be 'steeped in history' from the 17th century is to be given a prominent role in a new book.

A historic diocesan cope, which is a liturgical vestment worn by Catholics at non-eucharistic functions and dates to the 1660s, is to feature in a new book entitled *100 Treasures, and Curiosities from the Collection of Carisbrooke Castle Museum*, which details the treasures of the Isle of Wight's Carisbrooke Castle Museum.

The cope's origins and story thereafter narrate a fascinating 17th century tale of Catholic persecution in England and abroad. The book will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the museum by sharing the history of the Isle of Wight through "100 Treasures and Curiosities."

The diocesan treasure, known as the St Dominic's vestment, features embroidery created by religious sisters from a Belgian community founded by Father Philip Thomas Howard. The community was established for English Catholic women who had a vocation to religious life when religious orders and communities were still prohibited in England.

In 1794, the French Revolution forced the sisters to leave Belgium, and they buried the vestment in Brussels before they fled.

They returned two years later and managed to smuggle the garments back to the UK, where they eventually made their home at Carisbrooke in 1866 in St Dominic's Priory, which was built for them by the Dowager Countess of Clare.

The embroidery was restored and remounted in 1940 by Sister Mary Hyacinth Graham.

To raise money for the project, the team at Carisbrooke Museum is launching a sponsorship drive, with Medina Publishing, encouraging people to sponsor an artefact of their choice.

Bishop Philip Egan of Portsmouth said: "I was delighted to learn that a priceless piece of our diocesan heritage has been selected for this inspired project. The St Dominic's vestment is steeped in history, reminding us of the courage and endurance of faithful Catholics in centuries past. This historic item gives us pause for thought, reflection, and thanksgiving."

Rachel Tait, curator of Carisbrooke Castle Museum, said: "I'm excited that this book will be



The vestments carry with them a wealth of Catholic history

an opportunity to share with the public the museum's collection of beautiful and significant as well as quirky and intriguing objects, dating from prehistory to the present day and collected over the last 125 years."

The enclosed community who lived at St Dominic's Priory were sisters of the Order of Preachers, founded in the 13th century by the Spanish Saint Dominic Guzman. The sisters were the last community of Dominican nuns in Britain and the priory closed in 1989.

Clampdown on trans pupils

New Government guidelines mean single-sex schools will not be forced to accept transgender pupils. Under the new rules, headteachers of girls' schools will be told they can reject pupils who are legally male but identify as female, without risk of legal action. The same will apply for boys' schools receiving applications from girls who identify as male. Teachers will not be required to call children by their 'preferred' pronouns, either.

Killer of Catholic schoolboy named

Andy Drozdziak

A 15-year-old boy who boasted about stabbing to death a Catholic teenager from Gateshead can be named after a judge ruled it was in the public interest. The judge added that it should act as a deterrent to young people carrying knives.

Leighton Amies shouted "I've wetted your boy" to a rival gang after he knifed Tomasz Oleszak deep in his chest as he walked through a nature park in Gateshead last October.

The defendant had denied murder, claiming he did not know he had stabbed Tomasz and slashed another youth's coat after being attacked by the group.

Jurors heard that the killer, then aged 14, was walking through Whitehills Nature Park with his girlfriend at around 8pm when a group of youths followed them.

He was carrying a serrated kitchen knife in his jacket pocket, and used it to slash Tomasz when he came under attack from the group.

Amies shouted to the gang "I've wetted your boy" after landing the fatal blow, the court heard.

Mark McKone KC, prosecuting, told jurors: "He wanted them to know he had stabbed one of their number."

Peter Makepeace KC, defending, had told jurors Amies had not looked for trouble and asked the jury to put

themselves in his situation: aged 14, attacked by a group, in the dark, not knowing if any of the gang were armed.

The jury also convicted Amies of a charge of attempting to cause grievous bodily harm on the boy whose coat was slashed.

Outside court, Detective Inspector Chris Deavin said: "We want to send an unequivocal message to anyone who chooses to carry a weapon of any kind or believes that violence is acceptable – the consequences can be devastating."

The killing sent shockwaves through the community in October 2022. Tomasz's family paid an emotional tribute to him as 'an amazing son' and 'a kind and caring role model.'

His mother Kamila said: "Tomasz was an amazing son, a kind and caring role model to his little brother and a great friend to so many.

"As a family we are devastated beyond words.

Brendan Robson, headteacher of Cardinal Hume Catholic School in Gateshead, which Tomasz attended, also paid tribute.

"Tomasz was charismatic and engaging, always displaying a great sense of humour. He was a loyal friend who others could turn to," Mr Robson said.

"He has been described by his friends as 'someone you'd always want to have on your team.'"



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Mayor Andy gift unites Pope with one half of city

Greater Manchester civic leaders and members of the faith community have met with Pope Francis at the Vatican to pledge a commitment to tackling climate change.

On Thursday, 20th April, the region's faith and civic leaders attended a private audience with the Holy Father to discuss how Greater Manchester is tackling the climate crisis and made a formal commitment on the action they pledge to take in future.

The group, led by Bishop of Salford John Arnold and Dean of Manchester Rogers Govender, included Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, The Lord Mayor of Manchester Donna Ludford, Bishop of Manchester David Walker, Gorton MP Mohammed Afzal Kahn and Chair of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership Mike Wilton. City Centre Methodist Minister Rev'd Ian Rutherford, and Rabbi Robyn Ashworth Steen from the Manchester Reform Synagogue were also in attendance, along with environmental officers from both the Diocese of Manchester and Salford, and members of the Sikh and Hindu communities.

Bishop John Arnold said: "The devastation that we are witnessing around the world is no longer in isolated occurrences but a constant reminder that we are now at a 'vital moment' or a 'turning point'. Our actions and way of life are inflicting damage across our common home.

"By leading this delegation, we look to use our influence in the wider community, to people of all faiths and none, leading by example and sharing opportunities to learn from each other as we respond to the ecological crisis.

"We thank the Holy Father for his leadership in alerting the world's attention to the urgent damage of the climate crisis."

Dean of Manchester Rogers Govender called the visit to the Vatican "an honour."

"As Greater Manchester continues to grow, we cannot avoid the challenges of carbon reduction and the impact on the environment. It is this desire to work together across faith communities, and the political and civic sectors, that needs greater action," he said.

"Bishop John and I hope this once in a lifetime audience with Pope Francis will reflect this commitment to greater collaboration to benefit all the people of Greater Manchester."

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said it gave him "great pride to be at the Vatican to witness the historic moment our faith and civic leaders make our commitment to the Holy Father." He gave the Holy Father a Manchester United shirt bearing the name of Argentinian defender Lisandro Martinez.

Pope Francis has shown a commitment to focusing the world's attention on the damage of climate change throughout his ten-year papacy, including dedicating his 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* to the subject.

Over a decade ago, colleagues from Greater Manchester faith communities formed the group *Our Faith, Our Planet*, a forum raising awareness and encouraging collaboration to tackle the climate crisis across the region's faith communities.

During their meeting, the group made a pledge to Pope Francis to: support the use of renewable technology and accelerate the decarbonisation of its many places of worship; use Church land to help heal nature and increase biodiversity; and encourage local communities to engage in proactive transformational behavioural change.

The private audience allowed members of the group to discuss the work that has already taken place, while hearing words of encouragement and support from the Holy Father.



Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham presents the gift of a Manchester United shirt to Pope Francis, and below, the full delegation from the city in Rome



Fr John's beeswax beauty products are just heavenly



Richard Morris

Benedictine monks and beeswax-based beauty products might seem a strange combination, but it is what the hidden Catholic monastery of St Augustine's Abbey in Surrey is becoming renowned for.

Benedictine monk Fr John Seddon OSB is the mastermind behind an enterprise known as 'Sanctuary Products', which sees hundreds of beeswax-based flavoured skin creams and lip balms fly off the shelves to be sent all over the UK and across the world, including the USA and Australia.

The centre of the production process is a small and modest room found deep in the Victorian basement of the monastery building and a far cry from a modern, impersonal factory. Like every room in the building, it has a crucifix on the wall.

Fr John Seddon personally and prayerfully makes skin creams in five flavours: vanilla, natural, lavender, honey and rose, and coconut. His lip balms come in seven flavours: lemon, peppermint, orange, aniseed, lemon and aniseed, natural, frankincense and cinnamon.

He also makes beeswax furniture polish. Meanwhile, the monastery's newest monk, Br Simon, makes Chilworth Rosary Beads' from cord in different colours. He has sold almost 1,000 of them in two years and is "delighted to be helping people pray this way."

Monks and nuns of many religious orders have made products for centuries, not only to help pay for their way of life, but also because it adds focus and creativity away from the formal prayer structure of the monastic day. It also helps get the place known.

The *Financial Times* is the latest to show an interest in the products, along with the BBC, which featured the monastery in the three recent episodes of *Heaven Made*. It's a 'must see' for anyone wanting to learn about monastic life.

Want to know more?

Find out more in the Benedictine Abbey's Online Shop by clicking here



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From the Universe Catholic Weekly

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Sterling silver rosary bracelet, with small sterling silver beads, and 2 cm cross, with clasp, in display box. Bracelet: 16 cm circumference.

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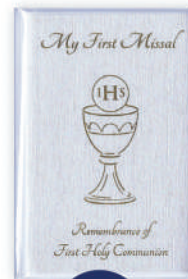


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Children's picture Missal: 5" x 3.25", containing the easy to follow Order of the Mass and specially selected Prayers for Communion, Confession and other occasions, with 15 full colour illustrations of the Mass. Pearlised white hardcover with gold lettering Remembrance of First Holy Communion and chalice picture. 64 pages. In clear plastic Presentation box. Limited stocks.

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Confirmation Card, with colourful Dove/Pentecostal Fire design, and text: 'On your Confirmation Day'. Inside right text: 'Wishing you every Blessing on your Confirmation Day.'

Ref: F0632 Price £2.75



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BUY ME



Confirmation Holy Spirit Dove key-ring

Holy Spirit Pewter key-ring, with Dove image, and Bible extract from John 3:24 on reverse: 'And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit He has given us.'

Ref: F0539 Price: £6.50

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In brief

Advancement of women in Church on right path, says French sister

A French religious sister has said Pope Francis's involvement in lay members and, particularly, women in reforming the Church is the right way forward and will pay strong benefits in the future.

Sister Nathalie Becquart is undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops in 2021, the first woman to hold the position, and advises the pope on his Synod on Synodality and voting rights.

She told a meeting in the USA women's roles, and the role of the laity in general in the Church, has changed greatly with Pope Francis. "It's really about the promotion of the laity first, and understanding that we are called to be a synodal Church," Sr Becquart said. "That means a church in which everybody is a missionary disciples."

She sees that "many women are the driving force of synodality. ... It's really about our vision of the Church. And the challenge is to move from a pattern of a clerical Church to move forward to a synodal church."

She added, "There is an urgent call coming from all over the world for more women in leadership."

New body to study Marian apparitions

The Pontifical International Marian Academy has created a commission to study and monitor cases of alleged Marian apparitions and other mystical phenomena.

The new 'observatory' or monitoring body was officially inaugurated at the academy in Rome last week and will study cases that have not yet received an official Church pronouncement regarding their authenticity.

Its purpose is "to provide concrete support to the study, authentication and correct disclosure of such events, always in harmony with Church teaching, relevant authorities and applicable norms of the Holy See," Franciscan Father Stefano Cecchin, president of the Marian academy, said.

It will specialise in cases such as alleged Marian apparitions, 'weeping' statues of Mary, private revelations and stigmata.

"It is important to provide clarity because often presumed messages generate confusion, spread anxiety-inducing apocalyptic scenarios or even accusations against the pope and the Church," he said.

"How could Mary, mother of the Church, undermine (the Church's) integrity or sow fear and conflict, she who is mother of mercy and queen of peace?" he asked.

Pope calls for life's wounded to find a welcome in Church

Thomas is the disciple who is most like us all, says pope in homily

Cindy Wooden

The wounds of Christ, still visible after his resurrection, are the greatest sign of God's love and mercy, Pope Francis said on Divine Mercy Sunday.

"Let us ask ourselves, however, if in the name of this love, in the name of Jesus' wounds, whether we are willing to open our arms to those who are wounded by life, excluding no one from God's mercy, but welcoming everyone – each person like a brother, like a sister, like God welcomes everyone. God welcomes everyone," he said last Sunday.

After reciting the midday *Regina Coeli* prayer with about 20,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis wished a happy Easter to Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Christians who follow the Julian calendar and were celebrating the Resurrection that day.

He also expressed concern about the situation in Sudan, where fighting between forces loyal to two different generals has led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians. "I am close to the Sudanese people, already so tried," the pope said, "and I invite you to pray so that they might lay down their arms and take up the path of peace and harmony." (see page 18 for update).

In his main address, Pope Francis spoke about the day's Gospel reading, John 20:19-31, which recounts the story of St. Thomas doubting the other disciples' claim that they had seen the risen Lord.

In his hesitation to believe the oth-



A banner celebrating St John Paul II is held by people in the 20,000-strong crowd gathered in St Peter's Square

ers, "he represents all of us a little bit," the pope said. "Indeed, it is not always easy to believe, especially when, as in his case, he had suffered a tremendous disappointment" after following Jesus, believing in him, and then watching him die on the cross.

St. Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them the evening after the resurrection, the pope noted.

"He had gone away from the community," he said, and the only way he could have a chance of encountering Jesus was by going back, "returning to that family he had left behind, scared and sad."

"Thomas wants an extraordinary

sign – to touch the wounds. Jesus shows them to him, but in an ordinary way, coming in front of everyone, in the community, not outside," the pope said. "It's as if he said to him: 'If you want to meet me, do not look far away, remain in the community, with the others. Don't go away. Pray with them. Break bread with them.'"

Jesus says the same to his disciples today, Pope Francis said. The community of the Church "is where you will find me; that is where I will show you the signs of the wounds impressed on my body: the signs of the love that overcomes hatred, of the pardon that disarms revenge, the signs of the life that conquers death."

Christians should ask themselves where they look for Jesus, the pope said. Is it "in some special event, in some spectacular or amazing religious manifestation, solely at the emotional or sensational level?"

Or, he said, do they look for the Lord "in the community, in the Church, accepting the challenge of staying there, even though it is not perfect?"

"Despite all its limitations and failures – which are our limitations and failings – our mother church is the body of Christ," the pope said. "It is there, in the body of Christ, that, now and forever, the greatest signs of his love can be found impressed."

Italian diocese asked to remember its Blessed hero and pray for peace in Myanmar

People in the Diocese of Crema, Italy, were given a special task by Pope Francis during a visit to the Vatican: pray for peace in Myanmar.

The south-east Asian nation has a link to the northern Italian province because one of its sons, Blessed Alfredo Cremonesi, who was born and raised in the Italian diocese, was murdered by Burmese soldiers in 1953. They claimed he was a rebel working to overthrow the government.

Burma, now called Myanmar, is the site of what is known as the world's longest civil war with repeated battles, insurgencies and coups over the past 75 years.

"As you know, it is a troubled land, which I hold in my heart and for which I invite you to pray, imploring of God the gift of peace," Pope Francis told the 2,000 members of the diocesan pilgrimage to Rome.

He asked them to look to Blessed Cremonesi, who was beatified in



Pope Francis reaches out to greet pilgrims from Crema

2019, for inspiration in living their faith and sharing it with others.

"He sowed communion, knowing how to adapt to a world that was completely new to him and making it his own, with love," the pope said.

"He exercised charity especially toward those most in need, finding himself several times with nothing and forced to beg himself. He spent himself for the education of the young and did not let himself be

intimidated or discouraged by misunderstandings and violent opposition, not even to the machine-gun fire that cut him down."

In their diocese in northern Italy, the pope said, the faithful must "cultivate communion among people and among communities, in mutual assistance, collaboration, openness to new paths, in an ever more rapidly changing world."

"Try always to be welcoming and inclusive to those who knock on your door," he said, and "take special care of the education of the young, helping them to bring out the best in themselves and to find God's plan for the life, making it a mission with passion."

Pope Francis encouraged the people to spend time with the elderly and listen to them, "because there is a great deal to learn from those who know what life, toil and suffering are all about."

Vatican leaps to defence of pope after vile claims made over girl's disappearance

Pope Francis has called vile insinuations that St John Paul II played a role in the 1983 disappearance of Vatican schoolgirl Emanuela Orlandi "offensive and unfounded."

