

A Critical
View - pg 23

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Small boats bill ripped apart by Peers

Lords inflict 11 defeats on the Government over the Illegal Migration Bill

Andy Drozdziak

Catholics are leading renewed calls for the Government to back changes to its controversial Illegal Migration Bill to ensure a fair asylum policy.

The Bill would give the government the power to deport people seeking safety to countries such as Rwanda—a policy the Court of Appeal has ruled is unlawful because people deported could face persecution, although the Government intends to challenge this ruling.

Earlier this week, peers inflicted 11 defeats on the Government's plans to tackle the small boats crisis.

The string of changes being demanded by the House of Lords to the Illegal Migration Bill include strict time limits on the detention of children and pregnant women, protections for victims of modern slavery and safeguards for the care of unaccompanied youngsters. Other revisions place restrictions on removal destinations for LGBT+ people and strip out curbs on legal challenges to deportation.

Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees for the Bishops' Conference, said: "We should never view people arriving from elsewhere as a political problem to be solved, but rather as brothers and sisters who we have a responsibility towards, and who greatly enrich our communities."

Ministers say action is needed to stop migrants making dangerous

sea crossings, but Catholic critics argue the draft legislation breaks international law and denies refuge to the most vulnerable. Justice charity JRS UK is calling on Catholics to write to their MPs. "It's really important that MPs realise this Bill was a mistake," JRS UK said. "It's really important that everyone writes to their MP to tell them they don't want a refugee ban bill, they want an asylum system that extends protection to those who need it."

Downing Street said ministers remain "fully committed to all aspects" of the Illegal Migration Bill. The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: "We remain committed to stopping the boats and to do that we need to make clear that if you come here illegally you will be removed to a safe country."

However, international charity

CAFOD took the unusual step of making an intervention on domestic policy due to concerns over Government's language and proposed treatment of people seeking safety and fleeing persecution.

Pointing to Pope Francis' message to world leaders to welcome, protect and integrate people without distinction, Aisha Dodwell, CAFOD's head of campaigns, said: "If passed, this inhumane legislation will be a stain on the country's reputation. People fleeing conflict and persecution are dying in their thousands as they try to find safety for themselves and their families. Yet the UK government is seemingly doing everything it can to make their lives even harder."

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Prime Minister Rishi Sunak during a visit to the Evelina Children's ward at St Thomas' hospital in central London, to take part in a NHS Big Tea celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of the NHS.

Peers accused of 'wrecking' boats bill

High Court reinstates Christian Governor dismissed for questioning school's sex ed policy

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"The Illegal Migration Bill represents everything Pope Francis asks us not to be, which is why we are urging Catholics to speak out against the Bill and show we are a country that welcomes people who need our help."

In a further attempt to address the 'small boats' issue, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly called for an "international response" to stem the flow of migrants to countries including the UK and Italy. Mr Cleverly said Britain and the European Union are "very focused" on working to stabilise North African nations from which many people are fleeing.

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A Christian parent governor, dismissed for raising concerns with the trans-affirming sex ed policy at her children's primary school, has been reinstated by the High Court.

The Gateshead mum's case, backed by The Christian Institute, will reassure parents and school governors of their right to challenge inappropriate teaching on gender and sexuality in schools.

'Susan'-not her real name-reached a legal settlement with the school after being removed from its Governing Body for pointing out legal errors in its Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) policy.

The Governing Body and Local Authority both accepted that the decision to remove Susan was unlawful and that Susan had sought to act in line with the Governor's Code of Conduct and in the best interests of the school and its pupils.

School lesson plans, challenged by Susan, included activities to encourage children to question their own gender identity, and claim that being a 'man' or a 'woman' is determined by personality, hobbies and clothes - not biology.

Susan said: "I was concerned at the devastation that might be done to children from teaching gender ideology. I'm absolutely delighted



The Christian Institute

that I've been vindicated. It feels wonderful to be back and helping the school get the best outcomes for all the children there."

She first raised her concerns with fellow governors in March 2021, pointing out, unsuccessfully, that adopting the draft RSE policy could be unlawful. Susan resorted to the school's official complaints proce-

cedure. Before this had concluded, the Governing Body removed Susan as a governor in June 2022.

Statutory guidance warns that the power to remove a governor "should not be used simply to remove dissenting or challenging voices", but, in September, a Local Authority Appeal Panel upheld the Governing Body's decision.

In court, Susan's legal team successfully argued the Governing Body and Appeal Panel acted unlawfully in how they removed her - including breaching her Article 10 right to freedom of expression, and that Susan should be permitted to resume her role as an elected governor.

Ciarán Kelly, Deputy Director of The Christian Institute, said: "Had this decision stood, it would have sent a terrible message to school governors. Parents too would be justifiably fearful that those tasked with ensuring their children's education is lawful and appropriate may be more interested in not 'rocking the boat' than doing what is right. Rightly, Susan has now been reinstated."

The Education Secretary wrote to schools at the end of March, telling them the DfE is clear that parents should be able to view all curriculum materials. A review of statutory guidance on RSE is underway following widespread evidence of age-inappropriate materials being used in schools. Around 50 Conservative MPs, led by Miriam Cates, recently warned the Prime Minister of children being 'indoctrinated' about 'radical and unevicenced ideologies'.

MP resignation a 'courageous stand', say pro-life group

A Welsh Conservative MP has quit his job as a ministerial aide to vote against new regulations which force all state secondary schools to teach students about abortion access in Northern Ireland.

Robin Millar, MP for Aberconwy in Wales, was one of twenty Conservative MPs who voted against the regulations, which passed by a vote of 373 in favour to 28 opposed.

The new rules make teaching about access to abortion part of the curriculum and require the Depart-

ment of EDUCATION in Northern Ireland to issue guidance ensuring that "pupils receive education on ... access to abortion".

Millar was a Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) to Welsh Secretary David TC Davies before he resigned from the post to vote against the abortion teaching regulations.

The MP for Aberconwy said: "I could not in good conscience represent parents and at the same time ignore the conclusion of the House

of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee that more time was needed to consult with parents in NI before enacting this Statutory Instrument".

Before a debate on the regulations last week, the House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee (SLSC) had been highly critical of the approach taken by the UK Government, which did not undertake a public consultation on the regulations. The Committee said: "The Committee believes that this

will be of considerable concern to parents in NI".

A number of submissions made to the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee raised concerns that teachers who are morally opposed to abortion would not have the option of opting out of teaching abortion to pupils.

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said: "Well done to Robin Millar for taking a

courageous stand, and resigning from his position so that he could do the right thing and vote against these regulations.

"It is so encouraging that there is at least one MP willing to sacrifice his parliamentary career for the sake of the principle that parents must be consulted about teaching of controversial material like abortion access at schools".



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Universe-sponsored Catholic Union event meets at Douai Abbey



Catholic Union Director Nigel Parker and President, Sir Edward Leigh MP

The group of around 40 Catholic Union members were given a tour of Douai by Fr Oliver Holt, who spoke of how his community had been founded in Paris in 1615 and ended up in Woolhampton in 1903, where they established the Abbey that exists today.

The distinctive Abbey Church, with its part-stone part-timber frame, reflects the ambition of those first monks who arrived in 1903 combined with the financial realities as the century wore on. The present Church was only completed in 1993, with a smaller and more modern design than originally planned, but the amount of natural light and subtle stained-glass windows create a very peaceful atmosphere.

As well as a tour of the Abbey and Mass in the parish church, there was the opportunity to hear about the Catholic Union's work over the past year. The group's President, Sir Edward Leigh MP, spoke about the continued challenges in Parliament

on a number of fronts from abortion to assisted suicide, but said that there was a "vocal minority" continuing to make the pro-life argument.

Deputy Director, James Somerville-Meikle, gave an update on the Catholic Union's recent work from the campaign to lift the 50 percent cap on new free schools to carrying out a major survey on religion in the workplace. The survey found that almost 1 in 3 Catholics had faced disadvantage at work because of their faith. Catholic Union member and City lawyer, Peter Frost, spoke about how some of these challenges could be addressed in practice.

The day was sponsored by the Universe Catholic Weekly and members could be seen thumbing through their free copies of the papers during tea and coffee breaks. The Summer Gathering is one of a number of events for Catholic Union members, which included a tour of Westminster Cathedral earlier this year.

More details of membership can be found here: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/support-us/>

On the Feast Day of St Oliver Plunkett, 1st July, members of the Catholic Union headed to Douai Abbey in Berkshire for their 'Summer Gather-

ing'. This was the first time that the Union had held the annual event at Douai and the group were given a warm welcome by the Benedictine

monks. It is in another Benedictine congregation, Downside Abbey, where St Oliver Plunkett's body can be found.