Emanuela's brother, Pietro Orlandi, made the allegations in a television interview broadcast on Italian TV on 11th April.

Emanuela, the daughter of a Vatican usher who lived inside the walls of Vatican City, disappeared in Rome on 22nd June, 1983, when she was 15. The Vatican recently opened a new investigation into her disappearance, which also was the subject of a 2022 Netflix documentary.

But Pope Francis said linking the girl's disappearance to the late pontiff was grossly offensive: "Certain I am interpreting the feelings of the faithful around the world, I express a thought of gratitude to the memory of St. John Paul II, who in these days has been the object of offensive and unfounded insinuations," the pope said April 16 after reciting the *Regina Coeli* prayer.

In the TV interview, Pietro Orlandi made a number of lurid – but totally unsubstantiated – claims about the Polish pope, including that he would sometimes leave the Vatican at night with two Polish monsignors and that "it certainly wasn't to bless houses."

He played an audio recording of an unknown speaker he said was part of a mafia group allegedly linked to his sister's disappearance, who said on tape that St. John Paul was involved in bringing young girls to the Vatican to be sexually exploited.

On the tape the man claims that "when the situation with the girls turned into something foul," the Vatican secretary of state asked the mafia, via a network of prison chaplains, for assistance in removing the girls.

He also claimed Popes Benedict



XVI and Francis are "aware of what took place" in 1983 that led to his sister's disappearance.

Immediately before the interview was broadcast, Orlandi had met with Alessandro Diddi, Vatican City's chief prosecutor, for more than eight hours to discuss the case.

Orlandi said in the interview that he was not "calling John Paul II a paedophile, but it is right to investigate these claims 360 degrees."

Diddi, who is leading the Vatican investigation into the case, called Laura Sgrò, the Orlandi family lawyer, to request information about the sources of Orlandi's comments and of the audio recording. However, Sgrò invoked attorney-client privileges in the meeting and refused to disclose the name of the individual making the claims.

One of St. John Paul II's longtime aides slammed what he called "vile insinuations" about his former boss.

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, who served as St. John Paul II's personal

secretary from 1966 until the pope's death in 2005, said that Orlandi's claims about the Polish pope's involvement, claims which originated in the "elusive circles of the Roman underworld," are "rambling accusations, false from beginning to end" and even "laughable."

But strongly refuting the claims, Cardinal Dziwisz said that St. John Paul "took charge of the matter" of Emanuela's disappearance from the beginning and "never encouraged actions of concealment of any kind."

"What was done to Emanuela and her family was a huge crime," said the cardinal, but it also "is criminal to profit from it with uncontrollable rants aimed at preemptively discrediting people and places worthy of universal esteem until proven otherwise."

Andrea Tornielli, editorial director at the Dicastery for Communication, denounced the "slandorous accusations" presented by Orlandi as a "sleazy" and "absurd" defamation of the former pope.



In an open letter to the Vatican's communications executives, including Tornielli and Bruni, Sgrò said that Orlandi had never accused St. John Paul of anything, but rather "requested an investigation of facts reported to him."

"For 40 long years, my clients have asked for justice and truth for their beloved Emanuela," Sgrò said.

Over those four decades, leads in the Orlandi case have led nowhere, even though multiple investigations have taken place and several tombs – in Rome and at the Vatican – have been opened following tips that Emanuela was buried there.

Diddi, the Vatican prosecutor, opened a new file in the case in January, and has said Pope Francis gave him free rein to investigate "from the lowest to the highest up" in the Vatican and to "silence nothing".

He told Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* that Pope Francis has an "iron will" to shed whatever light is possible on what happened to Emanuel Orlandi.

Mongolia is next on list for papal visit

Pope Francis has confirmed that he will be making what some Vatican observers would suggest is a somewhat unusual overseas visit in September, when he travels to Mongolia.

The landlocked central Asian nation isn't the most obvious nation to host a papal visit, as it is believed there are only 1,300 Catholics – though it does have a cardinal.

He is also set to visit Marseille the same month, and will fly to Mongolia straight from the French city.

His next overseas trip – his 41st – is to Hungary from 28th-30th April.

The trip to Mongolia will be strategic to the Vatican, which has strained relations with neighbouring China, primarily due to apparent violations of an agreement between China and the Vatican which outlines procedures for the appointment of bishops.

In 2022, Pope Francis named Italian Bishop Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to be the first cardinal based in Mongolia. Cardinal Marengo has served in Mongolia since 2003 and at 48 is the youngest member of the College of Cardinals.

The papal trip to Marseille is not an apostolic one; rather he will travel to the city to attend a meeting of Mediterranean bishops, and address their meeting. "I will go to Marseilles, not to France," he has previously said.

The Vatican has suggested his next major overseas visit will be to India.

The pope's foreign trips are a continuation of St. John Paul II's policy of leaving Rome and meeting the faithful in their own lands. He made 104 international trips during the 27 years of his papacy, and made international travel an integral part of the pontificate.

Pope Benedict XVI was similarly well-travelled, making 24 foreign trips in his eight years as pope.

Safeguarding expert lays out problems in Church commission

Justin McLellan

The pope's safeguarding commission must not be merely engaged in PR, but become a refuge for those abused by clergy and silenced by the Church, said leading safeguarding expert Jesuit Father Hans Zollner.

Fr Zollner, who recently stood down from his key role on the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, told reporters that he hoped the commission will take seriously the principles of "transparency, compliance and responsibility," the lack of which he cited as the reason for his departure.

It must be "a central focus point of encounters with victims from around the globe," he said. "This is

what people are looking for."

After nearly 10 years of serving on the pope's advisory body, Fr Zollner said that "victims continually feel that that they are not listened to," and without naming individuals, he said there are people in the Church, who "for personal or emotional reasons, create obstacles" in the fight against abuse.

Fr Zollner cited "structural and practical issues" with the commission in resigning in March.

Currently about 20 members serve on the commission, whose task, according to Pope Francis when he established it, is to advise him on "the most opportune initiatives for protecting minors and vulnerable adults" and "to

promote local responsibility in the particular churches."

Fr Zollner is not the first member of the papal commission to resign. In 2017, two prominent members who were also abuse survivors also left the commission: Irishwoman Marie Collins who cited "resistance," "reluctance" and a "lack of cooperation" from the then-doctrinal congregation; and Peter Saunders, who said he was frustrated with the pace of change and "disappointed" the commission was not doing what he thought it was intended to achieve.

Boston Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, who heads up the commission, is not addressing its problems, Fr Zollner said. Among other issues,

he criticised a lack of transparency over the selection of new members to the commission, a lack of clarity over roles and blurred lines of responsibility of the commission's members, staff and experts.

"If one doesn't know what they are responsible for, or who they report to and on what criteria, it leaves people confused," he said. "This created difficulty not only in terms of compliance – how we can follow clear rules – but also transparency."

When those principles are threatened, "the door to abuse and coverup opens," he said.

Pope Francis put the commission under the control of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in June

2022, but nearly a year after the new organisation went into force, Fr Zollner he said he still does not understand how the two bodies are meant work together.

He also clarified that his resignation was not intended to personally attack anyone or impede the work of the commission, which he said was "a great idea by Pope Francis" and one that has an "intrinsic value."

He praised the pope's understanding of the abuse crisis: "I've seen with my own eyes how Pope Francis takes his time and listens to victims, and he is an example of the attitude that the Church must have," he said, but "some in the Church do not listen."

In brief

DeSantis backs tough abortion line

Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis, who is widely expected to launch his bid for the Republican presidential nomination soon, has approved a bill to ban abortions after six weeks – but the new bill would only go into effect if the state's current 15-week ban is upheld amid an ongoing legal challenge before the Florida Supreme Court.

DeSantis, who is Catholic, previously indicated he would sign the bill if it reached his desk. His decision could become a frequent topic for supporters and critics alike if DeSantis does launch an anticipated presidential campaign.

Lawmakers in the state House approved the bill largely along party lines in a 70-40 vote after the state Senate approved the measure earlier in April.

The Heartbeat Protection Act would prohibit most abortions in the state, with exceptions for women who are victims of rape or who face a mortality risk associated with the pregnancy.

Germany's nuclear era is over

Germany's final three nuclear power plants closed over the weekend, marking the end of the country's nuclear era that has spanned more than six decades. Nuclear power has "long been contentious" in the country, with opponents dubbing it 'unsustainable, dangerous and a distraction from speeding up renewable energy'.

However, others insist it is a reliable source of low-carbon energy at a time when drastic cuts to planet-heating pollution are needed.

Mass shooting at 16th birthday

At least four people were killed in a mass shooting at a 16th birthday party in the US state of Alabama. There were also dozens of injuries, some critical, after shots were fired at the Mahogany Masterpiece Dance Studio in the city of Dadeville on Saturday.

The "joyful birthday party" "quickly turned into a chaotic and terrifying nightmare as party-goers ran for their lives", said the *New York Post*. It is the 160th mass shooting in the USA this year.

US warning over nuclear plant secrets

The US is warning Russia not to touch sensitive nuclear tech at a nuclear power plant in Ukraine. The Department of Energy told state-owned nuclear energy firm Rosatom that the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant "contains US-origin nuclear technical data that is export-controlled by the United States Government", and it is "unlawful" for anyone else to handle the US technology.

Church in peace appeal as Sudan fighting intensifies

Fredrick Nzili

Catholic bishops have led calls for factions in Sudan to lay down their arms, after a ceasefire brokered to allow humanitarian aid in after five days of deadly violence collapsed within hours.

Fighting between the regular army and a paramilitary force broke out on 14th April, with the two sides firing tanks, artillery and other heavy weapons.

Over 200 civilians are known to have lost their lives, with a number of unknown military casualties.

The Sudanese capital of Khartoum has been the centre of the fighting, with fighter jets and attack helicopters dropping bombs on targets held by both sides.

The latest fighting has raised fears of a civil war for the country, which has been trying to return to democracy after decades of military rule.

"There is fighting all over the country. We are advising our people to stay indoors," Bishop Tombe Trille Kuku Andali of El Obeid told news agencies from Khartoum. "Right now, there are gunshots all over. Thank God, we are safe."

Sudan is a majority Muslim nation, with only five per cent of its 46 million population Christian. Around half the Christians are Catholic.

The fighting began after weeks of tension between forces loyal to General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which is the regular army, and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti, who heads the paramilitary Rapid Support Force (RSF).

In practice, al-Burhan is the Sudanese president, while Dagalo is his deputy, but an attempt to integrate the paramilitary into the country's army, thus neutralising Hemedti's powerbase, has led to the fighting.

The army leader said the move was part of the effort to restore civilian rule.

The two generals rose to prominence as leaders of a transitional government formed in 2019, after the overthrow of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Bashir had ruled the country for 30 years, but was forced out of office following months of mass popular uprising.

With al-Bashir out of the way, the Sudanese leaders formed a hybrid government composed of the military leaders and a civilian prime minister.



Members of the regular Sudanese army on patrol in Khartoum. The army, which is loyal to the country's de facto president General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, are fighting paramilitary forces (bottom photo) loyal to General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti. The fighting has included attacks on diplomats and UN food envoys

The pact forming the government involved a gradual move to civilian rule, but two coups – in which al-Burhan and Dagalo were involved – forced the civilian part of the government to resign in 2022.

The fighting has hit food and water supplies, amid rumours that Khartoum – a city of six million people – was out of both. Most families have been unable to restock supplies as fighting forced the closure of shops and markets.

Across the border in South Sudan, Archbishop Stephen Ameyu Martin Mula said Catholic bishops were saddened by the fighting in its northern neighbour. He expressed his deep concern over the loss of lives and properties.

"We are aware many people are

trapped by the fighting away from their homes, many in their homes, with no way to access basic needs for their survival and their families. Many have been injured and others have died," Archbishop Mula said. He also called for prayers for Sudan in the spirit of Easter. "We pray for the protection of all people caught in the conflict."

The majority of the people suffering simply yearned for peace, he said. "In order to preserve the unity of the country and not to further the suffering of the people, we call for an end to the fighting and a (return) to dialogue," Archbishop Ameyu urged.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the fighting and appealed to the leaders to immediately cease hostilities, restore calm and be-

gin dialogue to end the crisis. "The situation has already led to horrendous loss of lives, including many civilians," Guterres said.

Three employees of the UN's World Food Programme were killed and another two injured while on duty in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. The tragedy forced the agency to halt its operations in Sudan.

He confirmed that a US diplomatic convoy was fired at on Tuesday, while the EU ambassador to Sudan, Irishman Aidan O'Hara, was attacked in his home.

"Any loss of life in humanitarian service is unacceptable and I demand immediate steps to guarantee the safety of those who remain," Cindy McCain, the World Food Programme's executive director, said. "Aid workers are neutral and should never be a target. Threats to our teams make it impossible to operate safely and effectively in the country and carry out WFP's critical work."

McCain added that it was difficult for WFP's staff to operate after its aircraft was "significantly damaged" at Sudan's Khartoum airport.

According to agencies, hospitals have been attacked, and medical and other supplies have been looted in parts of the country.

The World Health Organization is alarmed that several hospitals treating wounded civilians in Khartoum have run out of blood, transfusion equipment, intravenous fluids and other important supplies.



G7 vows to keep up pressure on Russia over Ukraine

Group of Seven (G7) foreign ministers vowed to intensify sanctions against Russia over its war in Ukraine as they wrapped up their latest meeting in Japan on Tuesday.

"We remain committed to intensifying sanctions against Russia, co-ordinating and fully enforcing them," the G7 ministers said in a statement.

"There can be no impunity for war

crimes and other atrocities such as Russia's attacks against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure.

"Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and its threat to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus are unacceptable."

The ministers also agreed to continue their utmost support for Ukraine.

The G7 ministers from Japan, the

US, UK, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union have underlined that their meeting in Karuizawa marked a crucial moment in the world's response to both crises, which are seen as challenges to the post-Second World War rules-based international order.

Global efforts to confront the matters at the United Nations have been

stymied by Chinese and Russian intransigence on the Security Council.

The G7 ministers also discussed growing concern that China plans to attack Taiwan. It recently sent planes and ships to simulate an encirclement of the island, which China claims is a renegade breakaway state, and it has been taking a tougher line on other territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Holy Sepulchre restrictions raise tensions as Eastern Rite lights its Holy Fire for Easter

Judith Sudilovsky

Thousands of local and international Christian pilgrims thronged to Jerusalem's Old City and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the ancient Eastern rite ceremony of the Holy Fire on 15th April, with some scuffles reported as Israeli police restricted the number of people able to reach the church.

Celebrated for over 1,000 years on the Saturday before Orthodox Easter, as reported by Christian historian Eusebius in AD 328, the Orthodox Christian ceremony involves the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, along with an Armenian Orthodox bishop, entering the Edicule where, tradition holds, Jesus' tomb is located. There, according to the tradition, a fire is mysteriously produced, which the patriarch uses to light two sets of candle bundles.

As the lit fire is passed out from a window in the tomb and the main entrance, church bells ring out and the crowd bursts into joyous cries of: "Christ is risen, he has arisen indeed." In seconds, the fire from the candles is used to light candles held by the Christian faithful who have been waiting inside the packed basilica for hours and the basilica is lit by thousands of little flames – and, in modern time, phones – recording the whole proceedings.

The candle torches are rushed outside where they are taken to light special lamps held by waiting dignitaries from Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and other Eastern Orthodox countries who then fly to their respective countries to share the fire there. The first church to see the Holy Fire arriving in Ukraine was the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Lutsk, on 16th April.

Lit torches also are carried through the Old City and taken to local Palestinian parishes.

From early morning, Jerusalem's Old City was closed and entrance was restricted to those with permits



Numbers inside the Holy Sepulchre were tightly controlled by Israeli police but it was still a chaotic scene inside for the ceremony

from the churches, with metal barricades sealing off alleys leading to the Christian Quarter as, according to a police statement, hundreds of police were deployed throughout the Old City.

"It is sad for me that I cannot get to the Church, where my heart, my faith, wants me to be," Jelena Novakovic from Montenegro told The Associated Press. Like thousands of others, she was trapped behind metal barricades that sealed off alleys leading to the Christian Quarter in Jerusalem's walled Old City.

Several social media posts showed video recordings of Christian pilgrims including foreign diplomats arguing, and in some cases, scuffling with police to get through, with one particular violent incident involving the shoving of a Coptic priest

against a wall.

In previous years, as many as 10,000 worshippers could celebrate the Holy Fire ceremony inside the church, while this year, police had limited attendance to 1,800 people inside and 1,200 outside, citing safety reasons.

Pilgrims also gathered on the roof of the church, and in locations in the Old City where the police had placed shading and large TV screens where the ceremony was broadcast live.

Police said they arrested one person for assaulting police officers. AP reported some 2,000 police present in the Old City and other incidents of confrontation including Israeli police dragging and beating several worshippers and tackling one woman to the ground.

Tensions over security restrictions

of the ceremony have been growing over the past 10 years.

Israel police maintain they must uphold safety precautions in the basilica, roof top and its outside courtyard with its limited capacity while local Christians charge Israel with harming their freedom to worship.

Inside the basilica the number of pilgrims swelled, with local Christians as well as Coptic Orthodox Christians from Egypt singing, chanting, drumming and waving flags enthusiastically in the hours-long lead-up to the ceremony, as Eastern European Orthodox pilgrims, nuns and monks looked on in the crowded rotunda.

Sadly, the co-ordination for the ceremony caused friction between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, supported by the Armenian Patriarchate and Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, and the police. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch said police were being 'heavy-handed' with restrictions infringing on freedom of worship.

Police said they were enforcing safety measures following a tragedy two years ago during a Jewish pilgrimage to a holy site in the northern Mount Meron where 45 Jewish worshippers were killed in a crowd crush. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has only one entrance/exit. Though no accidents have occurred in over 200 years, dozens of pilgrims were trampled to death in 1808, and in 1834 a fire during the Holy Fire ceremony also killed hundreds.

Disgraced cardinal faces new charges

Former US cardinal Theodore McCarrick faces new charges of sexual assault in Wisconsin, in addition those he is currently battling in a Massachusetts court.

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul and Walworth County District Attorney Zeke Wiedenfeld charged McCarrick, 92, with fourth-degree sexual assault for an incident in 1977.

According to the complaint, McCarrick allegedly fondled the victim while staying as a guest at a Geneva Lake, Wisconsin, 'engaging in repeated sexual abuse of the victim over time.'

McCarrick has also pleaded not guilty to charges in Massachusetts that he allegedly sexually abused a boy during a wedding reception at Wellesley College in June 1974.

His attorney Barry Coburn has tried to have the charges dismissed due to his client's alleged dementia.

McCarrick, once one of the most powerful clerics in the Catholic Church, faces numerous accusations of sexually abusing both adult and children over decades. After the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith found McCarrick guilty of abuse in 2019, he was laicized by Pope Francis.

Big drop in Latino Catholics

The percentage of Hispanic adults identifying as Catholic declined from 67 per cent in 2010 to 43 per cent in 2022, according to a Pew Research Center study.

At the same time, US Latinos who identify as religiously unaffiliated (describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or 'nothing in particular') increased from 10 per cent in 2010 to 30 per cent in 2022.

Hosffman Ospino, a Boston College professor with years of experience examining the role of Hispanic Catholics in the US, said that this decline has been "in the works" for decades and that younger generations of Latinos are less likely to identify as Catholic, mirroring trends across other ethnicities.

Despite the 24 per cent decline over the last decade, Catholics remain the largest religious group among Latinos in the United States, the Pew report said. Latinos also remain about "twice as likely as U.S. adults overall to identify as Catholic."

The Pew study also indicated that about half (49 per cent) of U.S. Latinos ages 18 to 29 identified as religiously unaffiliated, while 30 per cent identify as Catholic and 15 per cent identify as Protestant.

These steady shifts could have wide-ranging implications in the future as Hispanic Catholics make up close to 45 per cent of all Catholics in the country. About 60 per cent of all Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic.

"Let's keep investing in the immigrant Hispanic community, but also redouble the energy and resources bringing the gospel among those who are US-born and try to retain them. Otherwise, we will lose them," Ospino said.

Jordan stands as symbol of unity

In Jordan, where a unique ecumenical act sees Christians celebrate Christmas in line with western Churches but Easter with the Orthodox calendar, 16th April was the holiest of days. Catholics focused their Easter prayers on peace to reign in Jerusalem, which has experienced a violent wave of attacks. Other faithful joined in prayers at Jordan's famed Mount Nebo, where Moses saw the Promised Land across the Jordan River. Mount Nebo is under the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

In the capital Amman, Auxiliary Bishop Jamal Daibes of Jerusalem, who also is the Latin patriarchal vicar for Jordan, urged congregants to seek reconciliation and forgiveness first with God and then with their

neighbours. This, he said, is important for Christians to engage in the blessings of the Resurrection. "We direct our eyes on this feast toward the honorable Jerusalem, and we pray for peace, justice and stability, especially in what its citizens face, in terms of restrictions on the arrival of worshippers," Bishop Daibes appealed. He also prayed for Jordan's continued stability and prosperity and for the well-being of its ruler, King Abdullah II. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, has urged unity after witnessing violence across the Holy City in recent weeks, including those targeting churches and Christian symbols.

HEART OF THE MATTER

MGR RICHARD ANTALL

Cardinal issues warning against El Salvador's brutal gang crackdown

When it was time last month for Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez to preach on the 43rd anniversary of the death of his friend and mentor St. Oscar Romero, the retired auxiliary bishop of San Salvador chose to address a very controversial topic in the country right now: the “state of exception” that allows the government to lock up thousands of gang members without due process.

These “domestic terrorists” are to be housed (or better said, warehoused) in the recently opened Terrorism Confinement Center. This mega-prison will be the world's largest with a capacity of 40,000, surpassing the Silivri Penitentiaries Campus in Turkey, which supposedly has more than 22,000 inmates. (Turkey, it should be noted, has a population of 84.6 million people, more than 14 times that of El Salvador.)

The gangs in El Salvador have a monstrous record of mayhem and violence, their criminal activity penetrating almost every sector of the country's economy and people's daily lives. In the little town where I was pastor for many years, El Puerto de La Libertad, hardly any small business escaped paying protection money.

It was a way of life. One ‘pandillero’, as the gang members are called, charged my compadre – a store owner whose son with Down syndrome is my godson – \$50 a week. The average daily wage in El Salvador is estimated at \$12 a day.

This same gang member later went to prison for the murder of the wife of a Mexican agent of Interpol who worked in El Salvador. Ironically, he had been contracted by the wife, who was in love with her children's swimming instructor, to kill her husband. The pandillero, on a motorcycle, rode up to the car of the couple at a traffic light and shot into the car, wounding the husband, who survived, and killing his client.

Stories like these help explain why *The Washington Post* in 2016 declared El Salvador ‘the murder capital of the hemisphere.’

We can thank God that is no longer true of the country. Violence has dropped dramatically, earning president Nayib Bukele popular support around the country. Unfortunately, it has taken something like the ‘state of exception’ for that to happen. Bukele's government has not been shy to admit its suspension of legal rights for anyone accused of being a gang member is draconian and has many critics.

Under the ‘exceptional rules’,



police don't have to inform arrestees of their rights or what they're being arrested for, nor do those arrested have the right to a lawyer. They can now be held for 15 days without seeing a judge (the period used to be 72 hours).

Watchdog group Human Rights Watch reported that the policies have resulted in “mass arbitrary detention, torture, and other forms of ill treatment against detainees, deaths in custody, and abuse-ridden prosecutions.”

Bukele's government has produced videos showing at least 4,000 “domestic terrorists” being transferred to the mega-prison. The scenes of shirtless, shoeless tattooed men in white boxer shorts file into a courtyard and squat with their heads touching the backs of the men ahead of them resembles something out of Hollywood science fiction.

I don't know what is more shocking: the footage of these men or the fact that many Salvadorans, especially those who have immigrated to the US, are not appalled by the sight of so many young men entering an environment that would have intimidated Dante Alighieri.

‘Abandon hope all ye who enter here,’ the Italian poet famously imagined the sign welcoming new arrivals to hell. The same words would seem fitting for this mega-prison.

The Government boasts that no one can escape from it. “This will be

their new house, where they will live for decades, all mixed, unable to do any further harm to the population,” boasted Bukele recently. The potential for violence in prison in a country with no death penalty is part of the terror the “state of exception” inspires.

One of Chávez's concerns is the many innocent young men who have been detained mistakenly. Some 4,000 of the 70,000 arrested under the new anti-terrorism protocols have since been released, but I am told that this takes some doing. Not all innocent men and their families have recourse to the

lawyers and other resources needed to apply pressure.

“How can you sleep at night, seeing how the ‘exceptional’ has become the rule, what is normal?” said Chávez, addressing the government in a homily last month. “How is it that you can accept as normal that the people who suffer cannot even express themselves publicly? How is it that it can be regarded as normal that all possibility of dialogue is closed?”

I would go even further than the cardinal in that I believe even the guilty deserve better treatment.

Is the possibility of redemption

A group of 2,000 detainees were moved overnight to the mega-prison Terrorist Confinement Center (CECOT) on 15th March, 2023 in Tecoluca, El Salvador. Stripped to their underwear and forced to keep their head bowed and resting on the man in front, their treatment has been labelled ‘dehumanising’ – but since the policy was introduced, El Salvador's crime rate has fallen dramatically

now totally ruled out? What about the souls of these men? Can we just lock the doors and throw away the key?

During a recent visit to El Salvador, some of those I talked to found the treatment of the prisoners dehumanising. Others disagreed, saying that the gang members deserved the brutal treatment.

But what remains is a terrible situation, an invoice of sorts for El Salvador's long history of injustice, oppression, violence, and loss of faith. The cruelty and viciousness of the gangs is sinful, but it needs to be understood in the context of a society at war with its religious roots, overwhelmed by selfish materialism, and scarred by generations of fratricidal conflict.

Charles Dickens once wrote this about the excesses of the French Revolution: “Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seeds of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.” The gangs are both producers and products of violence.

The problem is not just that of the present government of El Salvador. This is something with international and even metaphysical dimensions. The desperation of the “state of exception” represents the bankruptcy of a civilization. The Confinement Center said that only force can hold society together. May God have mercy on us all. And may other brave voices join with that of Chavez in speaking for reason and decency.

“How is it that you can accept as normal that the people who suffer cannot even express themselves publicly? How is it that it can be regarded as normal that all possibility of dialogue is closed?” Cardinal Chávez, addressing the government in a homily last month.



VATICAN LETTER

CAROL GLATZ



New horror movie on exorcism is ‘story of hope,’ says Jesuit producer

Hollywood has cast its eye over the idea of exorcisms once more, with the release of *The Pope’s Exorcist*, starring Russell Crowe. Perhaps surprisingly, the producers had help from a Jesuit priest. Here he explains why he got involved.

The Jesuit priest who helped produce *The Pope’s Exorcist* said horror movie fans will be in for “a fun ride” with the new film that stars Russell Crowe.

Jesuit Father Edward J. Siebert, founder and president of Loyola Productions, told Catholic News Service that the film “relies upon familiar biblical, literary and cinematic images to personify the lure of evil against the power of good.”

“Any story that ends with the enemy’s defeat is ultimately a story of hope. And if you are a fan of horror films, this is a fun ride,” he said as the film was released.

Fr Siebert, who is also rector of the Jesuit community at Loyola Marymount University and teaches at its School of Film and Television in Los Angeles, served as an executive producer for the film.

The movie, billed as a ‘supernatural horror thriller,’ was inspired by the life and ministry of the late Pauline Father Gabriele Amorth, a longtime and well-known exorcist for the Diocese of Rome who performed tens of thousands of exorcisms until his death in 2016 at the age of 91.

Fr Siebert said Loyola Productions acquired both the book and life rights to Fr Amorth’s story. “I was drawn to the story of Father Amorth because it is primarily a story of

good and evil.”

Serving as the executive producer for the film, the Jesuit said he helped “to shape the project along the way.”

While “the film is written and directed in the style of historical fiction,” he said, it is based on the Italian priest’s two memoirs *An Exorcist Tells His Story* and *An Exorcist: More Stories*.

“The writers and director took creative liberty to visualise internal struggles as external events,” he said. “None of the supporting characters, especially Church officials, represent actual historic figures. They illustrate the ecclesial structure and system in which an exorcist would work.”

Before the film’s release, the International Association of Exorcists, headquartered in Rome and co-founded by Fr Amorth, released a statement after viewing the film’s trailer lamenting what it

believed was going to be a ‘splatter film’, ‘heavy on exaggeration’ and ‘unreliability on such a sensitive and relevant subject.’

Any overly sensationalised depiction of the ministry of exorcism ‘distorts and falsifies what is really lived and experienced’ by Catholic exorcists and ‘is insulting in regard to the state of suffering experienced by those who are victims of extraordinary action by the devil,’ it said in a statement.

Fr Siebert was asked about how the horror genre would be helpful in illustrating the ministry of an exorcist and how Catholics and the public should approach the film and discern what is pure entertainment and what is more instructive or accurate.

“Today’s audiences are savvy enough to glean the wheat from the chaff, if you will, in mainstream entertainment,” he said.

“Anyone watching *The Pope’s Exorcist* will see that this is a work of historical fiction in the horror/thriller genre, which is not your typical faith-based film.”

“What is more accurate and instructive for viewers is that the film reflects on some of the most challenging aspects of faith,” he said. “When we shed light on sin and evil, it reflects back the pain of our past and present.”

“While the demons in the film may seem extreme and exaggerated, the movements of disturbance and evil inside of us have the power to overtake us,” he wrote. “I have always believed that the power of prayer, the naming of demons, the forgiveness of sins and the conquering of evil are central to faith.”

• The film is reviewed below

Hollywood offers its usual take on the world of the devil, the Church and exorcisms

John Mulderig

It’s important to bear in mind that, however credible its source material may be, the ostensibly fact-based possession tale *The Pope’s Exorcist* (Sony) remains a Hollywood horror movie. Considered as such, the film starts off promisingly enough but eventually becomes overheated and lurid.

Any adaptation of books published by high-profile exorcist Pauline Father Gabriele Amorth, who died in 2016, aged 91, is unlikely to be fare suitable for the whole family, moreover. And so it proves in this case since, as directed by Julius Avery, the picture includes a variety of components that even grown-ups in search of casual entertainment may wish to avoid.

Star Russell Crowe brings verve to his portrayal of Fr Amorth. Genial and fond of a joke, the cleric is nonetheless never frivolous. Perhaps the most characteristic image among the opening scenes is that of Fr Amorth riding his Vespa scooter through the streets of Rome backed by punk band Faith No More’s refrain, *It’s a dirty job but someone’s gotta do it.*

From the Eternal City we jump to

Spain, where a trio of Americans – recently widowed mum Julia (Alex Essoe), rebellious teen daughter Amy (Laurel Marsden) and traumatised youngster Henry (Peter DeSouza-Feighoney) – are living temporarily. They’ve taken up residence in a former abbey while Julia supervises its renovation with an eye to selling it.

Of course, the spooky old place turns out to be haunted by a demon (voice of Ralph Ineson) who promptly puts Henry under his dominion. Local priest Fr Esquibel (Daniel Zovatto) tries to help but he’s way out of his depth. Time to summon Fr Amorth.

In fact, it develops that Fr Amorth’s presence is part of a scheme the unholy spirit has concocted for infiltrating the Vatican. There, an entirely fictional pope (Franco Nero) is not only ailing but surrounded by fractious prelates – some allies of Amorth, others his opponents.

While the focus remains on young Henry’s plight, the movie feels dramatically compact and sound, though not lacking in genre clichés. The screenwriters do successfully make the case for taking the power of evil seriously.

As the clergymen research the abbey’s past, however, extraneous elements ranging from contemporary divisions within the Church to the legacy of the Spanish Inquisition are thrown into the mix – and depicted ineptly. As a result, the proceedings eventually degenerate into a muddle while the tone becomes increasingly sensationalist.

Details of religious practice are also portrayed inaccurately. Thus in two of the three confessions we witness on screen, the confessor fails to use the necessary formula of absolution, substituting instead a vague prayer that the penitent may be forgiven. Any well catechised Catholic would demand a re-run.

In the midst of it all Fr Amorth makes an observation that might be taken for heresy in some circles these days. “Prayers,” he tells Fr Esquibel, “are more powerful in Latin.”