'Joyous' Day at Overflow as young people shine



Deacon Larry Oney took to the stage at OVERFLOW

go and evangelise. He also encouraged a lifestyle of prayer.

CHARIS chair Dr Maria Heath opened the day

Andy Drozdziak

Over a thousand Catholics at a key national gathering heard that the faith of young people in the Church is alive and active NOW-and the future is bright.

OVERFLOW was the first national gathering organised by CHARIS England and Wales (CNSC), taking place in Birmingham on 1st July.

Several young people shared how the Ascent discipleship process has helped them become more confident in their faith. They also put their faith into action by praying for all the participants at the event.

Alison Rebello, who travelled from Newcastle for the day, said: "The Ascent programme stories shared by youngsters were a highlight for the parent in me; to believe that, despite the peer pressure, they are still willing to embrace faith and practice it."

Northampton bishop David Oakley gave an inspiring homily during the closing Mass, encouraging all to

with an emphasis on mission, emphasising the importance of prophecy. American speakers Deacon Larry Oney and his wife Andi exhorted the faithful to pray and repent. "God will always accept a contrite heart. Get on your faces and cry out," Deacon Oney said.

Worship music was led by Fran McLean and a team, whilst a video was shown of Alpha founder Nicky Gumbel sharing with Dr Maria Heath about the importance of Christians working together.

Alison Rebello said: "There certainly was a joyous and generous Overflow of blessings, as the theme rightly suggested, in terms of what we heard from Deacon Larry and his wife Andi from New Orleans. The singing, praise, and worship provided much needed personal space to focus on God for our own good."



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IN BRIEF**Sunak's inflation worry**

Banks will be told by the British public blames the government for high inflation, new polling for the i news site shows. Some 67 per cent of those surveyed said the government had directly contributed to the stubbornly high rate of inflation either to a "great extent" or to "some extent". Nearly 6 in 10 said they believed Rishi Sunak's government has been "poor" in responding to inflation. The news comes 6 months after Sunak asked the country to judge him on his ability to deliver his five key pledges, including halving inflation.

Tories call for 'Brexit part II'

Leading Tories are calling for a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Court of Human Rights. After the Appeal Court ruled that the controversial Rwanda deportation plan was "unlawful", the prospect of a pledge for a referendum in the Conservative general election manifesto has been discussed. "It would be Brexit part II," a former government aide told the news site. "We would campaign on 'stop the boats' and it would get our base out," they added.

Shell 'takes blood money'

Shell has been accused of accepting "blood money" after it was revealed that it is still trading Russian gas more than a year after pledging to withdraw from the Russian energy market. According to analysis from campaign group Global Witness, the energy giant was involved in nearly an eighth of Russia's shipborne gas exports in 2022. Oleg Ustenko, an adviser to Volodymyr Zelensky, accused Shell of accepting "blood money" but the company said the trades were part of "long-term contractual commitments" and do not violate laws or sanctions.

'First act' of energy crisis 'over'

gas and electricity after Ofgem dropped its price tag - but bills will still be almost double what they were before the energy crisis. The average household energy bill will fall by £426 a year from 1st July. The chief executive of British Gas-owner Centrica, Chris O'Shea, said last night that the "first act" of the energy crisis was over but risks remained

Leeds Cathedral Awarded £100k National Lottery Heritage Grant



The Diocese of Leeds has received a grant of £99,944 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for Leeds Cathedral to expand its welcome and provisions for visitors of all faiths and none. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, Leeds Cathedral's 'Heritage for All' project will celebrate the 2024 centenary of the Cathedral's consecration by welcoming all to share its history, heritage, and culture at the

heart of the City of Leeds.

The Cathedral plans to remain open every day as usual whilst masonry repairs are carried out on the south steps. Development work can now take place to explore ways of improving access for visitors with impaired mobility and incorporating better toilet facilities into the building. This will form the basis for a future development project at the Cathedral.

New interpretation materials and resources developed and tailored to the needs of tourists and school visits will be delivered by a team of Cathedral Guides, supported by volunteer stewards and welcomers, all to be recruited from local communities and given full training opportunities.

This National Lottery Heritage Fund grant will help bring the Grade II* Cathedral's story to life for peo-

ple of all ages. Sustainable online resources developed with local teachers for both faith and non-faith schools will engage children and young people in the historical and cultural context of art, architecture, and music as well as the continuing contemporary significance of religion, worship and belief. A 'People's Heritage' project will tell some of the stories of the diverse local communities for whose members the Cathedral has long been a focal point and cultural venue in West Yorkshire's largest city.

The Dean of Leeds Cathedral, Canon Matthew Habron, expressed his thanks for the support of National Lottery players. "The award of this grant from the Heritage Fund will enable Leeds Cathedral to continue to welcome those who come here to worship, or to visit this historic building in the heart of Leeds, deepening their appreciation of its heritage and of those past and present of all ages and backgrounds who make up that living heritage," he said.

"I am very grateful to all who have made the award of this grant possible, and I look forward to welcoming many more people from across the City of Leeds, and far beyond, to experience the beauty and heritage of this unique Cathedral Church."

CAFOD's Clare Dixon awarded 'Citizen of São Paulo' for human rights work

Clare Dixon, CAFOD's Head of Latin America and Caribbean team, has been awarded "citizen of São Paulo" in recognition of her lifetime of service to the rights of the most excluded people in the Brazilian city.

For over 40 years, Clare worked closely with and alongside organisations, churches, and the people of São Paulo in their fight for human rights, better healthcare and housing.

Clare attended the ceremony at the São Paulo City Hall on the 16 July, where she received the award from City Councillor Manoel del Rio who has worked with homeless people and fought for the housing rights for the poor for many years.

On receiving the award, Clare Dixon said: "It's an incredible honour to receive this award. I've been working with the people of São Paulo, for decades, side by side with them in their fight for their rights and against injustice. To be made a citizen of this amazing city means the world to me."

Luiz Basseggio, a friend of Clare



Dixon from São Paulo, said: "I have known Clare since 1978 and she has always supported the movements for justice in São Paulo, from rights for migrants to workers' rights. She has helped to make Brazil a more just and democratic country."

Clare's work in Brazil includes

supporting workers' struggles in rural areas, as well as the cities to overcome injustice, poverty and oppression. As well as with communities to defend their land and secure their rights to secure housing and livelihood.

This is not the first honour of

Clare's career, with her service for CAFOD and the people of Latin America saw her receive an OBE in 2003. In 2008 the Chilean Church awarded her the Cardinal Silva Human Rights medal and in 2017 she was awarded the Jose Simeon Canas medal by the Central America University - UCA - in El Salvador. Clare also worked with Saint Oscar Romero, the Salvadorean Archbishop who was murdered for his defence of the poor and marginalised communities

CAFOD Director Christine Allen said: "I am delighted for Clare, no one deserves this award more than her. Clare has been a tireless campaigner, advocate and a ferocious force of nature in fighting for the rights of people in São Paulo and across Latin America. CAFOD has been very lucky to have someone as dedicated and effective as Clare in post."

Sea Sunday, 9th July:

Show your support for Stella Maris as it works with overburdened seafarers and fishers



STELLA MARIS

Stella Maris, formerly known as Apostleship of the Sea, is the official maritime charity of the Catholic Church.

Last year in the UK, Stella Maris supported 136,884 seafarers and fishers and carried out 6,222 ship visits. It has a team of 22 chaplains and 79 ship-visiting volunteers in the country, who help seafarers and fishers when they are overburdened and in need of rest.

A ship arrived at Teesport in Northeast England last year with 22 seafarers on board. Two Stella Maris ship visitors conducted a routine visit, taking with them welcome packs and bags of clothing.

It transpired that the crew was under huge mental and physical strain. One confided that, during the voyage to Teesport from the USA, he had only been getting two hours sleep a night because he was so stressed and overworked. He was also concerned that the crew were no longer able to operate the vessel safely as they were all exhausted.

The Stella Maris team contacted the relevant authorities, and a vessel detention notice was served that



afternoon. As a result, the seafarers were able to go ashore for the first time in many months and spent time relaxing at the seafarers' centre in the port. Eleven of the crew were repatriated to the Philippines later that month.

Stella Maris' work, supported by your prayers and generosity, can make a huge difference. Stella Maris' ship visiting can only happen because of your support.

Your generous contribution will help this work to continue and grow. It will be an expression of God's love, helping to bring rest to overburdened seafarers and fishers.

Stella Maris is appealing to Catholics throughout the UK to support Sea Sunday on 9th July.