All-in-all, it’s typical Hollywood fare as far as the Church and the devil are concerned – so expect violence, blood, bad language and occasional nudity.

Its rating? You’ll never guess, it’s an 18 – and definitely one that needs customers with a strong stomach.



The poster from the film, *The Pope’s Exorcist*, starring Russell Crowe

Reviving our faith in the Eucharist

The Eucharistic Revival is a movement to restore understanding and devotion to this great mystery. Launched in the USA, it is now gaining traction in the UK and western Europe. Here, we look at its origins and goals

The Eucharist is the summit of our faith, in which the entire story of our salvation is made real in a miraculous and powerful way. The Roman Missal calls Holy Eucharist the ‘Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received; the memory of his Passion is renewed; the mind is filled with grace; and a pledge of future glory is given unto us.’

Yet how often do we have a moment to reflect on this priceless gift? Even in Mass we can become distracted, and what is miraculous and precious becomes routine. The National Eucharistic Revival can be such an opportunity for reflection and for deepening our love for what God has given us – his Son, Jesus, who we receive into our hearts. During this time, we can make a point to focus on the Eucharist – in the Mass, in our reading, in our faith formation classes, and in the quiet of our own hearts. We can use this time well to pay closer attention to this gift.

The Eucharist and the Mass

At every Mass we are witnesses to a miracle. The Eucharist is not a symbol of Our Lord; the bread and wine actually become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. At the altar, he truly comes to us, again and again, in his real presence.

Christ himself instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper as a “memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium, No. 47*).

The Eucharist calls us to memorialise Christ’s passion and death on the cross, the sacrifice in which he won for us our salvation and eternity with the Father. It also is a tremendous sign of our unity as believers. We call it Holy Communion because when we approach the altar, we are acknowledging our unity with Christ, his Church, and one another.

Yet these words can only partially express a mystery that is beyond words: ‘If you understood him, it would not be God,’ writes St. Augustine. So, too, with the Eucharist. During the National Eucharistic Revival, we can plumb this mystery more and more deeply – not just when we come together for Mass, but in every situation of life.

The Church asks all of us to examine our consciences to make sure we are truly prepared to receive Jesus:

- Are we in a ‘state of grace’, that is, not aware of any unconfessed grave sin? If not, then we should celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation first.

- Have we observed the one-hour fast from food and drink (except for water and medicine) before



receiving Our Lord?

- Do we believe in the Real Presence; do we believe that Christ is present, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity?

- Are we faithful to the moral teachings of the Church in our personal and public lives?

Ways to celebrate the Eucharistic Revival

- **Corpus Christi processions**
The National Eucharistic Revival began on the feast of Corpus Christi in the United States, Sunday, 19th

June, 2022. The feast of Corpus Christi began in 1246 in France and became a feast for the entire Western Church only 18 years later. It was itself meant to be a celebration of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic feast.

In this centuries-old Catholic tradition, the faithful form a kind of ‘parade’ to honour the Body and Blood of Christ, singing Eucharistic hymns as they march in a church or other public setting as a testimony of their faith.

- **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**

Churches celebrate Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. During Exposition, Catholics spend time praying and worshipping the Lord in the Eucharist while the Host is exposed on the altar.

- **Adult Faith Formation.**

Throughout the revival, parishes around the country are offering programs and other types of study on the Eucharist. Catholics are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to join with others in deepening their faith and understanding of the Eucharist.

More ways to draw closer to Jesus in the Eucharist

- **At Mass.**

When we recognise that Jesus himself is present in the Blessed

Sacrament, we come to realize that participation every week at Sunday Mass (or Saturday vigil Mass) is more than an obligation. It is a privilege! When you are in the presence of the Consecrated Host, pray with heartfelt sincerity, “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” With St. Thomas, who touched the wounds of the Lord, simply say, “My Lord and my God.”

- **Make a spiritual communion.**

When we desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist but are unable to do so, we may make what is called a “spiritual communion.” Wherever we may be, we need only ask the Lord to come into our hearts and renew his life within us. We can then spend a few moments in prayer and praise, and then resolve to receive Communion as soon as possible.

- **Before the tabernacle**

Jesus is present in the Host reserved in the tabernacle. We can take time out regularly to visit a church and talk to him there. Make it a ‘Holy Hour’.

- **In an adoration chapel**

Many churches provide a place where the Blessed Sacrament remains exposed for prayer and adoration every day – sometimes even around the clock (the latter is known as perpetual adoration). This arrangement provides an excellent and ongoing opportunity to draw close to Jesus in his Eucharistic presence outside Mass. If possible, sign up for a regular time to visit the church or chapel.

- **Through learning and teaching.**

Abundant resources are available for study. Ask pastors or directors of religious education for suggestions about literature, recordings, broadcasts and websites that teach about the Eucharist.

- **Cultivating an attitude of gratitude.**

Finally, keep in mind that the word ‘Eucharist’ literally means ‘thanksgiving’. In Holy Communion, as Jesus gives himself to us, we give ourselves to him as well in gratitude. His sacrifice on the Cross – presented on the altar – takes away the sins of the world and makes possible for us a life of intimate union with God.

Finally, a word from a saint who understood the significance of the Eucharist, St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa): “The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth.

“Each moment you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with Him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in heaven, and will help bring about everlasting peace on earth.”



At every Mass we are witnesses to a miracle... He truly comes to us, in his real presence

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

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



What is a sin - and why do we do it?

What is sinning? In all cultures, there are always the local customs or laws to be obeyed. In our own country we have a Parliament that creates laws for us to obey. Wherever there are laws, there is always praise or rewards for those who obey them, and punishments for those who don't.

God gave us laws to live by – The Ten Commandments. We can never know what's behind God's decisions but if we all lived by these laws that God gave, there would never be any wars, killing, thefts, only people loving God and everyone else. It would be an idyllic lifestyle.

We call disobeying God's laws sinning, but what are the benefits and punishments that go with them? The Catholic Church defines sins as Mortal or Venial. Mortal are those that are severe, such as killing and adultery, which we do willingly knowing they offend God. They stain our immortal souls in such a way as to lose God's favour. If we die with our souls in this state, it will perish in hell for all eternity.

Venial sins also stain our souls but are not severe. These are ones such as lying to make people laugh or ones that you don't realise are sins or do not willingly do. If your soul is only stained with venial sins, it shows you have tried, but in vain, to keep God's laws and his friendship, and your reward when you die, is life for your soul in Heaven for all

eternity.

Our very short lives here on Earth are nothing compared with life in Heaven for all eternity, so be aware of sinning. Make sure your soul is free from mortal sins at all times, because you never know when you will die.

A great way of ensuring this is to go to the sacrament of reconciliation (Confession) as often as possible. It's the only sure way we have of knowing that God has forgiven our sins, and our souls are free from them.

When we only go to confession

once or twice a year, we tend to recognise our sins just before going to this sacrament. When we go regularly, we recognise we are sinning as we start to commit them, allowing us to stop. This is just one great reason for going to confession as often as possible.

Don't lose your eternal soul by committing sins: it's your worst, everlasting and devastating loss.

Sinning is such a devastating thing that the mission of the Catholic Church is to follow the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ who in various ways said "I have

come to save sinners...."

We are told that where Heaven is concerned, "the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard the wonders that God has prepared for those who love him."

The Church wants us all to get to Heaven, but we must earn it. To do so, our immortal soul must be "In Favour With God" when we die, and the strategies taught by the Catholic Church are all aimed at achieving this. The Church follows what Jesus Christ told us to do. He explained what was wanted and how it can all be achieved. We should worship God alone, love Him and our neighbours as ourselves. If we do this, our souls will be in favour with God when we die.

It's all so simple, but our free will, a gift from God, means that we have the problem of DESIRE. It is this that causes us to fail in achieving God's promise. There is also Satan at work, endlessly trying to get us to desire things that cause us to sin.

Desire causes most of man's problems, such as when we desire the love of another human being, or power, or wealth and many other things. Desire is not wrong, it's when we use it at the expense and pain of others.

To overcome these dreadful desires and to stop us sinning, the Church has instituted particular ways of living, of praying, using special practices (Sacraments) and

of actually worshipping God. Practising these will ensure that our souls are in favour with God when we die.

The main ones are:

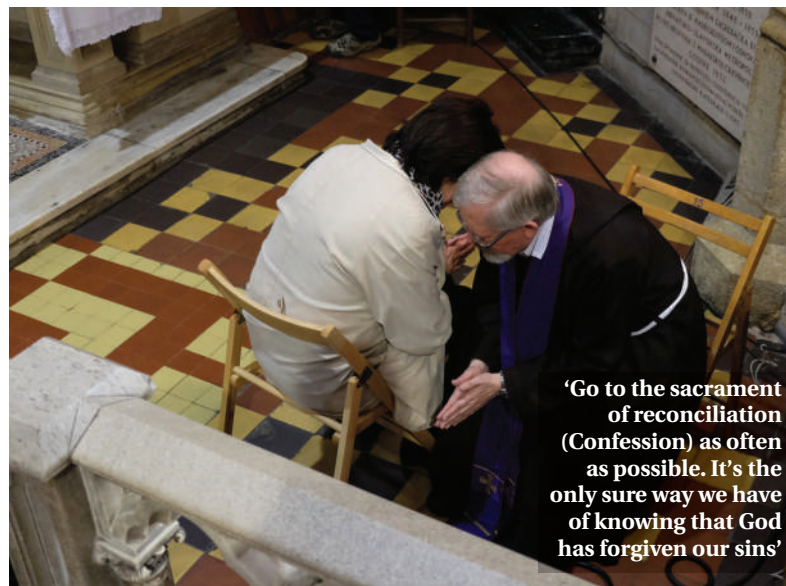
1. Love God with our whole heart, mind and body and our neighbour as ourselves.
2. Praying daily to God.
3. Receiving the sacraments, especially Baptism, Penance and Holy Eucharist.
4. Going to Mass at least once a week.

There are many others, all designed to save sinners and allow them to achieve God's great promise, but the four above are very effective ones.

Don't lose sight of the endless eternity. If Satan offered you life until the end of time, with no medical problems and being the richest on earth, remember, until the 'end of time', is nothing in terms of length when it's compared with 'eternity in heaven' promised by God to the souls of those who die without sin..

Do not let sinning, during your tiny lifetime, destroy your eternal soul by making sure it resides in hell for all eternity.

Do what the Catholic Church teaches, making sure your soul gains God's great promise to live with him in paradise for all eternity.



'Go to the sacrament of reconciliation (Confession) as often as possible. It's the only sure way we have of knowing that God has forgiven our sins'

JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Padraig offers a glimpse of life in its rawest form

The American poet, Mary Oliver concludes her poem *The summer Day* with these lines.

*Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?*

The Irish poet Padraig Daly who has recently published a new volume of his poetry *Glimpsing More*, speaks with a clear and honest voice of his own life experiences where he serves in the Liberties quarter of Dublin, as an ordained Augustinian priest.

Through carefully chosen words and well-crafted lines he offers us insight on his ministry to the

community to whom he gives his time and patience. Take for example the brief poem that opens this new Collection.

My prayer
*My prayer is the prayer of the street.
Of addicts berating the dark,
Of crows descending for discarded suppers,*

*Of football crowds and birthday feasts
Swish of buses, horses' clop,
Neon light surrendering to hopeful dawn.*

In another piece, he tells us of an elderly woman called Elizabeth:

At ninety-six, she has moved to a Nursing Home.

*She cannot pray.
She asks if all she believed is fairy tale.*

*Would I were so full of You
That I might comfort her with certainty.
Would that love were provable like a sum*

*And I could show
How You stroke our brow
And smother Yourself in our trouble.*

These are pieces reminiscent of the end of Mark's Gospel when two women finding the empty tomb are told the Risen Lord has gone before them in to Galilee. They should seek him there, in the midst of the busy reality of life.

That reality of life is captured in



twelve short pieces towards the end of the collection entitled simply *Dublin*. The third one in the sequence is called *Islandbridge Park*. *Listening to water fall over an*

*unseen weir,
I am cut in two by loneliness.
In the young people passing,
I idealise the lives I might have had.
Surrendering to the rawness of my chastity,
I beg my sweet God comfort me.*

Mary Oliver's words challenge us to be accountable: Padraig Daly faces square on the reality of the journey. Padraig's sense of family is strong. He includes 13 short pieces named for his grandnieces and grandnephews, each fine fragments of care and affection.

This new collection reflects the story of his life's vocation. Your time spent reading it will be well rewarded.

Glimpsing More Padraig J Daly
pub: 2022 Scotus Press DUBLIN 6

CREDO

FR HUGH DUFFY

Rise up and believe in the divine truth of the resurrection

The Gospel of John, chapter 11:25
“Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though He dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

The doctrine of the resurrection is so important to our spiritual lives that St Paul declared that: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.” (1 Corinthians 15 : 17).

The resurrection changed a group of frightened disciples into men of courage who could go forth boldly to transform a world, enslaved by the pitiless might of the Roman Empire, into a world of Christlike compassion and love. All this took place because Jesus conquered death and sin, and made it possible for us to rise to the new life of the Gospel. It is imperative to say ‘yes’ to the resurrection, and not just give lip service to the new life and endless possibilities it offers.

That was the problem with poor Martha (John, chapter eleven) who was content to pay lip service to the resurrection when Jesus visited her home after the death of her brother, Lazarus. Her faith was weak and she was upset that Jesus had not arrived earlier for she believed that if He had arrived when Lazarus was alive, he “would not have died.” (John 11:21)

Then, Jesus said to her, “you brother will rise again”; and Martha replied, “I know that he will rise again on the last day.” (John 11 : 24) That’s when Jesus corrected Martha’s misunderstanding about the resurrection; she was right in what she said, but was wrong, very wrong, in what she ignored. She failed to acknowledge that the resurrection is not only about rising again on the last day; it is also about rising to new life today. Jesus’s resurrection from the dead makes it possible for us to experience the new life of the gospel today, right in the midst of real life, among the pots and pans of the kitchen, in the supermarket, in the classroom, with our colleagues at



Fresco Glory of the Resurrected Jesus from the cupola of the side chapel in the Duomo, Ravenna, Italy by Guido Reni (1575 - 1642).

work, in our relationships with the boss and our office colleagues. The way we treat one another is the gauge of how we believe in him. That is why Jesus said: “Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11 : 26)

Resurrection is about rising every day to live a new life, inspired by the

gospel. It is about greeting the day with a new attitude that builds up rather than destroy; that spreads forgiveness among friends and acquaintances over real or perceived offenses; that reaches out to the least of our brothers and sisters for “whatsoever we do to the least” among us we do to Christ. (Matthew

25 : 40) Jesus can raise us up right now, give us new life, help us to fight selfishness, make us whole, and fill us with a joy that lasts.

This is the good news that Jesus preached while he walked the earth; and it is the good news he conveyed to Martha in today’s Gospel: “I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11 : 25) “Do you believe this?” That is the question Jesus asked of Martha, and that it is the question he addresses to us today. It is imperative we say ‘yes’ to the living Jesus and not just give lip service.

Celebrate with Mark, as Christ defeats death

Gospel of Mark, chapter 16:6

We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and with Jesus the resurrection of all who believe in Him. We have risen from the dead, so to speak, because Jesus had freed us from death to sin. Death to sin is a more unspeakable death than death of the body. Death to sin is spiritual death; it is enslavement to base passions and desires; it is entrapment in a world of evil, prejudice, malice, viciousness and selfishness.

We have been set free of those chains that

weigh us down by Jesus who rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. What a reason for giving thanks to God for such a blessed gift!

The Easter message is the good news that Jesus preached while He walked the earth. Accept the Gospel, work with grace and not against grace, and you will be free!

But, the Bible tells us that God created nature, including human nature, and that it was good. The Bible also tells us that human nature without grace is faulty. Not that the world we live in or the people we live with

are bad, but the world and the people in it are not fulfilled without the grace of God which alone can protect us and our world from the poisonous influences of sin.

The Resurrection shows what can happen when people give God a chance. God can raise us up if we work with His grace. He can raise us up right now, give us new life, help us to fight selfishness, make us whole, and fill us with joy.

This is what the Resurrection is all about. Be glad that you can rise in the morning to a

bright new day. Be happy that you have friends who are tried and true. Be thankful that God’s grace is at work urging our community to greater generosity.

Cast aside jealousy, pettiness, vindictiveness, deceit, double dealing, and all forms of nastiness.