It respectfully appeals to readers of the Universe Catholic Weekly to support its ministry with fishers and seafarers. Readers are invited to pray for them on Sea Sunday and to make a donation to support its work through the form or link below.

Stella Maris will be very grateful for any support you can kindly provide.

Support our work at
<https://www.stellamaris.org.uk>



Sea Sunday is on 9th July

Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) provides spiritual and practical support to seafarers, fishers and their families.

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STELLA MARIS

COMMENT

Cap on faith based school admissions hits Catholic schools

Catholic schools have long been considered the jewel in the crown when it comes to the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State in this country.

Catholic schools, academies and colleges in England and Wales educate just under 850,000 pupils, with Catholic schools making up 9 per cent of the national total of maintained schools.

Our schools are widely regarded as some of the best in the country. They are extremely popular with parents and pupils, not only because of their academic performance - five percentage points higher than national GCSE Maths and English scores - but because of the care and quality of their teaching.

Sadly, it is precisely because of the success of Catholic schools that they have been one of the biggest losers from the 50 percent cap on faith-based admissions to new free schools.

The policy applies to oversubscribed free schools with a religious character in England. As Catholic schools are nearly always oversubscribed, it would mean schools having to turn away pupils simply because of their faith.

It is a policy that goes against Canon Law and our Bishops have rightfully said they cannot sanction the creation of new Catholic free schools while the cap is in place.

The situation is particularly frustrating as there has never been any evidence to justify the cap. Our schools are already extremely diverse in terms of background and religion of pupils. They also educate more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds.

A new campaign by the Catholic Union is attempting to show grassroots support to 'scrap the cap' with an open letter to the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan MP. With a General Election on the horizon, politicians should be in listening mode.

If we want our schools to continue flourishing, we need to lift the cap, which is preventing new schools from opening and putting Catholic education in this country under a cloud. Now is the time to scrap the cap.

The NHS workforce plan is a good start – but missing detail

POLITICS

Victoria Joffe

A long-term workforce plan for the NHS – which the UK government promised four and a half years ago – has finally been unveiled. Its arrival, days before the NHS turns 75, is welcomed.

The ambitious plan sets out a 15-year strategy to address the increasing demand for healthcare and decreasing supply of healthcare professionals in England. An investment of more than £2.4 billion has been agreed to fund a 27 per cent increase in training places by 2028-29. The total NHS workforce would grow from 1.4 million in 2021-22 to around 2.3 million in 2036-37.

This investment targets the current shortfall of NHS staff, which has around 150,000 vacancies. This shortfall is forecast to grow to 260,000-360,000 staff vacancies by 2036-37 without any intervention.

The main emphasis of the 151-page plan is on training and increasing the number of healthcare professionals – not only doctors and nurses, but also allied health professionals, such as physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and podiatrists, as well as pharmacists and healthcare scientists.

Existing apprenticeships for nurses and other healthcare professionals will be expanded, and a new apprenticeship scheme for doctors will be introduced to meet the required number of 12,000-15,000 medical school places by 2030-31.

New healthcare roles have been promised, including “enhanced practitioners”, who have specific knowledge and skills in a field of expertise, and the more senior “advanced practitioners”, who manage the whole episode of a patient’s care. These posts will combine with the more generalist roles that provide basic care across a range of patients and free up the time of those more specialist practitioners.

Retention in the NHS is a considerable problem. The overall staff leaving rate increased from 9.6 per cent in 2020 to 12.5% in 2022. The plan acknowledges the importance of retaining workers, offering them more flexibility, and improving the culture and leadership in the NHS. But details of how this will be achieved are limited in the current plan.

Reform and innovation are also part of the plan to improve



productivity by including staff with a more varied mix of skills and expertise within multidisciplinary teams, combining generalists and specialists. For example, a dental practice might have only one dentist, but two dental therapists and two dental hygienists. The therapist and hygienist would do most of the basic dental care, with the dentist intervening when more specialist care is needed.

The plan also draws on the increased use of technological advances to enhance and transform healthcare, such as AI technology, which can decrease diagnostic screening times in radiology.

More detail needed

While the plan is certainly a positive step, it is only the first step in a longer trajectory, setting out clear markers for growth and improvement. Much more detail is needed on how the plan will be implemented and what measures will be used to judge its success.

The emphasis of the plan is on boosting the quantity of staff and services. However, aspects of quality of care, type and level of staffing required and overcoming obstacles to this expansion, need to be explored further, such as the feasibility of shortened medical degree programmes, medical apprenticeships and the student take-up of all the new university places.

The plan acknowledges that NHS staff are working in highly pressured environments and many are exhausted since the COVID pandemic. The recent nursing strikes are not only about pay but also poor working conditions and lack of support and leadership. To make this plan viable, a clearer blueprint on how to retain staff must be included.

Where will this expansion come from? Universities do not always fill their quota of places for some health courses, including nursing, midwifery and allied health professions. It is difficult to see where the students will come from to fill the government’s proposed 92 per cent increase in adult nursing training places by 2031-32 if current places are not being filled.

During the pandemic, people saw the value of working in healthcare as they clapped weekly for those working in the NHS who they regarded as heroes. But this perception of feeling valued in society has not endured in the NHS workforce. More NHS staff are leaving – the overall number rising by more than 25 per cent from 2019 to 2022.

Meanwhile, nurses, doctors and some allied health professionals are taking strike action. About 170,000 NHS workers left their jobs in 2022, more than 41,000 of whom were nurses, the highest rate for a decade.

Improving the culture, wellbeing and work environment of staff in the NHS will lead to people valuing NHS roles and seeing the opportunities they bring. This will encourage people into health and social care careers.

Clinical placement

The availability of clinical placements during training is a major obstacle to this ambitious expansion plan, mainly due to the shortage of experienced staff to supervise students. All healthcare courses incorporate “practice-based hours” where students work in a variety of healthcare settings.

This shortage of experienced supervisory staff means that clinical placements are notoriously hard to find and universities are sometimes forced to cut target placement

numbers, despite the need, because of a lack of capacity.

Partnership working is essential if the plan is to be successful. Close collaboration between training institutions and NHS trusts will ensure that the appropriate type and number of health courses are offered at the right time and with the right balance of skills.

A closer alliance between schools, colleges and universities will allow students to step on and step off at different points in their learning trajectory, depending on their abilities, experience and choice of occupation. Showcasing the benefits and opportunities of healthcare as an occupation both in primary and secondary school will lead to more people choosing to join the NHS and fill these newly released places.

If working conditions for NHS staff are improved, the current trend of people leaving can be reversed. This, in turn, can lead to a more positive image of working as a healthcare professional in the NHS.

And, combined with the development of more active and well-defined partnerships across education, health and social care, the hope is that more people will opt to enter the health and social care sector.

If all of the above issues are addressed, the ambitious expansion, retention and reform targets of the NHS long-term workforce plan are more likely to be achieved. And in 25 years, at the NHS’s 100th anniversary, the NHS workforce will hopefully meet the healthcare needs of the population.

Victoria Joffe
Professor of Speech and Language Therapy and Dean, School of Health and Social Care, University of Essex, University of Essex

Dana joins Archbishop Martin at World Youth Day ‘Light the Flame’ service

Andy Drozdziak

Eurovision favourite Dana is praying that St Patrick’s ‘flame of faith’ will burn in Ireland once again when she joins Archbishop Eamon Martin for a special Mass on World Youth Day at Slane.

In the Spirit of World Youth Day, pilgrims from across Ireland are invited to join Dana, Sr Brieghe McKenna, and Archbishop Eamon Martin, at the Hill of Slane, County Meath, on August 6th for rosary, Mass, and a healing service.

At the Light the Fire of faith service, Dana will sing her new song, Light the Fire, an anthem inspired by St Patrick, who famously lit the Easter fire at Slane in 433AD in defiance of King Laoire.

The Paschal candle will also be lit as part of the ceremony on the Feast of the Transfiguration as pilgrims pray for a renewal of faith in Ireland.

Dana said: “Buses are already filling up and I hope every diocese in Ireland will send parishioners to pray for a blessing for Ireland and that the flame of faith, lit by St Patrick so long ago, will continue to burn brightly again in our hearts and minds.”

Archbishop Eamon Martin recalled St Patrick’s own experience as



he prepares for the event.

“He knew he was a sinner, but he grew to know and love God through prayer and sacrifice. The light of faith will be kept alive and spread and renewed in Ireland in families that pray and from young person to young person - as Dana’s new song puts it: lighting the flame of faith in their own hearts and in the hearts of others,” he said. The archbishop added a prayer that the young people of Ireland would become ‘ambassadors for Christ all around the island of Ireland.’