These base instincts have no place in the lives of Christians. Break forth in freedom and inner song for Jesus, our savior, has risen.

Alleluia!

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



The people of Jerusalem were told: Jesus God is raised up, and all of us are witnesses'

23rd April 2023 – 3rd Sunday of Easter, (A)

1st Reading: Acts 2:14, 32-33

Jesus' greatest moment was when God raised him to glory. His resurrection shows the Father's plan for all of us

Peter, standing with the 11, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say: This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

Responsorial: Psalm 15: 1-2, 5, 7-11

R./: Lord, you will show us the path of life

*Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.
I say to the Lord: 'You are my God.
O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;
it is you yourself who are my prize.'*
(R./)

*I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.* (R./)

*And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my body shall rest in safety.
For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
nor let your beloved know decay.*
(R./)

*You will show me the path of life,
and the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand happiness for ever.* (R./)

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-21

Christians are called to live in obedience to the Father. This life is founded on faith and hope in Christ who has been raised from the dead. If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you

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



have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Two disciples come to recognise our risen Lord in the breaking of the bread, as he opened the Scriptures to them

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word

before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early that morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying,

"Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

A Gospel within the Gospel

The Emmaus story is like a Gospel within the Gospel. It is so rich a lesson that it serves as a summary of our own bonding with Jesus Christ. For these disciples on the road to Emmaus, the future looked grim indeed. For the previous few years,

life had been exciting and they were captivated by the Gospel message of Jesus. But it emerges that they hadn't grasped some vital parts of what he had said. We can empathise with them, because mostly we too tend to pick and choose the parts of his message that please us, and fail to take seriously other words of the Lord.

After his death on the cross, they felt all was lost. But Jesus used the Jewish scriptures to enlighten them. The prophecies declare the divine promises and reveal the saving plan of God. The scriptures have power like an electric current, and are inspired by the Spirit of God. When he opened the meaning of God's Word to them, they began to understand his cross in a totally new light. They saw it not as a total disaster but as the start of a new age of grace.

Once arrived in Emmaus, they recognised him also in the breaking of bread. The prayerful sharing of a meal among friends was a living symbol of friendship and trust. What was special about the way Jesus broke the bread is an intriguing question. Perhaps it was the spirit of self-giving that he invested in the act that showed them who he really was. There was a level of focus, of sharing and of sacredness unique to Jesus, something they had experienced previously, before his passion. His presence touched their deepest hungers, and the bread he broke was not just physical. It was food that they opened their hearts as well as their mouths to receive.

The Emmaus story speaks to people of all ages. We can see ourselves in these two weary travellers on their journey, the faith and hope they have lost, the future they have hoped for fallen apart. And yet they met an unknown friend walking the road with them, who gave them a fresh insight, and connected the new world with the world they knew. And, of course, he is present in a particular way in the Eucharist, in the breaking of bread, full of the many meanings that breaking bread had for Jesus himself, during his life and after the resurrection.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH FR DOYLE

There's no rush to leave church: take your time and spend it in prayer

Q. I often hear references, both in worship and in religious teaching, to 'fear of the Lord'. I struggle with this because I think of God as so forgiving and passionate in his love for the people he has created. Do we really mean 'fear', or just the highest respect?

A. The word 'fear', in many people's minds, has a negative connotation. But closer study shows there are really two kinds of fear - servile and filial. 'Servile' comes from the Latin word for slave, and that sort of fear is self-centred, worried about being punished for a misdeed. 'Filial' is from the Latin for son or daughter, and filial fear is inspired by love.

It is the desire never to disappoint a parent or to betray a trust; filial fear is based on wonder and awe, reverence and respect.

Your question tells me that you understand this distinction. It is the second sort, filial fear, that is meant in the Book of Proverbs 9:10, when it says fear of the Lord is 'the beginning of wisdom'; this is also the type of fear referred to when the Acts of the Apostles 9:31 says of the early Christians: 'The Church throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.'

Without forgetting that there are consistent reminders in the Scriptures about divine retribution for sinfulness, a Christian should primarily be motivated not by fright but by fidelity, by a desire to return God's lavish love.

I sometimes ask people to tell me the first image they think of when I say the word 'God'. To some extent, this is a function of personality type and, perhaps even more, of a person's early religious education.

For me - and, I suspect, for many - that first image used to be of some giant scorekeeper in the sky, writing pluses and minuses on a large blackboard. But no more; now I think, instead, of the father of the prodigal son, running down the road to throw his arms around his once-wayward boy and saying: "It's OK. Don't worry about it. You're home. Let's have a party."

That is the image Jesus projects of his heavenly Father - someone much more ready to embrace us than to punish. It is so important for us to know and experience this image of God which Jesus shows us.

Q. Because of what has been going on in the world lately, I am having trouble concentrating when I pray. Do you have any suggestions for avoiding such distractions?



Christian pilgrims at the baptismal site known as Qasr el-Yahud on the Jordan River near the West Bank city of Jericho, which is associated with John and Jesus baptising. 'Baptism inserts us into the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection and applies the merits of Christ's action to ourselves.' Photo: Debbie Hill

A. First of all, don't be discouraged - or surprised. Distraction is a normal companion to prayer. The holiest people we've known, some of the best-known saints, have spoken of their struggles to focus while praying.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (the 'Little Flower') had a trick that she would use. She explained: "I also have many (distractions), but as soon as I am aware of them, I pray for those people the thought of whom is diverting my attention, and in this way they reap benefit from my distractions."

It is important, I think, for us to set aside certain times exclusively for prayer. Sometimes I do pray when I am doing other things - driving a car, even working out on a stationary bike. But those can't be the only times that I pray - I need, too, to pray when I am doing nothing else.

And I can't rush in from a busy day, plop down in a chair or on my knees and expect to focus immediately on the Lord; instead, I need some moments to settle and catch my breath before I start to pray.

The saints seemed to do this a bit more easily. St. Francis of Assisi, when he was about to enter a church to pray, would say: "Worldly and

frivolous thoughts, stay here at the door until I return."

So when you meet with distractions while praying - as inevitably you will - don't panic. Simply pause, refocus and then continue your conversation with the Lord.

Q. When is it proper to leave church at the end of Mass? Do you have to stay for the recessional hymn to end, or can we leave after the blessing, while the recessional is still being sung?

A. You should remain in church while the recessional hymn is being sung. Singing is a part of worship - particularly so if it is a hymn meant to be sung by the entire congregation.

It bothers me when I see people leaving church early - sometimes, alas, even right after Communion - in a rush to get to the car park.

What's the urgency, I think, and isn't God worth the extra few minutes? I have read - and I understand - that technically the Mass finishes when the priest blesses us and the deacon or priest tells us that the Mass is ended.

But for the sake of simple politeness, one ought not distract others in the congregation by leaving before communal worship is concluded.

I find it helpful if the priest remains at the altar for the first verse or two of the recessional hymn and structures it so that the procession of liturgical ministers reaches the back of church as that hymn is ending.

Ideally, of course, worshippers would then spend a few minutes in private, silent prayer of thanksgiving before leaving church.

On this side of Heaven, we are never closer to the Lord than when we've just received him in the Eucharist.

Q. I was taught that the Bible never mentions Jesus baptising anyone, because our sacrament of baptism commemorates His death and resurrection, and He had not yet died and risen. But I recently read this passage: 'After this Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptising. John was also baptising in Aenon near Salim' (John 3:22-23). In Matthew 3:11, though, John says that he is baptising with water and Jesus will baptise with fire and the Holy Spirit. In John 3:22, isn't Jesus baptising with water, or what else would that quote mean?

A. You raise a good question, and the plain truth is that we don't really know whether Jesus baptised

anyone with water during the two and a half years of his public ministry. The scriptural passage to which you refer (John 3:22) would seem to indicate that Jesus did baptise, along with some of his disciples.

However, if you continue on just a few more verses, you will read (John 4:1-3): 'Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptising more disciples than John (although Jesus himself was not baptising, just his disciples), he left Judea and returned to Galilee.'

The synoptic writers - Matthew, Mark and Luke - offer no clarity on this, because they are silent on the question of Jesus baptising.

What we know is this: if Christ did, in fact, baptise during the early days with his apostles, it was not the sacrament of baptism as we know it today. That sacrament, as you correctly point out, inserts us into the mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection and applies the merits of Christ's action to ourselves.

We, the baptised, are initiated into the sacramental life of the church and placed on a path to holiness and to Heaven.

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

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Time is ticking: heed Our Lady now!

David continues his course on Our Lady's Teaching on Prayer

Part 8 - When Love is Lost

If the Sun became a symbol of God's love shining in the risen Christ, then the Moon was a symbol of his mother shining with his reflected glory, even here on earth to lead all to union with her son.

It was her contemplation and the fruits of contemplation that shone in her that inspired others to follow her, in the only way to union with God, and the only way to lead others to follow.

Wisdom from St Francis of Assisi

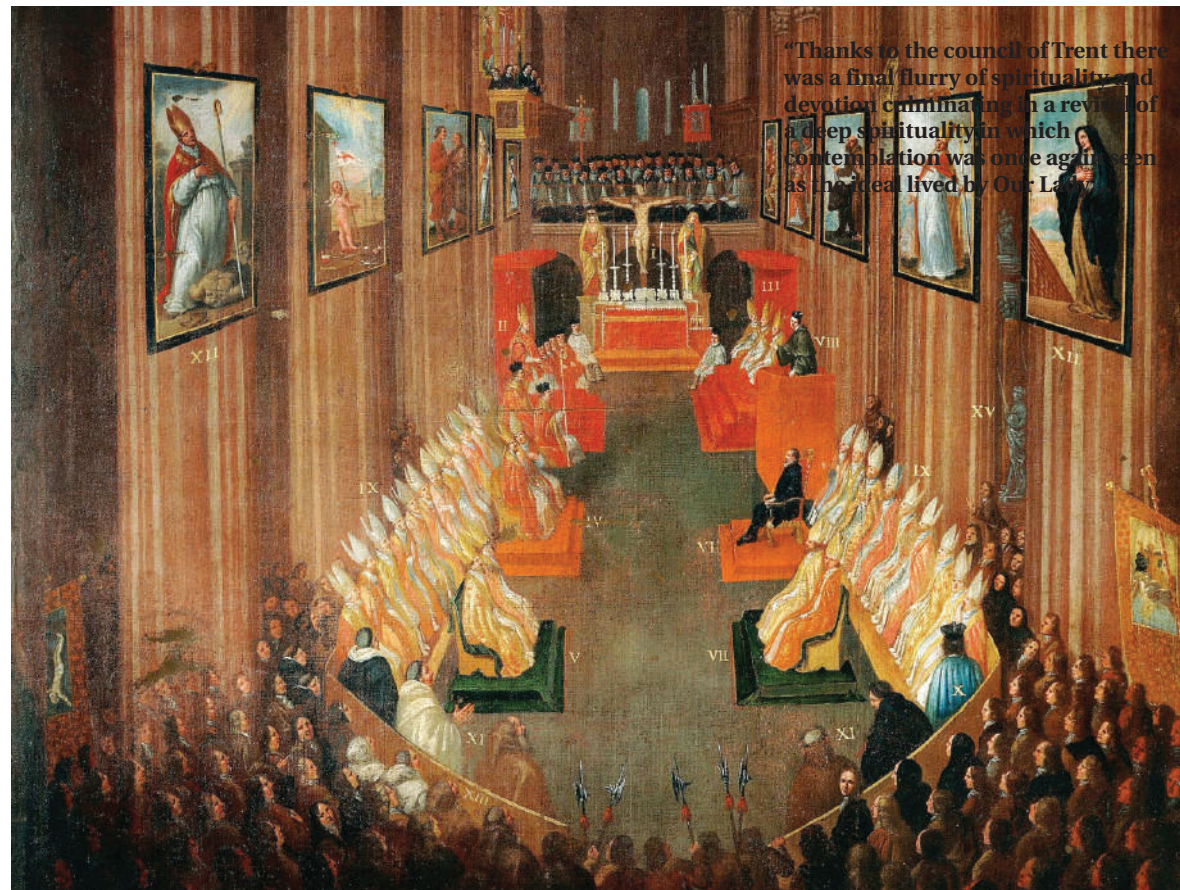
St Francis of Assisi once said that there are two ways of calling others to God. The first and most important way is by embodying his life in our own lives, that should be replete with the virtues that characterised his life. The second is by preaching, but without the first way, the second way will fail.

The success of Christianity in those first centuries was that they followed the practical example and teaching of Mary in whom her son's teaching, and praying, was so perfectly embodied. Centuries before religious life grew up it was through the love of Christ learnt in prayer and meditation that found its fullest expression in contemplation. In this way it was the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit that raised saints in abundance to transform a pagan Roman empire into a Christian Roman Empire in such a short time.

However, when, at the end of the fifth century the Catholic Emperor Theodosius, made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, things changed. The days when contemplation was the ultimate goal of the ordinary Christian family prayer which Our Lady presided over, were numbered. The ideal became ever more distant as the world that Christians were called to change, changed them instead, and it changed them into its own image and likeness, not God's.

An Orwellian change

All that was once good and holy was all but changed into its opposite. The repentance that was originally meant to turn people to God now turned them inward upon themselves, to seek, not God's own honour and glory but their own. Instead of the prayer that was meant to help them rise up to God, they began to rise in the world. Sacrifice that once meant making offerings to God now meant making offering to man for material preferment. In subsequent centuries there was always the remnant who kept the faith and from whom regular renewals arose. Perhaps it was from



"Thanks to the council of Trent there was a final flurry of spirituality and devotion culminating in a revival of a deep spirituality in which contemplation was once again seen as the ideal lived by Our Lady"

the time of Constantine that the graph that once charted the spiritual advancement of the Church upwards, began to fall downward. Thanks to great saints like St Gregory, St Bernard, St Francis of Assisi and other great saints and mystics, the steady downward trajectory of our spiritual graph made striking upward movements that were successful for a while. Repentance returned, the sacrifice that turned people back to prayer was made, and the liturgy that expressed these sacrifices once again reflected the vibrant life-changing celebrations that were common place in the early Church.

With the Renaissance that began in the middle of the 14th century, the birth of the man-centred modern world gradually began to seep into the Catholic Faith infiltrating and finally strangling it into near death as we can see today.

Thanks to the Council of Trent

But first, thanks to the council of Trent there was a final flurry of spirituality and devotion



With the Renaissance began the birth of the man-centred modern world... finally strangling the Catholic faith into near death as we can see today...

culminating in a revival of a deep spirituality in which contemplation was once again seen as the ideal lived by Our Lady and practised as the culmination of the spiritual life, by the first Christians. Once again what St Thomas Aquinas called the fruits of contemplation made the 17th century the place where, what had so often been lost and found in the past, flourished again and gave hope of the return to our true spiritual origins. But sadly, the condemnation of a counterfeit mysticism called Quietism, riddled with heresy and the sins that it led to, set in motion anti-mystical witch-hunts that have successfully outlawed mystical prayer and contemplation down to the present day. There has always been a remnant there to retain the essence of the faith that Jesus introduced into the early Church and over which Mary presided, but the way of meditation that leads to and is culminated in contemplation was gone. At best it was only seen as an extraordinary way for the few, and the eccentric few.

God bless them, but don't dare follow them!

When love is lost

Take love out of a family and disaster follows. Take the God-given love that is given out of the Church, and the disasters that we have all seen will multiply as time plays out. With no one else to speak out and be heard, Our Lady has returned to centre stage to warn that even God's Mercy has its limits.

If it was her frightening warnings

at Fatima of what would happen if people do not return to repentance, prayer and sacrifice that many believe galvanised Pope John to call a council to prevent the horrors contained in the so called 'Fatima Secret', then it failed. It failed because it failed to reproduce a document that would inspire us all to return to the profound God-given spirituality that Jesus Christ introduced into the early Church.

The greatest tragedy of modern times,

I personally believe that this is the greatest tragedy of modern times, not just for the Church, but for the world. It did produce a document

that set before the faithful a modern version of the ancient liturgy in which the early Christians expressed their faith. That was well and good, but without the profound contemplative spirituality born of repentance, prayer and sacrifice over which Our Lady presided for a time, it would mean little.

What is a beautiful liturgical expression of the faith, without the presence of the faithful who daily live and practice the spirituality of repentance, prayer, and sacrifice?

In the years that have followed everything has become progressively worse, as people have turned to the latest human wisdom to make up for the divine wisdom that they have been denied. They seem to believe, and wrongly believe, that they can do for themselves what only the divine wisdom received in contemplation can do for them.

It has now been left to Our Lady to do what the Church, the one that calls her 'mother', has failed to do. Her call is now loud and clear for all to hear, thanks to the children through whom she has spoken to us all at Garabandal.

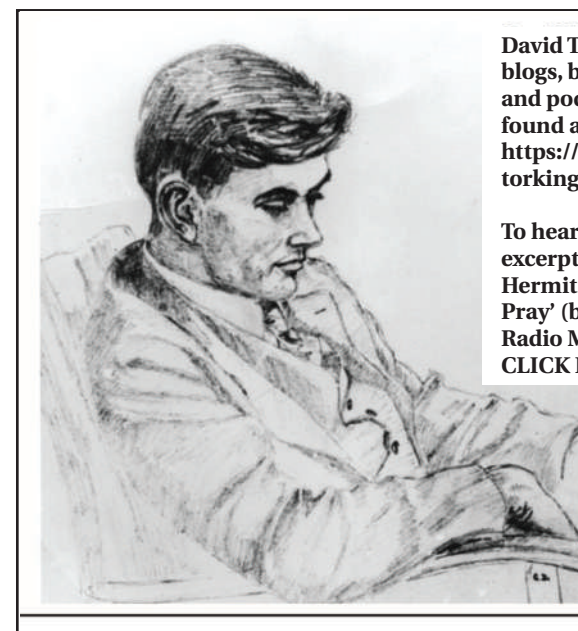
Thanks to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as she calls herself, it is back to the contemplation that was her own prayer, through the practice of repentance, prayer and sacrifice. And a return to Christ's sacrifice of the Mass to receive from him the fruits of contemplation that can alone do again for the modern world what it did for the ancient world.


But this time it seems there are no options. God is ready and willing to 'rend down the heavens and come' to do what has never been done before, at least this side of the Resurrection. We are in the last minute of extra time!

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


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





AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION



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

Special Mass has a message for us all

A wet and blustery day in Coventry didn't stop St Osburg's, the Mother Church of Coventry, from celebrating Easter Monday Mass in style. Canon Paul Fitzpatrick was the principal celebrant, and he was joined by priests from across the deanery. As per tradition, this is the only Mass in the Coventry and Nuneaton Deanery on Easter Monday.

Canon Tom Farrell opened the Mass by welcoming Canon Paul Fitzpatrick, the Episcopal Vicar for the Pastoral Area of Coventry, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire.

Canon Paul thanked Canon Tom, adding that it was good to be back at St Osburg's where he had visited as part of the ongoing Deanery visitation. He thanked those present and the choir for the lovely entrance hymn.

During his homily, Canon Paul spoke about how it only took one word for Mary

Magdala to be transformed. One word from Jesus changed her life. Jesus spoke her name, 'Mary,' to her. Jesus speaks to us all to follow him, Canon Paul said, and be the messenger with the good news he has risen for us all.

Reflecting on his visitations, Canon Paul mentioned that he has seen the joy and happiness across the deanery as part of confirmations and visitations and seen many who want to be called. Canon Paul asked if each of us could invite 'another' to Mass to know and feel welcome in our church. Our vision as a diocese is to be one that goes out to find others and bring them home.

At the end of Mass, Canon Paul again thanked the choir – led by those from St Mary and St Benedict. He also announced a new Sunday evening Mass at St Osburg's, at 6pm.



Warm welcome as parish cultures come together

Mel Ward

The Catholic community of Cambourne, south west of Cambridge, celebrated Easter in a number of cultural traditions, embracing its Irish, Indian and Polish members.

One of the great treasures of the faith is its universality – being inclusive, all-embracing and inviting. The 50-plus villages that form our parish near Cambridge are as diverse as any other with many coming to work in 'silicon fen', universities or hospitals, and many other businesses.

The richness of culture brings colour and refreshing insights to our faith and fellowship, our communities and celebration. As Catholic churches, we can find true unity, welcome and belonging by sharing our experience and expressions of our faith. The Saint John Fisher community does its best to

enjoy this gift to the full.

For the St Patrick's party, the hall was decorated and a bring-and-share meal took place. Lorretta Peck shared videos of her talented family in Ireland and Niamh, who is fourth in the world for her age group, danced a slip jig.

On Maundy Thursday, after Mass of the Lord's Supper, we celebrated Pesaha appam with our Kerala parishioners. Flat, firm, rice cakes made from rice batter without yeast were shared.

On Holy Saturday afternoon, St John Fisher hosted a well-attended Swieconka for our Polish friends. Fr John Minh blessed the baskets of Easter food, and we helped to make folk feel welcome with Easter gift bags for the children and young people and cake and refreshments, served by students Mimi and Ana.

The St Patrick's party.



Jersey Knights make a trip to celebrate with ‘one of their own’

Danny Ó hEarchaí, Supreme Director for Membership & Development & Deputy Supreme Knight, reports on the journey some of the Jersey Council of the Knights of St Columba made to Portsmouth for Fr Edward Hauschild's recent ordination to the sacred priesthood.

On Saturday 25th March, five members of the Jersey Council of the Knights of St Columba made the trip to Portsmouth Cathedral to see Edward Hauschild ordained to the sacred priesthood. As Fr Edward has been in Jersey during his Diaconate, he feels like ‘one of our own’ so, of course, we had to make the journey.

With us being in Jersey, we don't often have the opportunity to enjoy large diocesan events, so seeing the bishop and 40 priests and deacons process into the cathedral was a sight to behold. Many of them had served in Jersey in the past, too, so it was wonderful to catch up with them after Mass.

We all thoroughly enjoyed being part of our wider diocesan family and, God willing, other

Fr Edward Hauschild had a warm welcome from his friends from Jersey when he was ordained in Portsmouth



opportunities like this will arise for us to all enjoy in the not too distant future.

While in Portsmouth we met up with our Knights Brothers from Province 14 (Portsmouth) and we all enjoyed each other's company and a lunch after in the city. This was a fabulous opportunity to socialise with our

Brothers, to share ideas and enjoy the fraternity whilst together.

My wife, Sarah, is the lead Confirmation Catechist in Jersey and, with Fr Edward also leading the programme, we are looking forward to welcoming Bishop Philip to our island parish in June for the Confirmation Masses.

We wish Fr Edward all our love and best wishes as he begins his ministry to us in the wonderful Diocese of Portsmouth.

We'd welcome new members to the Knights of St Columba-not just in Portsmouth Diocese but across the country. Email membership@ksc.org.uk



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD
Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School
 Queen's Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EX
 Tel: 01277 227156 www.brentwoodursuline.co.uk

**Assistant Headteacher,
 Head of Religious Education**
Required for September 2023
Pay Scale: L12 - L16 (Fringe): Full Time

Governors are seeking to appoint, for September 2023, a suitably experienced and qualified person to join the Senior Leadership Team of our thriving Catholic school as the Head of Religious Education. This appointment includes working with the Chaplain to develop the spirituality of our students and the liturgical life of the school. Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School is a Catholic School and seeks to appoint a practising Catholic to this post.

Set within the vibrant town of Brentwood is our popular and successful oversubscribed girls' Catholic School with a co-educational Sixth Form. As a top-performing comprehensive we have a motivated and friendly staff community. There will be many opportunities for the successful candidate to develop their career by joining a high-performing and friendly Senior Team, from whom they will receive all the support they need to develop their leadership skills, combined with supportive line management and CPD.

The successful applicant will be Head of Religious Education and there will be other areas of responsibility within SLT for the successful candidate.

BUCHS is committed to the protection and safety of its students and the successful candidate will be subject to an enhanced DBS check.



Closing Date: 27th April 2023
Interviews: as soon as can be arranged
Application forms available from and should be returned to:
Mrs M Freeman, PA to Headteacher
Tel: 01277 238005 E-mail: mfreeman@buchs.co.uk
Or access the link on the school website: www.brentwoodursuline.co.uk



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A decade of good deeds continues at St Catherine's

Caring youngsters at a Newcastle primary school spent a whole month raising money for a variety of charitable causes as part of their Lent.

The children at St Catherine's were continuing an annual Lent tradition that the school has followed for over a decade, and which is in keeping with the school's Catholic ethos.

Six charities were chosen by the Year 6 pupils: CAFOD, UNICEF, SightSavers, Young Minds, Newcastle Cat and Dog Shelter, and Tommy's Baby Charity, and the children raised a total of £255. While funds were raised for all six causes, one of the organisations was chosen as St Catherine's Lenten charity for the year.

Groups of four Year 6 pupils gave

presentations on each charity, before a whole-school vote elected Young Minds as winner.

Children dressed in yellow, black or white for £1 for the charity day when activities ranged from sponsored Mario Kart racing to 'sponging the teacher.'

Year 6 teacher, Nathan Seville, said: "This is something St Catherine's has been doing every year for 10-plus years. Every child at St Catherine's has a vote for the Lenten charity that will represent St Catherine's for this year.

The winning charity had a themed day where the children come in related dress and take part in activities throughout the day organised by the Year 6 children of the winning charity."



The week of fundraising for the other causes was also the responsibility of Year 6, with their creative money-making ideas including a chocolate tombola, bracelet selling, cake sales, a



Sponging the teacher always seems like a good idea

sponsored dance, and a candy-floss stall. "Last year's charity winner was Tiny Lives, which raised around £210," Mr Seville said.

"This fundraising project allows the Year 6 students to develop a

sense of empathy and maturity as they are consumed with passion for this project, helping and aiding causes that they truly believe in.

"It is putting their faith into action."

Visit from the bishop certainly cuts the mustard for students at St Louis Academy

Children from St Louis Catholic Academy in Newmarket were thrilled to welcome Bishop Peter Collins to bless the Mustard Seed Kitchen, a recently completed teaching hub.

The bishop visited on 20th March and the parish welcomed children to celebrate Mass with him before returning to school.

"Our team of altar servers excelled in serving at the Mass," said Sue Blakeley, headteacher at St Louis Catholic Academy. "They were introduced to some new duties, including holding the Bishop's hat and crosier."

Sue shared further about the content of the Mass and those present.

"Daniel Justin, our choir leader from the Cathedral of St John the Baptist where he is Master of Music,

led our school choir, which performed parts of a new Mass that he has composed," she said.

"Parishioners and parents were excited to welcome Bishop Peter to Newmarket for the first time and to attend the Mass celebrated by the Bishop and supported by Fr Simon Blakesley, the school link governor from the Our Lady of Walsingham MAT Trust Board, and Deacon James Hurst."

In 2021, Bill Gredley, a local businessman kindly gifted the school £12,000 towards developing a teaching kitchen, intervention space and nurture facility. That donation was match funded by the Alive in Faith grant overseen by Bishop Emeritus Alan Hopes.

The school PTA secured £1,000 from Tesco towards cooking equipment, and Governors agreed



Bishop Peter with guests, teachers and children at St Louis academy.

to make up the final cost to push the build over the line through use of some contingency funding.

The new space fitted in a former PE storage area will be used to teach design and technology. "We will host after school clubs for Young Carers and Pupil Premium learners to provide opportunities for parents to cook alongside children and improve food preparation facilities for PTA fundraisers," Sue Blakeley said.

"As a healthy school, we are always looking to provide advice to families to make healthy choices and we hope that this will be a great

place to educate in a supportive way."

She added: "Our first classes start after Easter with Chatty Chefs, a nurture group that builds resilience and confidence."

The school chaplain enjoyed a buffet lunch with Bishop Peter and found out about his move from Wales to East Anglia.

After lunch, children took their special guest for a tour of the school where each class met and chatted with him.

The school looks forward to welcoming Bishop Peter to St Louis in future years.



"Our team of altar servers excelled in serving at the Mass... they were introduced to some new duties, including holding the Bishop's hat and crosier."

Bishop launches Salford on a journey to discover future look of the Church

Bishop of Salford John Arnold has announced the launch of a Diocesan Synod to prayerfully discern how to address the needs of the diocesan community in a post-pandemic world.

The synod was formally decreed at this year's Chrism Mass, which took place on Wednesday 5th March during Holy Week.

In his homily, Bishop John reflected on the considerable changes the Church has witnessed over recent years, remarking that the time has come to envisage a new future for the Church in the diocese of Salford.

"So, it's time for us to see a challenge. A challenge as to what we need to be now in a changing world. What our people expect of us and for which they are so grateful to us in our ministry. How might we rethink things?" he said.

"Pope Francis is so clear, isn't he, about each and every one of us having our part to play, but we are in a changing world, where we need to think globally.

"We need to see where do the Gospel values fit in this 21st century? How are we best able to promote and encourage people in faith?"

The diocesan synod seeks to provide an answer to these questions by calling all to prayerfully discern what kind of Church the Spirit is calling us to be, to reflect on the needs of our diocesan community

today, and to understand more about opportunities to build up the Church in our part of Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Bishop John is clear that the process is not solely for Church leaders, but must be a journey we embark on together to ensure each and every voice is represented in this new generation of the diocesan Church.

It will be a collaborative and participatory journey by which the people of Salford, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, can together set the future direction and priorities of the life and mission of the diocese.



"We need to see where do the Gospel values fit in this 21st century? How are we best able to promote people in faith?"



That's eggs-cellent work for the seafarers, St Peter's


Richard Cunningham, headteacher at St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Waterlooville, paid tribute to pupils and staff from the school after their recent fundraising efforts over Lent and Easter.

He said: "A great thanks and a massive well done to the pupils and staff at St Peter's Catholic Primary School in Waterlooville, who donated a great haul of Easter eggs to give to Stella Maris for passing on to international seafarers docking in Portsmouth and Southampton this Easter."

"This is just one of many impressive acts of charity this term from the pupils of St Peter's, which has also included raising money for the Wessex Neurological Centre and Place2Be Children's mental health charity through sponsored swims, the RSPCA by holding a cake sale, and the collection of essential toiletries for people displaced by the war in Ukraine."

Below, Charles and Gregory from Stella Maris accept a massive clutch of eggs from the school, with helpers Phoebe, Ruby-Lou, Shaye and Kiera.






DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD
Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School
 Queen's Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EX
 Tel: 01277 227156 www.brentwoodursuline.co.uk

Head of Religious Education

Required for September 2023
MPS/UPS + TLR1B (Fringe): Full Time



The governors wish to appoint a Head of Religious Education to teach across the age and ability range from September 2023. We are looking to appoint an enthusiastic and well-qualified graduate teacher who will lead a strong team of dedicated teachers.

As Head of Department we would expect the candidate to be able to teach at GCSE and A level, and Core Religious Education in the 6th Form.

This appointment has a wider school responsibility in working with the Chaplain to develop the spirituality of our students and the liturgical life of the school. Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School is a Catholic School and seeks to appoint a practising Catholic to this post.

Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School is a successful and over-subscribed school which enjoys support from the Catholic and wider communities. Opportunities for excellent Continued Professional Development and staff well-being are at the forefront of our commitment to all staff at Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School.

Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and this position is subject to satisfactory enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service. We are an equal opportunities employer.

Closing Date: **27th April 2023**
 Interviews: **As soon as can be arranged**
 Application forms available from and should be returned to:
Mrs M Freeman, PA to Headteacher
 Tel: **01277 238005** E-mail: mfreeman@buchs.co.uk
 Or access the link on the school website: www.brentwoodursuline.co.uk



GARDENING

It's spring – and now is the best time to start your vegetable garden. In the cold months of winter, we drool and dream of the gardens we hope to have, and by late February, some of us have had enough of seed catalogues and TV and want to get out there. We set out to start our vegetable seedlings indoors, so as not to miss a single day of planting, once the risk of frost has passed. Then it's out into the wide and welcoming open doors...

Sowing seeds

For anyone who planted in the early Spring, around mid to late April, your gardens are now full of plants for summer crops of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, peas and beans. One of the hardest things for me to do in the early growing stages of a new seedling (and I suspect for many gardeners) is to pull out perfectly healthy plants from their new home.

Now, I must admit, as a veteran gardener, you'd think I'd get over it, but I still treat these first born seedlings like my children. I want them all to have an equal chance at making something out of their lives. This heart wrenching but necessary process is known as "thinning" and must be done if seeds are planted too close together.