Poor Clare Sr Brieghe McKenna, who is famous for her ministry to priests and her healing ministry, will be accompanied by Fr Pablo Escriva de Romani. They will speak and conduct the Eucharistic Healing service.

During their recent Parish Mission in St Patrick’s Cathedral in New York, Sr Brieghe described Dana’s song, Light the Fire, as a gift of the Holy Spirit to light the flame of faith in everyone’s hearts.

Dana shared her hopes for the new song. “It is a song for all year round and for all people everywhere who yearn for God’s light, the light of faith in darkness,” she said.

Refugee Week Concert in Dover remembers ‘each face, each story’

Andy Drozdziak

A moving concert took place on Saturday 24th June to mark Refugee Week and act as a reminder that each refugee ‘has a name, a face, and a story’, which this year had the theme of ‘Compassion’.

The initiative came from Woolwich-based duo Ooberfuse, who have composed and performed songs for papal visits and youth festivals and whose songs advocate against injustice. Philippine-born Cherrie Anderson, Ooberfuse’s lead singer, said: “The main message of Refugee Week is that we should welcome refugees, they are a valuable part of our UK society, and we should all do that we can to help them thrive here. The week also highlights injustices and raises awareness in the international community.”

Ooberfuse’s latest release, “Show Me love”, celebrates Refugee Week. After visiting Dover—the first sight of Britain for those arriving by sea seeking safety - to film scenes for the video, they vowed to return and

hold a concert featuring other exiles and supporters. This was rapidly arranged a few weeks later, with help from asylum seeker support organisation, ‘Seeking Sanctuary’, a member of Caritas Social Network (CSAN), which aims to raise awareness about people displaced from their homes and to channel basic humanitarian assistance.

Farm Street parish priest, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ, introduced each performer and spoke of how the concert underlines the message from Pope Francis - “Each of them has a name, a face, and a story”—which appears on a Dover seafront plaque, remembering those who have died on perilous journeys.

Flaminia Vola, European Co-ordinator at the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development, described the event as “a service to the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, to remind everyone of their face, name and story”.

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Accompanying Dementia: A Review

Sir John Battle



Given the increasing incidence of dementia it is surprising that a comprehensive guiding handbook has only just emerged. Too often dementia is largely seen as a retreat from life, hidden away at the end in care homes and hospitals as we all fail to cope. Leeds Diocesan director of Caritas Leeds Dr Joe Cortis and Dr Pia Matthews of St Mary's Twickenham have now written a personally practical, ethical, legal, and spiritual guide for sufferers and carers alike and hopefully a much wider future supportive community not least in our parishes. The aim of "Journeying Together: Accompanying People With Dementia: A Practical Guide for those Who Care" is dementia friendly churches and communities. This text is not a specialist medical thesis but is rooted in the illuminating case studies of those suffering dementia and backed up with practical and sensitive strategies and supportive actions which are based on full respect for the dignity of each person. It is clearly stated "Each person living with dementia is unique" and "in dementia there is no one size fits all". The key is therefore always to "be attentive" to the person whether sufferer or carer, which requires attentiveness, thoughtfulness and detailed planning.

A section on "At the end" centres on the statement "dying does not mean that our earthly life has little meaning or should not be lived as fully as possible". There is a helpful section on "dementia and the sacraments" and an encouragingly powerful section on often neglected "spirituality"; defined as a "the invisible inner life of spirituality is often described as the way in which someone finds meaning and connection or finds sources of hope in the world". "Journeying Together" actually resonates for all of us on the journey with the challenges life throws at us through its specific focus that "those who live with dementia love and are loved by others". But its practical hints for recognising our identity is social and we are perhaps all called to be carers and cared for makes this a ready living well reference manual for us all and not least as church communities.

"JOURNEYING TOGETHER: Accompanying people living with dementia" by Joseph D Cortis and Pia Matthews is available from Redemptorist Publications (www.rpbooks.co.uk) price £11.95.

Bank account closure is an attack on free speech

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



In a plot that reads like something out of a dystopian novel, a building society has decided to close the account of one of its customers, an Anglican minister, because they didn't agree with his political views.

Reverend Richard Fothergill had been a loyal customer of Yorkshire Building Society for seventeen years when he decided to respond to one of their frequent online requests for customer feedback. Noticing that the Building Society was a prominent advocate of the LGBT Pride movement and were changing their logo to reflect the rainbow flag for Pride month as well as displaying Pride messaging in store, the Reverend wrote a couple of polite paragraphs on their online portal asking whether or not they might wish to reconsider their stance.

Reverend Fothergill said he made two points. Firstly, he asked whether or not this was a waste of Yorkshire Building Society's energy and resources, pointing out that their focus ought to be as a manager of other people's money and not engage in social engineering regarding attitudes towards sex and sexually. Secondly, the Reverend explained that as a minister in the Church of England, he was uncomfortable with some of the ideology being pushed by the Pride movement, notably, gender ideology and the way in which many activists are trying to push this on children. The minister said that he has serious ethical problems with the transsexual agenda and linked to a news story about the controversial drag queen story hours that have been held around the country.

Like most of us who submit customer feedback, the reverend didn't expect to hear anything back. He thought that his observations were likely to be binned, but nevertheless hoped that Yorkshire Building Society had received similar responses from a number of other customers which would make them think twice before promoting Pride in the future.

What Rev Fothergill didn't expect was to receive a letter in the post informing him that his accounts were going to be closed. I don't know which is more chilling, the fact that the bank chose to vindictively shut his accounts because he disagreed with their promotion of Pride, or the fact that they are now lying about what



happened and attempting to portray him as some kind of villain.

A spokesman from Yorkshire Building Society has responded to the furore by saying "we never close savings accounts based on different opinions regarding beliefs or feedback provided by our customers. We only ever make the difficult decision to close a savings account if a customer is rude, abusive, violent or discriminates in any way, based on the specific facts, comments and behaviour in each case".

In other words, Yorkshire Bank are trying to shift the blame back on to the clergyman claiming that his accounts were closed as a direct consequence of rude or objectionable behaviour. Having listened to Reverend Fothergill give an account of himself on various media programmes, it is blatantly clear that he is not an aggressive, ill-tempered or rude individual and indeed he runs an online charismatic mission within the Church of England, which is all about giving a fresh expression to the Gospel and engaging with non-believers but without being tied down by the encumbrance of a physical parish and the worries about whether or not the church roof is going to fall in. It's the sort of ministry which the Holy Father would undoubtedly approve, being all about bringing people into a personal encounter with Christ and making contact with people via unconventional ways, such as at the school gate and word of mouth, rather than any kind of flashy marketing.

It's far more likely that some young or likely 'woke' employee at Yorkshire Building Society took

massive umbrage over Reverend Fothergill's polite entreaties about the perils of Pride and gender ideology and decided to escalate the matter, resulting in the removal of their loyal customer.

As my own personal travails demonstrate, there is a whole swathe of people who genuinely believe that anything other than uncritical acceptance of LGBT ideology constitutes unjust discrimination, prejudice and that misgendering is akin to 'literal genocide'.

The news broke at the same time as Christian Concern announced that Barclays Bank had been forced to pay £21,500 in compensation to Mike Davidson, the CEO of the Christian Core Issues Trust, after they unilaterally shut down his accounts without explanation following complaints from online LGBT activists. While Barclays have refused to admit any kind of liability, they offered to settle with Mr Davidson, in advance of his case being heard at the High Court, from which readers may draw their own conclusions.

Nigel Farage may be a less sympathetic figure but he has also faced similar treatment, with his bank Coutts announcing that he was no longer eligible to bank with them. Shockingly, someone from Coutts appears to have violated Farage's privacy by giving an off record briefing to the BBC that the closure has come about because Mr Farage didn't hold sufficient funds in his account to qualify for the account. I'm calling that baloney, because as I can disclose, up until 2018 I held a Coutts bank account, which was opened back in the days when Coutts were attempting to

attract young city professionals and did not have any kind of minimum balance or income requirement. The reason that I closed the account was simply because it was not value for money, I was effectively paying hundreds of pounds in annual charges for nothing more than a designer bank card, cheque book and the fun of watching people's faces when they realised I had a Coutts account. Not once did they ever indicate to me that I was not worthy of the honour or that I should close the account, even though I suspect I was most likely their poorest customer.

Another instance of this happening was when political writer, Stuart Campbell who writes the "Wings over Scotland" blog also discovered this week that his accounts with First Direct were being closed down, without any reason given. Mr Campbell is another prominent critic of gender ideology.