Most vegetable plants need plenty of room to grow. This is so they can receive the most sunlight, air circulation, and nutrients for them to achieve maximum health and productivity. By now, you've likely done this important step of thinning. If not, do so now. Seed packets always provide the spacing information on the back of each package.

Now, you may ask, how about sowing seeds more sparingly, and then you can avoid this thinning process completely? Well, due to the relatively low price of seeds, my preference is to sow more liberally, as not every seed will germinate. Then I have the chance to evaluate and eliminate the inferior seedlings, leaving only the strongest for production in the garden. And it's the strongest plants that will best be able to stand up to the inevitable yet unwanted arrival of pests and diseases.

Uninvited pests

There are a number of ways of reducing uninvited pests in your garden. First, plant early in the season. Spring is the best time to start. Many of the worst



You've got your seedlings in – so what's the next step to a bountiful veg harvest?

pests aren't out until early summer. By then many of your plants will be past their most vulnerable stages, and will be tough enough by now to withstand some moderate invasions. Some pests have a preference for the young, tender plants, so by the time they get into your garden, the plants are well past this stage.

Another way to battle bugs is to use floating row covers. Row covers are nothing more than a lightweight fabric, used to physically cover the young plants like a blanket. This fabric is available at most nurseries, and gardening seed

catalogue companies. This material is light enough to let air, light and water in, but keep pests out. This fabric is best used from the time you plant your seeds, or seedlings, up until just before flowering. It is very important that row covers be removed for several days at this stage, so bees have access to flowers for pollination. Once adequate pollination has taken place, you may leave the covers off, or replace them. Just be sure that the fabric you choose for this is the lightest you can find, so as not to trap excess heat.

Bugs and insects transmit many diseases to vegetable plants. The row covers will help greatly in reducing the spread of disease, simply by reducing the amount of pests on your plants.

Reducing disease

Besides pests, another of the most common ways vegetable plants get diseases in the summer is through moisture, either by overhead watering, watering at the wrong time of day, rain, or by water splashing up to the plant from the soil.

There are a few simple things you can do to reduce the chances of your plants getting soil born, and water related diseases, like leaf spot, and Downy or Powdery mildew.

First, mulch, mulch, mulch. Think of a protective barrier between the diseases and pathogens in the soil and the plant itself. Soak the roots only, if possible. If you do water the foliage, do so early enough in the day so that the plant leaves have time to dry before night. Your goal is to minimise the length of time moisture stays on the leaf surface.



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HEALTH

It's not having high BMI that's the problem: it's how you got it

Risk of heart disease lower when obesity is due to genetics rather than lifestyle – new research

Elsa Ojalehto & Ida Karlsson

It's well known that a high body mass index (BMI) has negative effects on our health, increasing the risk of several diseases. This is concerning since nearly one-third of the world's population is now classified as overweight or obese.

One disease strongly linked to obesity is cardiovascular disease (such as heart disease and stroke) which, according to the World Health Organization, is the leading cause of death worldwide.

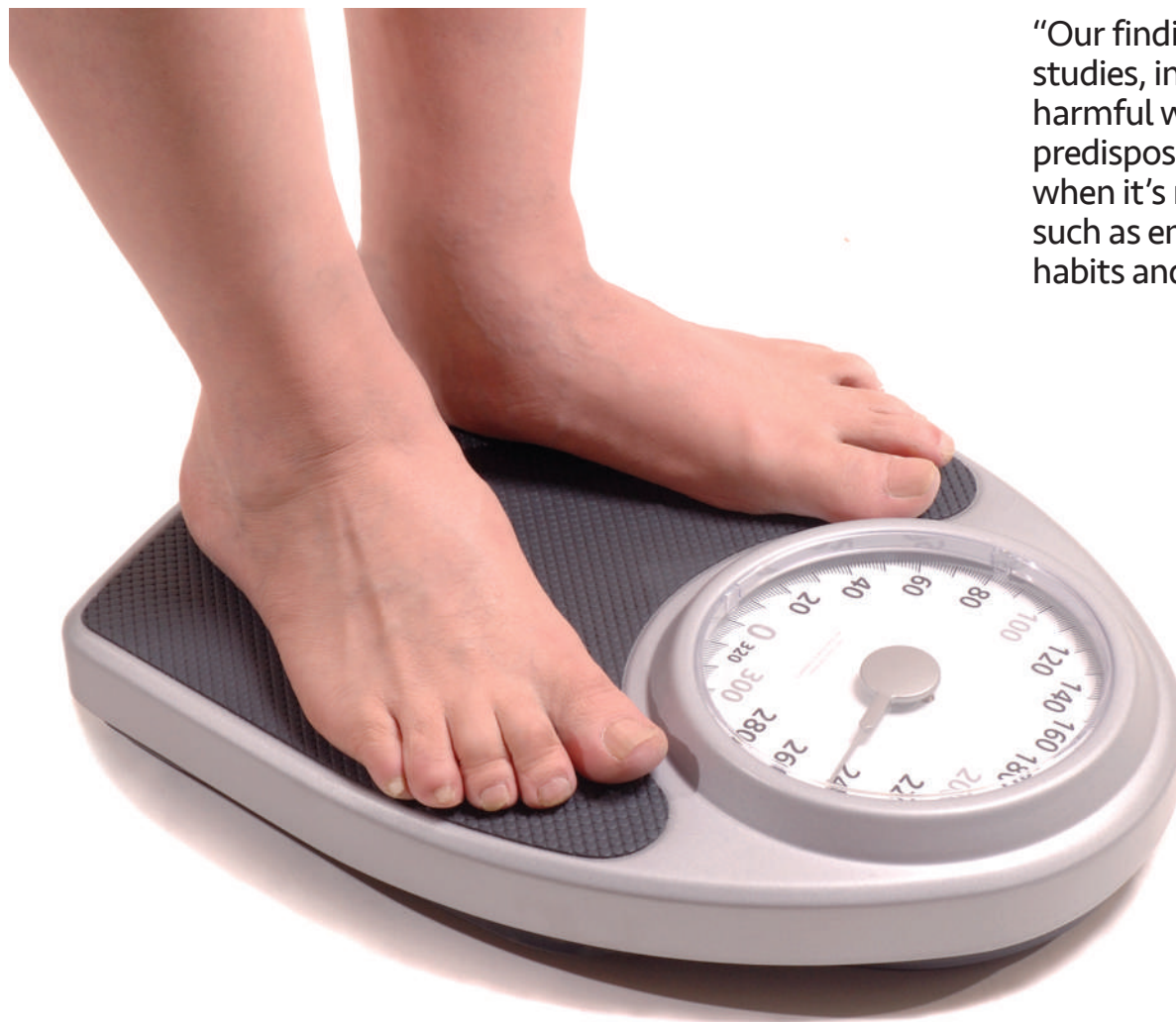
Obesity is a complex condition, and can be influenced both by genetics and a person's lifestyle and environment.

The latter can include air pollution, smoking, diet, physical activity, medications, education, socioeconomic status, and mental health, for example. This means obesity can result from a wide variety of factors – and notably, that different causes of obesity may have different consequences for our health.

In a recent study, we examined the link between obesity and cardiovascular disease – in particular, whether the risk differs if obesity is driven by genetic predisposition or mainly by other factors, such as environment or lifestyle.

We used data from the Swedish Twin Registry, a nationwide register that includes virtually all twins born in Sweden since the early 1900s. We included more than 15,000 twins born before 1959, gathering information about their BMI and whether they had a genetic predisposition to a high or low BMI.

We also used data from national medical registries to establish the incidence of cardiovascular disease. We were then able to see how cardiovascular disease risk changed depending on where people sat on the spectrum of genetic predisposition and BMI.



Obesity driven by genetic factors less harmful

We found the risk of cardiovascular disease was on average 76 per cent higher in people with obesity, compared with those of a healthy weight.

However, this link was twice as strong in those with a genetic predisposition to having a low BMI – meaning their obesity resulted from other factors such as environment or lifestyle – compared with those genetically predisposed to having a high BMI.

Previous research has similarly shown that people with obesity due mainly to

environmental factors have a higher risk of dementia, diabetes and heart problems, and earlier death in general than those with obesity due to genetic factors.

Based on our findings and other research, it appears that it's not high BMI in itself that increases the risk of disease. Rather, obesity affects our health differently depending on what caused it. We don't yet understand why this is, but it may be that the body can better cope with obesity in people who are genetically predisposed to having a higher weight.

“Our findings, as well as other studies, indicate that obesity is less harmful when it's due to genetic predisposition to a higher BMI than when it's mainly due to other factors, such as environment or societal habits and conditioning”

than when it's mainly due to other factors.

Unfortunately, it's difficult to know whether you have a genetic predisposition to a higher BMI. We can look around us in our family to get an idea, but it's important to remember that we also share many environmental and lifestyle factors with our families.

While BMI is a useful tool for ascertaining weight in population studies, it's a limited measure of health. Obesity is a complex and stigmatised disease that can have many different causes, not captured by measuring BMI.

Our results provide further evidence that the effects of obesity on health differ from one person to the next. A healthy lifestyle is important regardless of BMI, but we are all built differently. While diet and exercise may work well for some to maintain a healthy weight, this won't be enough for everyone.

In the first instance, we need to better understand obesity and its effects on health. After that, we hope that society can move away from focusing mainly on BMI – and instead consider what has caused the obesity, and what can be done to reduce the risk of poor health in each person.

Elsa Ojalehto is a PhD candidate, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institute

Ida Karlsson is an Assistant Professor, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institutet

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FOOD

It's still Easter, so let's tuck into some yummy figgy Easter bread

It's still the Easter season, so it's a great time to try this version of a fig and walnut cake. It takes its inspiration from the sweet delicacies of the Holy Land and the Levant region. It looks impressive and tastes good, too.

INGREDIENTS

The Bread

- 350g plain strong flour
- 12g easy blend yeast
- 25g margarine or butter
- 6 tbsp lukewarm semi skimmed milk
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 medium eggs
- 55g caster sugar

Filling

- 115g dried figs, chopped
- 55g walnuts, chopped
- 55g soft brown sugar
- 15g melted butter or margarine

Glaze

- 1 to 2 tbsp honey

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 220C
2. To make dough, mix flour and yeast in bowl. Melt butter or margarine and whisk with remaining dough ingredients, add to flour. Mix with wooden spoon until dough leaves sides of bowl clean. Knead thoroughly on lightly floured surface until firm, elastic and no longer sticky. Place in polythene bag or covered bowl and leave in warm place to rise until doubled in size.
3. Turn risen dough onto lightly floured surface, flatten with knuckles to knock out air bubbles and knead until dough is firm.
4. Mix together all filling ingredients.
5. Roll out dough to a rectangle 45x30 cm. Place filling down centre third and cut dough either side into slanting strips 1.75cm apart. Overlap strips across filling.
6. Place on baking tray and leave to prove for 15 minutes in a warm place. Bake in preheated oven for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 190 C for a further 10 to 15 minutes. Glaze with warmed honey.



GARLIC CHICKEN IN PUFF PASTRY

Chicken breast stuffed with garlic butter, wrapped in puff pastry on a creamy garlic sauce. It's bursting with flavour, and is always a safe bet if you need something hot and tasty. Delicious!

INGREDIENTS

- 80g butter
- 2½ tsps fresh minced garlic
- 1 tsp freshly chopped parsley
- 2 chicken breast fillets
- 2 frozen puff pastry sheets
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tsp fresh minced garlic
- 2 tbsps plain flour
- 300ml of milk
- 1 tsp freshly chopped parsley

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200C.
2. Mix butter, garlic and parsley for garlic butter.
3. Spoon onto each chicken breast and fold end of chicken over to cover.
4. Wrap breast in puff pastry and cook for 40 minutes.
5. Prepare sauce 10 minutes before chicken is cooked by melting butter and garlic in a saucepan on a low heat.
6. Remove from heat and stir in flour until it forms a paste.
7. Return to medium/high heat, add milk and parsley. Stir continuously until thick.

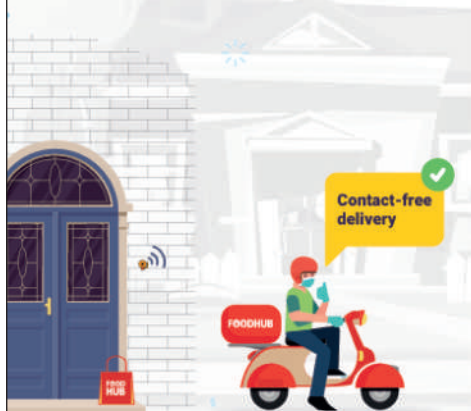
8. When chicken is cooked and sauce has thickened, pour sauce onto a plate, place chicken puff on top and serve with green vegetables



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CINEMA



Picture: Matt Damon and Viola Davis star in a scene from the movie "Air." OSV News photo/Amazon Studios

"I love the idea that you come in thinking you're going to see a story about Michael Jordan but it's actually about the person who was the most important to Michael Jordan, without whom there would be no Michael Jordan..."

Air's like Jordan, it keeps on scoring – just a shame about the language

An apt subtitle for the forceful fact-based drama *Air* (Amazon) might be: 'How to Succeed in Business by Trying Really Hard.' The film's positive underlying ethics and valuable life lessons, however, come with an overlay of vulgar dialogue that makes it a fit choice for grown-ups only.

Set in 1984, the movie charts the efforts of Nike marketing executive Sonny Vaccaro (Matt Damon) to rescue the company's failing basketball division as it struggled to compete with rivals Adidas and Converse. To do so, he wants to roll the dice on promising rookie Michael Jordan.

There are plenty of difficulties lying in wait for Sonny, not least Jordan's strong personal preference for Adidas. Sonny doesn't just want to obtain Jordan's endorsement, though. Instead, he wants to create a basketball shoe that will reflect Jordan's personality and capture the qualities he believes will make the

athlete a champion with a lasting legacy.

After winning over Nike's initially sceptical founder and CEO Phil Knight (Ben Affleck), Sonny teams with Rob Strasser (Jason Bateman), the head of his department, and with co-worker Howard White (Chris Tucker) to foster the project.

He also pitches the idea to Jordan's irascible agent, David Falk (Chris Messina).

But the person Sonny really needs to convince turns out to be Jordan's wise and wary mum, Doloris (Viola Davis). Contacting her directly, however, is

another gamble since it would violate established rules, rouse Falk's ire and potentially get Sonny fired.

The director underlined the importance of Viola Davis' role as Jordan's mother in the film, as he told film review website *geeksofcolor*. "I love the idea that you come in thinking you're going to see a story about Michael Jordan, but it's actually about the person who was the most important to Michael Jordan, without whom there would be no Michael Jordan.

"As such, it's kind of an homage to anyone who has played that role in someone's life," he said.

Affleck was also sure to receive the approval of basketball legend Jordan. "Right away, I thought there was no point in doing it if Michael didn't support it," he said. "He's my hero, so the last thing I wanted was to disappoint him. I sat down with him for a few minutes and said, 'I don't want to do this if you don't want me

to. And I want to know, what do you care about? What matters to you? Because I'm not going to get every single detail right."

Affleck manages to build suspense despite the obviously well-known outcome of his story (scripted by Alex Convery). Viewers will be cheering Sonny on as the visionary businessman uses ingenuity, innovative thinking and persistence to overcome long odds. An issue of equity raised late in the proceedings adds further moral depth.

All this would be as well appreciated by teens as by their elders. But be warned: *Air's* macho milieu, on the periphery of the sports world, is marked by relentless swearing, with the comically unlikeable Falk especially foul-mouthed.

Still, mature moviegoers will be well equipped to look past this seamy surface and recognise the good example that lies below it.

Air: Rated 15, put now



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Revelations about da Vinci's life show how far entrenched slavery ownership was in medieval Europe

HISTORY

Gabriele Neher

Leonardo da Vinci's mother might have been a slave: here's what the discovery reveals about Renaissance Europe

A recently discovered note, drawn up by Leonardo da Vinci's father, Piero, in November 1452, shows that he emancipated an enslaved woman named Caterina.

The scholar who found the document (Carlo Vecce, a professor of Italian literature) has suggested that she was Leonardo's mother.

The claim was announced to coincide with the publication of Vecce's novel *Il Sorriso di Caterina* (Caterina's Smile) – a fictional account of the life of da Vinci's mother. Vecce's novel weaves together the few facts scholars agree on: that da Vinci was the illegitimate child of his father and a lower status woman and that his mother was called Caterina.