In an age where we are all reliant on access to a bank account in order to be able to function and participate in society, this ought to concern us all. It looks as though banks are hiding behind regulations regarding money laundering in order to disempower and disenfranchise customers who dare to express views they don't like. Boycotting banks is incredibly difficult - we either need legislation to combat this, or a Catholic billionaire to set up a financial institution where can be assured, not only of ethical banking practices, but also, that we cannot be cancelled.

New bill will ensure 'higher standard' of age checks on porn sites



OSV News Photo/Peter Byrne, Reuters

Clauses in the Online Safety Bill requiring websites to verify the age of users accessing pornography will be beefed up by the government, it has been announced.

New amendments to the legislation will see services that publish or allow pornography on their sites held "to a new higher standard on the age verification or age estima-

tion tools they use".

Sites will have to ensure that these are "highly effective in establishing whether a user is a child or not". New measures will also hold tech executives

personally responsible for keeping children safe.

The move follows a long-running campaign by CARE, which drafted amendments and worked with other charities to have them accepted by the government.

Ross Hendry, CEO of CARE, said: "This announcement by the government is welcome and comes after a

long campaign by CARE and other charities concerned about the devastating impact of pornography on children and young people. Ministers have ordered a higher standard in age checks. This will make a real difference.

"It is possible that social media sites will try to circumvent new measures. The Children's Commissioner found that most children access pornography for the first time on social media. The Government must ensure that any potential loophole is closed before its online safety regime comes into force."

Ofcom will bring forward guidance spelling out how sites can meet new standards in age verification and avoid falling foul of the law.

The regulator will issue periodic reports on the effectiveness of age verification, and annual reports on the compliance of porn sites.

Catholic Church to honour Lord and Lady Haughey

Pope Francis has agreed to bestow the papal awards of Knight and Dame of St Gregory the Great on Lord William Haughey and Lady Susan Haughey, in recognition of their considerable charitable work for the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Motherwell, the City of Glasgow, throughout Scotland, and worldwide.

Commenting on the awards, Bishop of Motherwell Joseph Toal said: "I am delighted that Pope Francis has recognised the long history of charitable donations both to church and community charities in the Diocese of Motherwell and to the support of many Church and charitable causes in the across the world." Reacting to the awards, Lord Haughey said: "We are both surprised, humbled and honoured that the Holy Father has graciously chosen to bestow these wonderful Knighthoods upon us. Our faith means everything to us, we very much appreciate how lucky we are to be in a position "to give something back." Our Parish and local

community are a huge part of our lives; we are delighted to help in all their charitable endeavours."

William Haughey was born in Glasgow in 1956. He attended Holyrood Secondary School and Langside College. He was awarded an OBE in 2003 and was knighted in the 2012 Birthday Honours for services to business and philanthropy. In 2013, he was appointed as a Life Peer in the House of Lords. Susan Haughey attended Holyrood Secondary School and was awarded the CBE in 2016. In 2017, she was appointed as Lord Lieutenant for Lanarkshire.

William and Susan married in 1978. In 2002, they established the City Charitable Trust, which has donated over £20m to deserving causes over the past 22 years, many of them in Scotland but also internationally.

Wishing John a fond farewell and thanks

Caritas Westminster has said goodbye to director John Coleby, who has stepped down from his role. John, who has been director of Caritas Westminster for ten years, has overseen the organisation from its early days and was instrumental in the establishment of Caritas Bakhita House, Seeds Hub, and Safe in Faith as well as the development of the food programme, volunteer service and outreach through hubs into parishes and schools.

John began working for Westminster Diocese in 2010 as director of St Joseph's Pastoral Centre, which was subsequently incorporated, along with the Diocese Deaf Service, into Caritas Westminster. Soon after, John became the director of the whole of Caritas Westminster.

John said: "I'm leaving with a sense of gratitude for all the work the team has done. They're a fantastic team, not only the Caritas staff, but everyone from across the curia. Without their support we can't do what we need to do.

"There are always challenges and always more work to do, but I've really enjoyed it. I've been moved by the good wishes and thanks I've received in the past few days."

Diocese staff gathered last week to say goodbye to John and wish him well for the future. Cardinal Vincent Nichols presented him with an apostolic blessing from Pope Francis.



Paolo Camoletto, Chief Operating Officer for Westminster Diocese, said: "John has done a fantastic job establishing Caritas. He was the right person at the right time. His style of leadership always projects positivity.

"Personally, John is the type of person who makes you grow when you meet him. His patience, kindness and empathy makes you grow as an individual, you want to listen to him. He will be sorely missed."

Writing on Twitter, Caritas Westminster tweeted this message: "A sad day for #TeamCaritas, as we bid a fond farewell to John Coleby, our #Caritastic Director since we began, 11 years ago. We will miss John's quiet wisdom, leadership, humour and calm steadiness-and wish him well in his active retirement, and as he improves his golf."

"We wish John all the best in whatever the future holds for him. He will always be part of the Caritas family."

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IN BRIEF

Ukraine readying for jets

Ukraine could receive the first of many F-16s fighter jets within months, said a senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky. Speaking to the news site from the presidential office in Kyiv, Mykhailo Podolyak said Ukraine was accelerating the acquisition of F-16s to join the nation's fight to evict Russia from all its territory. In the same interview, he revealed that Kyiv is in talks with UK government officials over the future of a businessman living in the UK who is suspected of being a Russian secret agent.

Israel bombs Palestinian camp

The Israeli army has launched a "massive military operation" on the Jenin camp in the northern West Bank, said the BBC, with multiple air strikes. The Palestinian Health Ministry said at least three Palestinians were killed and 12 others wounded but the Israeli military insisted that the camp was a "terrorist" stronghold. "Right-wing ministers and lawmakers had been putting pressure... on the security establishment to launch a large-scale military operation in the West Bank," said Haaretz.

Fears of nuclear escalation

Russia could be preparing to trigger a localised explosion at Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, claimed Ukraine. "There is a serious threat because Russia is technically ready to provoke a local explosion at the station, which could lead to a [radiation] release," said Volodymyr Zelensky. Russian forces have begun to gradually leave the plant and some employees have also been instructed to leave the site by 5th July, reported Yahoo News.

Chinese share 'white people meals'

A new food trend has swept China's social media platforms in recent weeks – 'white people meals'. Users have been sharing images of bland foods, such as raw carrots wrapped in cheese, two-ingredient sandwiches and dressing-free salads – all under a single hashtag: #bairanfān, which translates as white people meals. "You're unlikely to find depictions of roast turkey dinners or cheeseburgers when exploring the images attached to this hashtag," said CNN. Instead you will find "unappetising pics of no-frills, cold, assembled dishes".

Putin seriously weakened by Wagner Group mutiny – but it was a missed opportunity for Ukraine too

WORLD AFFAIRS

Stefan Wolff & Tetyana Malyarenko

Blink and you could have missed it. Within 36 hours, the challenge mounted against the Kremlin by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the mercenary private military company the Wagner Group, was over. On Friday June 23 2023, Prigozhin ordered 25,000 of his troops on to a "march for justice", which duly set out to confront the Russian president in Moscow. The following afternoon he called it off.

At that point his troops had advanced along the M4 motorway more than halfway between Moscow and the Russian military's southern headquarters at Rostov-on-Don. His private army was within 200km (125 miles) of the Russian capital.

The crisis was apparently averted thanks to a deal brokered by Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, and confirmed by the Kremlin. But this brief episode of turmoil will have lasting repercussions for Russia and for the war in Ukraine.

The conflict between Prigozhin and the top brass of the Russian military has been going on for some time. But it escalated as the battle over Bakhmut intensified, during which Prigozhin complained more than 20,000 of his men had been killed.

Back in May, Prigozhin warned of another Russian revolution. He attempted to make good on this promise four weeks later. But this was a far cry from the mass uprising of the 1917 October revolution. Instead, it was ultimately a showdown between competing factions of the Russian military-industrial complex.

If there is a parallel, however, it is that foreign wars were part of the background against which both the Bolshevik revolution and Prigozhin's attempted power play occurred. And then, as now, the challenger confronted an increasingly fragile regime plagued by deep structural problems and uncertainty that any war brings.

The alleged trigger for Prigozhin's mutiny was an apparent airstrike on his camp at the front in Ukraine by Russian forces. The airstrike itself – if indeed it happened – is an indication that the Kremlin was



aware that something was afoot.

But the speed and precision with which Prigozhin moved his troops over large distances and to strategic locations – including Rostov-on-Don – indicates that this was a well-prepared operation.

It may have failed, but there will be lessons even in that for any future challenger to the Kremlin. As Lenin put it succinctly in his 1920 book *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, without the "dress rehearsal" of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 "would have been impossible". That should deeply worry Putin and his inner circle.

Russia – a fragile regime exposed

More immediately, Putin has other problems to consider and take care of. The Russian president's speech on Saturday morning was fiercely combative, vowing to crush what he called an "armed uprising".

Within 12 hours, he had made a deal which, for now, will not see Prigozhin or any of his mercenaries punished. What's more, Putin stood by his defence minister, Sergey Shoigu, and chief of general staff, Valery Gerasimov, throughout their rivalry with Prigozhin.

But there are now indications that both of them may be replaced. Shoigu by Aleksey Dymin, who led the operation that resulted in the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and currently serves a regional governor of Tula. And Gerasimov by Sergey Surovikin, one of his current deputies, who was briefly in charge of the war in Ukraine during the autumn and winter of 2002-23.

This does not project an image of a strong leader either at home or abroad. Moreover, the fact that Putin had to cut a deal in the first place and after Prigozhin's mercenaries advanced so close to Moscow without facing any resistance on the ground is significant. It says something about the limitations of Russia's capacity to respond to the crisis and deploy military and security resources beyond the war in Ukraine.

This lack of resistance to Prigozhin and the apparent popular support Wagner received in Rostov-on-Don also speaks volumes about the lack of enthusiasm for the war in Ukraine among regional elites and people outside the Kremlin bubble. It also raises questions about how ordinary people might feel about a change in regime in which the choice is between Putin and Prigozhin.

The exposure of these weaknesses must also be worrying for Russia's few remaining allies. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was apparently among the first foreign leaders to speak with Putin after his televised address on Saturday morning.

The Kremlin also dispatched Russia's deputy foreign minister, Andrey Rudenko, to Beijing for talks with China's foreign minister, Qin Gang, to "exchange views ... on China-Russia relations and international and regional issues of common concern".

Turkey and China will have viewed the turmoil in their nuclear-armed neighbour with some

concern. And both they, Kazakhstan, and other Russian neighbours in central Asia, will have deepening reservations about how reliable a partner Putin can be going forward.

An opportunity missed for Ukraine

This will probably be noted by Ukraine and its western partners. Most of Kyiv's allies generally limited themselves to statements of concern and noted that they were monitoring events as they were unfolding. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, meanwhile, highlighted the chaos in Russia and the humiliation that this meant for Putin.

Zelensky's senior advisor, Mykhailo Podolyak, expressed his disappointment that Prigozhin had given up so quickly. Oleksiy Danilov (the general secretary of Ukraine's national security council) and Ukrainian historian Georgiy Kasianov both saw Prigozhin's mutiny as another sign of the coming fragmentation of Russia.

And this is perhaps the main point from Kyiv's perspective. Had the chaos in Russia continued long enough, it may have created a real opportunity for further advances in a counteroffensive that Zelensky himself had to admit last week is making less progress less fast than had been envisaged.

In this sense, too, Prigozhin's failed rebellion can be seen as an important dress rehearsal that offers valuable lessons, especially for Ukraine's western partners.

A better equipped and trained Ukrainian military could have capitalised significantly more on even this short period of disarray in Russia. More tanks and artillery, more and better air defence systems, and more fighter aircraft would not have helped either one of the Russian war criminals – Putin and Prigozhin – to defeat the other.

But they could have brought the Kremlin closer to the point of accepting the failure of its war against Ukraine.

Stefan Wolff

Professor of International Security, University of Birmingham

Tetyana Malyarenko

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Dublin archdiocese mulls over which landmark church should become full cathedral



St. Andrew's church, located in Dublin's city centre, was named by Archbishop Dermot Farrell as a possible location for the archdiocese's cathedral. (OSV News photo/courtesy St. Andrew's Parish)

However, not everyone is convinced that the project is needed and questions the lack of consultation. Anthony Neville, a parishioner in Baldoyle Parish in Dublin, told OSV News that "a cathedral is not the most pressing question at this time. Attendances at Masses are down, collections are down, and the archbishop says it will not be possible to provide Masses in every parish due to (the) declining number of priests."

Sarah Mac Donald

The largest archdiocese in Ireland may finally get a cathedral for its 1 million Catholics, following Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin's surprise announcement of an initiative to identify the church that could best fulfill a cathedral function for the city.

Two locations were named by Archbishop Farrell in a statement on 22nd June, which revealed that a project group was being set up to study the future of St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral on the north side of the River Liffey and St. Andrew's Church on the south side. Both churches are located in Dublin's city centre.

The cathedral proposal, when it is formulated, will require approval by Rome and could see St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, which was built nearly 200 years ago and has served as a de facto cathedral, designated as a basilica, and St. Andrew's Church built shortly after St. Mary's, take on the mantle of a cathedral. Archbishop Farrell has been considering how the Catholic Church's presence in Dublin can be strengthened and how to reach an increasing number of people who have no established links with either the church or an individual parish.

According to the archdiocese's statement, "There are strong grounds for considering that St. Andrew's might better serve the cathedral function." A spokesman for the Archdiocese of Dublin, Peter Henry, told OSV News that "St. Andrew's has a far larger capacity with excel-

lent sight lines for those attending liturgies and other events."

Presidents, government ministers, prelates and even Pope Francis (in 2018), have attended St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral on occasions of religious significance. However, the church, an impressive classical revival-style building, is situated in the back of one of Dublin's main streets.

Under the Penal Laws, enforced during British colonial rule, Catholics were not permitted to erect churches on a main street. St. Mary's was officially opened in 1825, four years before Catholic Emancipation. As the principal Catholic church in Dublin, it was designated a pro-cathedral, meaning it was an "acting" cathedral, but technically it was still a parish church.

At Sunday Masses on 25th June, a letter from Archbishop Farrell was read to the congregations at St. Mary's and St. Andrew's. According to information obtained by OSV News, it seems as though the cathedral proposal was only brought to the Council of Priests in Dublin for discussion a day before the Archdiocese of Dublin made the statement public. Neither the parish council of St. Mary's nor that of St. Andrew's was consulted prior to the announcement.

The task of a project group, which will include representatives of both St. Mary's and St. Andrew's, will involve examining the physical and structural fabric of both churches, as well as their financials and other resources.

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Advocating for Women in Prison



Prisoners · Families · Communities

A Fresh Start Together

Theresa Alessandro

When I talk to Catholic people about the work of supporting prisoners and their families, they sometimes ask about advocacy. What is Pact doing to call for change in the criminal justice system? It's a good question.

In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis calls us to participate in building a better world: "We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies."

At Pact, we certainly work to create change in the criminal justice system. Andy Keen-Downs, our CEO, recently asked former Prime Minister John Major how to 'educate politicians on the realities of over-crowded, under-resourced prisons, full of damaged and often highly vulnerable people, so many of whom leave prison homeless, unemployed, addicted or mentally unwell'.

A key strategy is to roll up our sleeves and demonstrate how change is possible by piloting a new way of working-and then sharing the learning with everyone else.

Our Together a Chance pilot, funded by the Sylvia Adams Trust, addresses the needs of mothers in prison. Only 5% of children remain in the family home when their mother is imprisoned. Imagine the disruption to school, friends and family relationships. Separation from her children causes huge distress for many incarcerated women. Lord Farmer's landmark 2019 review highlighted the importance of maintaining family ties for women and

recommended that the Ministry of Justice fund social workers in each prison.

In our pilot, Pact employs two prison-based social workers to support mothers in HMPs Send and Eastwood Park. They bridge the gap between the prison and community social services so that, where appropriate, mums can continue to play a part in their children's lives. Of course, maintaining family ties also reduces the chance of people returning to crime later, making our communities safer.

The pilot project has been reviewed very positively by Cardiff University. It was shown that Pact social workers support contact between mums in prison and their children. Most powerfully, they give hope to mums separated from their children, helping with self-harm and the risk of suicide.

One woman said of her Pact social worker: 'She always delivers. If she says something, she follows through... I'd not have coped without her...'

Pope Francis' word 'co-responsibility' captures how we do advocacy at Pact. Informed by people with lived experience, we build good relationships with hard-working prison and probation staff, chaplains, government ministers, funders, and other partners – and with the people we serve. We have been supporting women and men inside, and their children and families, for 125 years.

When Pact calls for this important social worker project to be rolled out to all women's prisons, we do so from a position of credibility and mutual respect. We know that it can still take years to see a change adopted more widely but it is an effective approach. Pact has been at the forefront of previous changes, such as the introduction of Visitor Centres supporting visiting families at all prisons across England and Wales.

We are grateful for the support of Catholic people – as donors, volunteers, parish reps and well-wishers – which enables so much of what we do at Pact.

Vicar accuses Yorkshire Building Society of bullying over transgender comments

An Anglican priest has had his bank account closed after raising concerns over Yorkshire Building Society's promotion of transgenderism.

Rev Richard Fothergill, who leads the Filling Station network, sent an online message to YBS in response to a request for feedback. In it, the 62-year-old, who has had an account for 17 years, complained that the company should not be promoting a transgender ideology. Four days later, he received a letter stating his account would be closed. Speaking to The Times, he said: "I wasn't even aware that our relationship had a problem. They are a fi-

nancial house – they are not there to do social engineering. I think they should concentrate their efforts on managing money, instead of promoting LGBT ideology. "I know cancel culture exists and this is my first-hand experience of it. I wouldn't want this bullying to happen to anyone else."

The retired vicar believes his observations were nothing more than a simple but gentle objection of transgenderism in a few paragraphs.

Responding to his claims, a spokesperson said: "We never close savings accounts based on different opinions regarding beliefs or feed-

back provided by our customers.

"We only ever make the difficult decision to close a savings account if a customer is rude, abusive, violent or discriminates in any way, based on the specific facts, comments and behaviour in each case." The story comes just days after Christian charity Core Issues Trust received a payout from Barclays over the closure of its bank account as part of a settlement to avoid a court case.

The Core Issues Trust offers support to men and women who have unwanted same-sex attraction.



Newcastle school governor awarded MBE in King's Honours List

The dedication and hard work of a Foundation Governor at a Newcastle school was acknowledged with an MBE in the recent King's Birthday Honours List.

Bill Barnes has been a governor at St Cuthbert's Catholic primary school in Wallbottle for over two decades, and also served as Chair of Governors for a 12-year period at the school.

"I was in London that day watching a cricket match at Lord's, and when I came home that night, my

wife said there was a letter for me to open from the Cabinet Office," Mr Barnes, 85, said.

"It was the first I had heard about it – although my wife had known and hadn't told me. When I heard about all the people who had written in support, I felt very humble."

The retired insurance broker from West Newcastle was inspired to become a governor at St Cuthbert's after seeing his children go through the school and benefit from their time there.

"My three children all went to the same school and I saw how it had served them so well and gave them a great grounding for secondary school and then for university," he added.

"I felt I wanted to get involved and give something back."

The school has profited from his financial knowledge, with Mr Barnes advising on budget issues, as well as supporting children in mathemat-



ics. He is also responsible for safeguarding at St Cuthbert's, along with another more seasonal role.

"I've been Santa Claus for the last 17 or 18 years," he explained. "Although I think when I've seen the children all the way through the school, they know who I am by the time they get to Year 6."

Bill is also an active member of his local Catholic church, also called St Cuthbert's, leading the gift aid scheme and helping vulnerable people there.

Headteacher Colette Barrett said: "Bill has remained as a Foundation Governor, and is very committed to his role.

"Everyone at St Cuthbert's is delighted that Bill's hard work and dedication to the school and parish community has been recognised."

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IN BRIEF**Will sugar tax hit frappes?**

Iced coffee drinks sold by high street chains contain more sugar than a can of coke, a study has found. When it examined frappés and frappuccinos from Caffè Nero, Costa and Starbucks, the consumer group, Which, found that some drinks were found to contain more than an adult's total daily recommended intake of sugar. The finding has led some health campaigners to call for the 'sugar tax' imposed on fizzy drinks in 2018 to be expanded to other drinks, including iced coffees and milkshakes.

Explosions in Washington

Explosive devices were detonated outside three businesses in Washington DC in the early hours of Sunday, said police. The devices exploded outside stores in the northeast of the capital within 15 minutes of each other but the businesses were closed at the time of the incident and no one was injured. Police said that the perpetrators appeared to have targeted commercial establishments, but not members of the public. Each of the targeted businesses is at least a mile from the US Capitol building.

New era of psychedelic medicine

Australia has become the first nation to allow psychiatrists to prescribe psychedelics to patients with depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Psilocybin, the psychoactive ingredient in 'magic mushrooms', can be given to people who have hard-to-treat depression. Doses of MDMA, also known as ecstasy, can be prescribed for PTSD. CNN said that the move "ushers in a new era of psychedelic medicine".

Supreme Court blocks Biden plan

The US Supreme Court has "struck down" Joe Biden's proposal to wipe out billions in student debt. The 6-3 ruling, which affects the loans of more than 40m Americans, effectively cancels the plan, which would have forgiven about \$10,000 (£7,800) per borrower. On the same day, the justices ruled in favour of a web designer in Colorado, who refused for religious reasons to create websites to celebrate same-sex weddings. The ruling represents the latest victory for religious conservatives at the high court.

Greed, selfishness stand in the way of peace, pope tells Orthodox leaders

All wars are "utter disasters" for everyone, especially families, children, the elderly, refugees, communities and creation, Pope Francis said.

"As followers of Christ, we must not grow resigned to war but work together for peace," he told a delegation of Orthodox leaders during a meeting at the Vatican on 30th June.

"At the same time, (peace) remains a gift that requires acceptance by men and women, particularly believers, who are called to share in God's work of peacemaking," he said.

The delegation representing the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was in Rome for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. Metropolitan Job of Pisidia, the Orthodox co-president of the joint international commission for Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue, led the delegation, which met with officials at the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity on 29th June and the pope on 30th June.

Pope Francis highlighted the Catholic and Orthodox shared con-



Orthodox Metropolitan Job of Pisidia, representing the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, met Pope Francis at the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media).

cern for peace, "especially in war-torn Ukraine."

"It is a war that closely affects us; it demonstrates how all wars are in fact disasters, utter disasters: for peoples and families, for children and the elderly, for people forced to leave their country, for cities and villages, and for creation," the pope wrote.

Peace must rise from the human heart, he added. "The remedy is the conversion of hearts, renewing them with the love of the Father," he wrote. It is "a gracious and universal love that is not confined to our own group."

The lives of believers in Christ must proclaim "the newness of this love," he wrote, otherwise "how can we bear witness to Jesus before the world?"

Pope Francis also wrote about the gift of full Christian unity that is to be sought: "For communion between believers is not a matter of concessions and compromises, but of fraternal charity between brothers who acknowledge that they are beloved children of the Father and, filled with the Spirit of Christ, are capable of setting their diversity within a larger context."

The latest plenary session of the joint commission for theological dialogue, held in Alexandria, Egypt, engaged in "a joint reading of the way in which the relationship between synodality and primacy developed in East and West during the second millennium," the pope wrote.

Today, he wrote, "we are called to seek together a modality of exercising the primacy that, within the context of synodality, is at the service of the church's communion on the universal level."

In naming new prefect, pope asks doctrine office to promote evangelisation

Pope Francis appointed his longtime theological adviser and fellow countryman Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández of La Plata, Argentina, to lead the Vatican's doctrinal office, urging him in a public letter to expand the office's focus beyond its reputation as a watchdog pursuing possible doctrinal errors and to promote the understanding and transmission of the faith.

Archbishop Fernández, who turns 61 on 18th July, replaces Jesuit Cardinal Luis Ladaria, 79, according to the Vatican. In an open letter to the archbishop, the pope asked him to lead the dicastery toward promoting theology that is attentive to the essentials of the faith and at the service of evangelisation.

"Its central purpose is to guard the teaching that flows from the faith in order to 'to give reasons for our hope, but not as an enemy who critiques and condemns.'" The pope wrote that "the dicastery which you will preside over in other times came to use immoral methods. Those were times when, rather than promoting theological knowledge, possible doctrinal errors were pursued. What I expect from you is certainly something very different."

Given that the specific section for disciplinary matters is staffed "with very competent professionals, I ask you as prefect to dedicate your personal commitment in the most direct way to the



Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

principal aim of the dicastery which is keeping the faith," he wrote. The pope added that this task consists of "increasing the understanding and transmission" of the Catholic faith, especially before questions "posed by the progress of the sciences and the development of society."

The church, Pope Francis wrote, must "grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth."

"For differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the church to grow," he said. "This harmonious growth will preserve Christian doctrine more effectively than any control mechanism."

In a Facebook post on 1st July, Archbishop Fernández said he accepted the nomination "with much joy"-even though there would be many people against him. "There are people who prefer a more rigid, structured way of thinking at war with the world," he wrote.

He added that he would be tasked with "encouraging the reflection of the faith, deepening theology, promoting a way of thinking that knows how to dialogue with how people live" and "encouraging free, creative, deep Christian thought."

Aid to Ukrainians tops charity funded by Peter's Pence in 2022

Donations to the annual Peter's Pence collection, which supports the work of the Roman Curia and funds the pope's charitable activity, were down in 2022, but the amount the fund distributed increased significantly thanks to the proceeds of property sales, the Vatican said.

Overall, "in 2022 Peter's Pence income amounted to 107 million euros (\$116 million)," the Vatican said. And the fund spent 95.5 million euros (\$103.5 million) to support the work of the offices of the Holy See and the apostolic nunciatures around the world and to fund emergency aid to Ukraine and other countries, as well as to support the mission of local churches in need.

Dioceses, foundations, private donors and religious orders gave a total of 43.5 million euros to Peter's Pence in 2022, the report said, in comparison with 44.4 million euros in 2021.

In 2022, Peter's Pence also benefited from 63.5 million euros from "financial and other" income, the report said.

It was unclear if income came from the 2022 sale of the property in Chelsea, London, that is at the centre of a Vatican trial for financial malfeasance.

The Vatican announced in July

2022 that it had completed sale of the property for 186 million pounds.

Between 2014 and 2018, it is believed the Vatican Secretariat of

State invested 200 million euros in purchasing the building, with pay-

ments to brokers and debts collected on the property raising the total investment to 350 million euros.

The Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See had said the losses on the property were absorbed by the "reserves" of the Vatican Secretariat of State "without touching funds from the Peter's Pence collection and donations from the faithful."

However, some officials said the "reserves" are money set aside annually from the Peter's Pence collection.

As in 2021, the USA led the giving with 11 million euros. South Korea was second with 3.5 million, with Italy in third with 2.9 million.

Using the 2022 donations as well as 50.3 million euros "funded through the proceeds from real estate management," the report said, Peter's Pence spent 93.8 million euros during the year: 77.6 million euros "to support the activities promoted by the Holy See in carrying out the Holy Father's apostolic mission," which includes funding the Roman Curia; and 16.2 million euros for "projects of direct assistance to those most in need."

Over 1.5 million euros was spent supporting Ukrainians impacted by Russia's war.



Pope Francis blesses an ambulance to donate to the Ukrainian city of Lviv, in March 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Be modern prophets by guiding others to the Holy Spirit, Pope tells Angelus audience

Christians are called to be modern-day prophets who guide others to see the Holy Spirit at work in everyday life, and not to be superstitious people who try to predict or control the future, Pope Francis said.

"A Christian does not believe in superstitions like magic, cards, horoscopes or similar things," he told some 15,000 visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square on 2nd July to pray the Angelus. He admonished those who do so, saying, "many Christians go to have their hands read." Prophets are not limited to the biblical figures who anticipated Jesus' coming, since "Jesus himself talks about the need to welcome prophets," the pope said. He added that "a prophet is he who, by virtue of baptism, helps others read the present under the action of the Holy Spirit."

The pope said a prophet is someone who "shows Jesus to others, who witnesses him, who helps live today and build tomorrow according to his design." He encouraged Christians to reflect on how they live out their baptismal calling to be prophets in their daily lives, and to ask themselves:

"How is my witness going? How is my prophesy?"

Particularly in decision-making, the pope said it is important to recognise each person's prophetic gifts and to engage in listening and dialogue before reaching a conclusion.

"Let us think about how many conflicts could be avoided and resolved in this way, listening to others with a sincere desire to understand one another," he said. "Because each one of us has something to learn from others."



Pope Francis greets visitors in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican after praying the Angelus on 2nd July 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

IN BRIEF

Banks warned on free speech

Banks will be told by the government that they must protect free speech as controversy grows over alleged blacklisting of customers who hold contentious views. Jeremy Hunt is thought to be “deeply concerned” that lenders are closing down accounts because they disagree with customers’ opinions, said The Telegraph. Prominent political figure and British broadcaster Nigel Farage recently claimed his account had been closed by his bank due to “serious political persecution”, while a vicar claimed he was dropped as a customer after criticising his building society’s position on LGBTQ+ issues. However, the lender questioned his claim.

Afghans SAS killing claims

Eighty Afghans may have been victim of summary killings by British SAS units, said lawyers representing grieving relatives. One elite soldier is believed to have “personally killed” 35 Afghans on a six-month tour of duty as part of an alleged policy to terminate “all fighting-age males” in homes raided, “regardless of the threat they posed”. The claims are made in document submitted by lawyers to a new public inquiry into allegations of war crimes committed by SAS soldiers in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defence has called for the details to be heard in secret but that request is being challenged by media organisations including The Guardian, the BBC, the Times and the Daily Mail.

Clarkson column ‘was sexist’

A column by, former Top Gear presenter, Jeremy Clarkson, in which he wrote about the Duchess of Sussex being paraded naked in the street, was sexist, the press regulator has ruled. A record 25,000 people complained to Ipsos, the Independent Press Standards Organisation, about the article, which was published in The Sun. The passage was “humiliating and degrading towards the duchess”, Ipsos chairman Lord Faulks said. Mr. Clarkson has previously said he “really is sorry” for what he said in the controversial column - all the way “from the balls of my feet to the follicles on my head” for the article.

Supreme Court rejects Biden student loan forgiveness for millions of Americans



A sign calling for student loan debt relief is seen in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington. The Supreme Court rejected President Joe Biden’s \$400 billion plan to cancel or significantly reduce student loan debts. (OSV News photo/Nathan Howard, Reuters)

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected President Joe Biden’s \$400 billion plan to cancel or significantly reduce student loan debts for millions of Americans at the end of June.

The Biden administration’s student debt forgiveness programme would have cancelled \$10,000 (almost £8,000) in such debts for individuals making less than \$125,000 (£100,000) or households making less than \$250,000 (almost £200,000). Pell Grant recipients

would have been granted an additional \$10,000 in debt forgiven.

The Biden administration had argued the plan was lawful under a 2003 law called the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act, or HEROES Act, which permits the government to provide some relief to recipients of student loans in a “national emergency,” to ensure borrowers are not left in financial difficulty as a result of such an emergency.

But Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for a 6-3 majority, rejected that argument, arguing that the court’s precedent “requires that Congress speak clearly before a department secretary can unilaterally alter large sections of the American economy,” arguing the Biden administration overstepped its authority.

Rep. Michelle Fischbach, R-Minn., who is Catholic, wrote on Twitter that “today the Supreme Court ruled that Biden’s student

loan ‘forgiveness’ scheme is unconstitutional,” adding that her party has “been saying for months that this plan was an abuse of authority (and) a slap in the face to everyone who took on extra jobs to pay for school or chose not to attend.”

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., also a Catholic, argued the ruling “hurts the tens of millions of Americans who are plagued by student loan debt in pursuit of a quality education, particularly low- and middle-income borrowers and communities of colour.”

“I’m sorely disappointed that this Supreme Court coldly severed this lifeline that the Biden Administration rightfully and lawfully had offered hard-working Americans,” Durbin wrote on Twitter.

The Catholic Church has typically framed the issue of debt within its social teaching on the dignity of the human person. St. John Paul II, in his 1991 encyclical “Centesimus Annus”, taught that debt repayment in principle is just, but it cannot be “paid at the price of unbearable sacrifices.”

“In such cases it is necessary to find-as in fact is partly happening-ways to lighten, defer or even cancel the debt, compatible with the fundamental right of peoples to subsistence and progress,” he said.

After a more than three-year, COVID-era pause, borrowers will have to resume payments on their federal student loan bills later this year.

Pope’s ambassador: Staying in Ukraine during war a ‘big, big grace’ amid frustrations

As Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine hit the 493-day mark on 30th June, Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas, papal nuncio to Ukraine, said that remaining in Ukraine over the past several months has been a “big, big grace” amid difficulties, fears, frustrations and heartaches.

Challenges have included fearing for his life and frustration in trying to aid those in Russian-occupied territories, as well as “a lack of unity” among churches in condemning Russia’s aggression. A Lithuanian national, Archbishop Kulbokas knows firsthand what life is like under the former Soviet Union, and stresses that the consequences of Russia’s attacks are “much, much deeper” today. Ukrainians “suffering is a part of our prayer,” he said. “(They) just want to live with their families. They know that their country has problems, but most of

all, they want to live and organize their own country.”

Speaking further about the Russian war against Ukraine, Archbishop Kulbokas spoke from his own experience.

“I myself was born when Lithuania was still in the Soviet Union, so I have this experience,” he said.

“I was 13 or 14 when, as I imagine Russians are now, I was believing what the Soviet government was saying-that we were the best country in the world, we were the only ones wanting peace and all the world was trying to destroy the Soviet Union. We believed it because the propaganda was so strong.”

“My mother told me what her experience was in former times, before the Soviet Union came, so this has helped me to understand the consequences of such a world.”

Archbishop