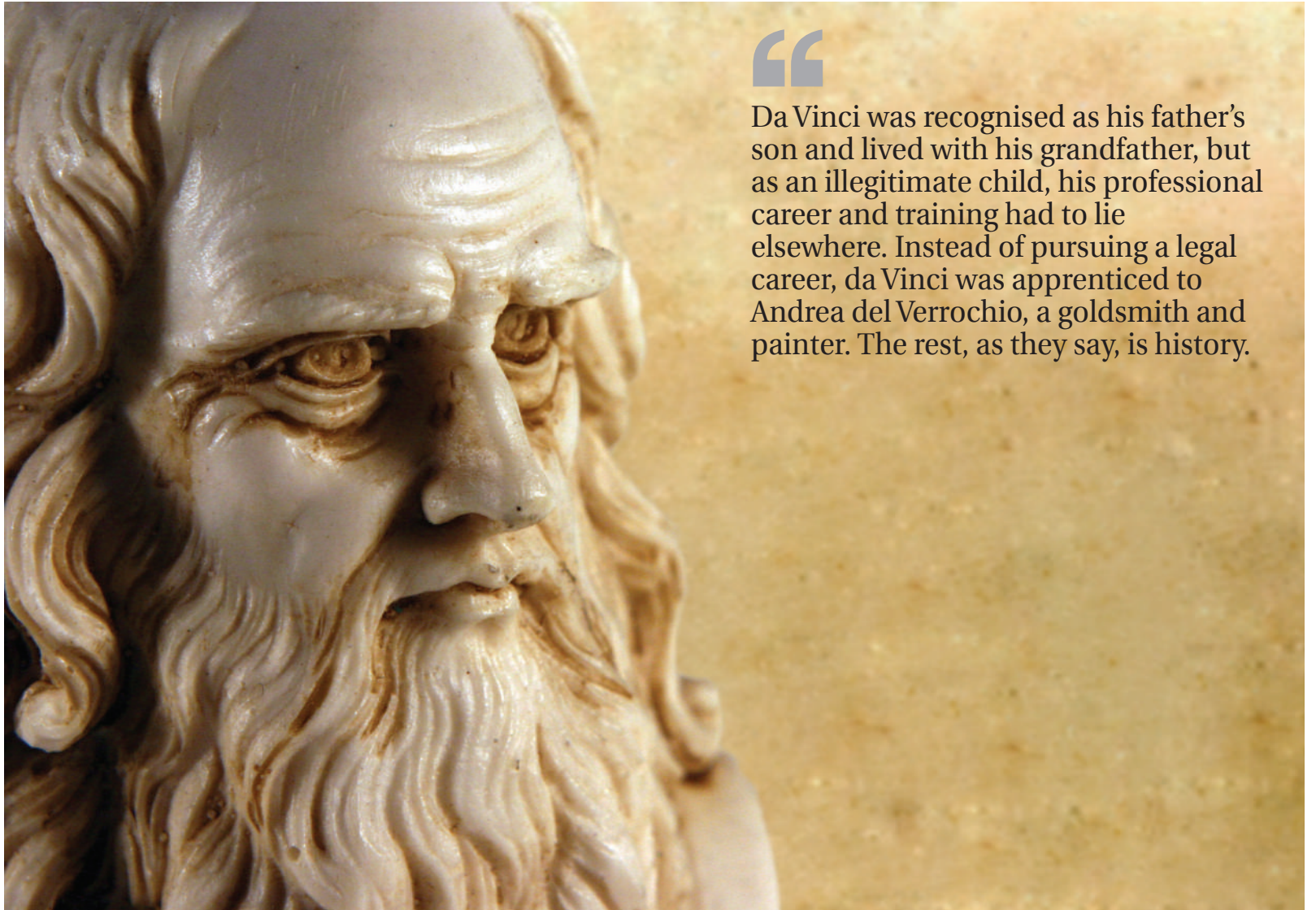
Scholars agree on these facts because of another archival discovery made by leading Leonardo da Vinci scholar Martin Kemp in 2016.

Kemp identified a 1457 tax return filed by Leonardo's grandfather, Antonio da Vinci, who listed his family members, including Piero da Vinci's illegitimate son, 'born of him and Caterina'. That document led Kemp to identify da Vinci's mother as 15-year-old orphan, Caterina di Meo Lippi.

These two archival finds – Piero da Vinci's emancipation of Caterina, and Antonio da Vinci's tax return – mean that Vecce and Kemp agree on da Vinci's mother's social background. This is an important part of his life story.

Had da Vinci been a legitimate son, his professional career would have followed that of his father, who was a notary (a legal professional who authenticates and witnesses legal documents).

Da Vinci was recognised as his father's son and lived with his grandfather, but as an illegitimate child, his professional career and training had to lie elsewhere. Instead of pursuing a legal career, da Vinci was apprenticed to Andrea del Verrochio, a goldsmith and painter.



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Slavery in Renaissance Europe

Slavery was an intrinsic part of the social structure of Renaissance Europe and was well documented in legal records. Much recent scholarship has focused on gaining a better understanding of what being “enslaved” meant and who these slaves may have been.

The newly discovered document demonstrates how common enslavement was in Renaissance Europe and how far down the social scale it reached. Piero da Vinci – who was reasonably well off but by no means top of the social order – both owned an enslaved woman (Caterina) and could afford to emancipate her.

Piero followed contemporary social conventions in adding a Circassian slave to his household. Circassian slaves came from the northwest Caucasus and the women were celebrated for their beauty.

Many Circassians were Muslim and the name ‘Caterina’ was commonly assigned on conversion to Christianity. Caterina refers to St Catherine of Alexandria, a Roman

convert who became a martyr, so the name both referenced this act of conversion and an example of devoted service for the newly converted's emulation.

Emancipation of slaves was a social expectation of Christian charity and often occurred when the owner drew up their will, or when a slave had “proven” their service. This could relate to their length of service or – likely in Caterina's case – the birth of a son. These people often disappeared from the records after their emancipation.

In Caterina's case, Kemp suggests she was provided with a small dowry to enable a modest marriage. It is certainly possible that Caterina's emancipation followed the birth of her son, Leonardo, but the archives give us no more answers. There is

likely no way of telling what Caterina's fate was and Vecce's fictional account is as good a reconstruction as any.

Vecce's document also raises questions about what is meant by the word ‘slavery’ within the context of Renaissance Europe. Slavery, in the most generic sense of the word, means the ownership of a person by someone else, including ownership over their body and labour.

An enslaved person like Caterina was considered very valuable in Renaissance Europe. Adding a slave to his household staff acted as a status marker for Piero da Vinci. His ownership of a Circassian slave showed that he had economically and professionally made it.

Furthermore, Piero's subsequent emancipation of his slave allowed

him to demonstrate his supposed Christian compassion in freeing her, and again demonstrated his economic affluence in being able to lose her (free) labour.

A Renaissance slave was the “most unfree” of a Renaissance household's servants, but ultimately, every one of Piero da Vinci's servants was bonded and unfree in one way or another.

Enslaved people in Renaissance Europe were not considered a distinct group but belonged within the wider social context of serfdom and servitude. What set them apart was their fixed market value and that they could, by law, be sold and (re)sold unless emancipated – which led them to be seen as luxury possessions.

So, does Vecce's document change our understanding of da Vinci's life and work? Not in the slightest. What it does do, however, is shed light on just how far enslavement reached into the households of Renaissance Europe.

Gabriele Neher is an Associate Professor in History of Art, University of Nottingham

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Slavery was an intrinsic part of the social structure of Renaissance Europe and was well documented in legal records... the use of slaves reached deep into many households...

Shakespeare's match report voiced despair of 'lewd and base football'

While history shows that man has played at sports for thousands of years, it was not until the medieval period that games truly took off. Mgr Vlad Felzmann looks at the authorities' views of popular sporting pastimes – particularly 'base' football

In medieval England, evidence of sporting activities is sketchy. It seems clear that in this period there was a huge rise in popularity of annual Shrovetide football matches, sometimes referred to as 'mob football'. These were played between neighbouring towns and villages, involving an unlimited number of players on opposing teams who would clash en masse. In 1180, William FitzStephen described London youths playing mob football on Shrove Tuesday.

The most widely accepted theory is that golf (as practised today) originates from Scotland in the 12th century, with shepherds knocking stones into rabbit holes on the site now occupied by The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews.

The first recorded race meeting in England was in 1174 at a horse fair, at Smithfield, London.

An expense in the English royal accounts, 10th March 1301, confirms that the Edward II of England, then the Prince of Wales, aged 15, was playing a game called 'creag' at Newenden, Kent. Despite speculation that 'creag' was an early form of cricket, there is no supportive evidence and it is possible that the word is an early spelling of craic, meaning 'fun and games' in general. Who knows? However, it does confirm that games were being played, if only among aristocrats, at the end of the 13th century.

Concerns over football

We know that football was played at Newcastle, County Down, where a spectator was stabbed during a game in 1308. It seems, that due to this and other disorderly events, civil authorities took a dim view on sport.

There have been many attempts to ban football, from the middle ages through to the modern days. In 1314, Nicholas de Fardone, Lord Mayor of the City of London, issued a decree banning football. Between



1314 and 1667, there were more than 30 laws passed banning football. In 1349, King Edward III of England issued a proclamation banning '...handball, football, or hockey; coursing and cock-fighting, or other such idle games'.

Complaints by London merchants led King Edward II of England to issue a proclamation banning football in London on 13 April 1314 because, '...there is great noise in the city caused by hustling over large balls from which many evils may arise which God forbid; we command and forbid, on behalf of the King, on pain of imprisonment, such game to be used in the city in the future.'

Playing football was seen as a distraction from the mandatory practising of archery. Archers – not footballers – were valuable in battle at that time. This led Edward III and Edward IV of England to ban football in 1349 and 1477 respectively. The latter stated that, 'No person shall practice...football and such games, but every strong and able bodied person shall practice with the bow for the reason that the national defence depends upon such bowmen.' Richard II also tried to outlaw the sport in 1389, as did Henry IV in 1401.

Despite ordering the first known pair of football boots, Henry VIII of England attempted a ban in 1540. As with the other laws, this was only a partial success.

By 1608, the local authorities in

Manchester were complaining that: 'With the ffotebale...[there] hath beene greate disorder in our towne of Manchester we are told, and glasse windowes broken yearlye and spoyled by a companie of lewd and disordered persons ...'

That same year, the word 'football' was used disapprovingly by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's play *King Lear* contains the line: 'Nor tripped neither, you base football player' (Act I, Scene 4). Shakespeare also mentions the game in *A Comedy of Errors (Act II, Scene 1)*: 'Am I so round with you as you with me, That like a football you do spurn me thus? You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither: If I last in this service, you must case me in leather.'

'Spurn' literally means to kick away, thus implying that the game involved kicking a ball between players.

King James I of England's *Book of Sports* (1618) however, instructs Christians to play at football every Sunday afternoon after worship. The book's aim appears to be an attempt

to offset the strictness of the Puritans regarding the keeping of the Sabbath.

The Puritans had some success in suppressing 'disorderly' sports including football after the English Civil War. Players were fined or sentenced to public humiliation in the stocks.

The joy of cricket

Writing about cricket in particular, John Leech has explained the role of Puritan power, the English Civil War, and the Restoration of the monarchy. The Long Parliament in 1642 "banned theatres, which had met with Puritan disapproval. Although similar action would be taken against certain sports, it is not clear if cricket was in any way prohibited, except that players must not break the Sabbath.

The Mayor of York fined 11 players 20 shillings each when their game resulted in a smashed church window in the winter of 1659–60. The prosecution triggered a violent protest and resulted in over 100 armed men breaking into the Mayor's house; the ringleader was

later fined 10 pounds a very large sum of money at the time.

Further north, the Scottish Parliament of James I decreed that 'Na man play at the fut ball', in the Football Act of 1424. His successor, James II banned golf too, believing sports were distracting his subjects from their archery practice.

It seems that 1512, at a fair in Chester, was the first time a trophy was presented to the winner of a horse race. Early in the 16th century, Henry VIII imported a large number of stallions and mares for breeding, although it was not until the 17th and 18th centuries that modern methods of thoroughbred breeding were introduced.

By 1600, rural folk in Great Britain had begun to play early versions of cricket, football and golf. Early in the 16th century, English public houses were showing interest in bowls and real tennis, as well as dice and cards, all of which the government tried to eliminate forcefully.

According to Derek Birley, it was late in the 16th century that 'licensing began to replace prohibition, a public house might be licensed to allow men of substance to engage in dice, cards, tables, bowls, and tennis on condition that there was no blaspheming or swearing, and no play before noon on working days or during hours of worship on Sundays.'

We will continue this look at the sporting games of the medieval period next week



'With the ffotebale...[there] hath beene greate disorder in our towne of Manchester, and glasse windowes broken yearlye and spoyled by a companie of lewd and disordered persons ...'

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days...



A girl takes photos of a pelican in St James' Park, London.



Above, (left to right) Irish Green Party leader Eamon Ryan, former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Irish visual artist Colin Davidson, Heather MacLachlan, former US Senator George Mitchell, Hillary Clinton, former US president Bill Clinton, former Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair, Professor Ian Greer of QUB, and Northern Ireland Secretary of State Chris Heaton-Harris, after the unveiling of a bust of former US Senator George Mitchell, during the three-day international conference at Queen's University Belfast to mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.



Lord Davis of Gower lays a wreath at a memorial service for WPC Yvonne Fletcher, at St James's Square in London, on the anniversary of her murder by Libyan gunmen on 17th April 1984.



Gardener, Helen Haley, tends to a bed of tulips on the Pergola Walk at Haver Castle and Gardens in Kent during their annual Tulip Celebration which features 40,000 tulips planted on the Estate.



Left, a 'Coronation Quiche', as shared by King Charles III and the Queen Consort in celebration of their coronation.



Members of the military outside Westminster Abbey, central London, during a night time rehearsal for the coronation of King Charles III on 6th May



Below, Eve Oliphant from Bollinger with the first official portrait of King Charles III by Alistair Barford

Portrait of His Majesty King Charles III
Painted by Alistair Barford, QEST Scholar
for The Illustrated Coronation Edition

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LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday, 23rd April: 3rd Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps. 16:1-2, 5, 7-11 r. 11; 1 Pet. 1:17-21; Lk. 24:13-35

Monday, 24th April: St. George, martyr, patron of England, Rev.12: 10-12; Ps. 125 r. 5; Jn. 15:18-21

Tuesday, 25th April: St. Mark, Evangelist
1 Pet. 5:5-14; Ps. 89:2-3, 6-7, 16-17; Mk. 16:15-20

Wednesday, 26th April: Weekday of Easter
Acts 8:1-8; Ps. 66:1-7; Jn. 6:35-40

Thursday, 27th April: Weekday of Easter
Acts 8:26-40; Ps. 66:8-9, 16-17, 20; Jn. 6:44-51

Friday, 28th April: Weekday of Easter or St Peter Chanel, Priest, Martyr; St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, Priest Acts 9:1-20; Ps. 117; Jn. 6:52-59

Saturday, 29th April: St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin, Doctor of the Church, patron of Europe 1 Jn. 1:5-2:2; Ps. 103:1-4, 8-9, 13-14, 17-18; Mt. 11:25-30

Extraordinary Form Calendar

according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

Sunday, 23rd April: Second Sunday after Easter
1 Pet. 2:21-25; Jn. 10:11-16

Monday, 24th April: St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, martyr Wis. 5:1-5; Jn. 15:1-7

Tuesday, 25th April: St. Mark, evangelist
Ezek. 1:10-14; Lk. 10:1-9

Wednesday, 26th April: St. Cletus and Marcellinus, popes, martyrs 1 Pet. 5:1-4, 10-11; Mt. 16: 13-19

Thursday, 27th April: St. Peter Canisius, confessor, doctor 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Mt. 5:13-19

Friday, 28th April: St. Paul of the Cross 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Mt. 5:13-19

Saturday, 29th April: St. Peter, martyr 2 Tim. 2:8-10, 3:10-12; Jn 15: 1-7

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The holy fire of faith

Orthodox Christian worshippers hold candles around what is believed to be the tomb of Christ during ancient Eastern rite ceremony of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City, 15th April
Photo: Oren Ben Hakoon, Reuters

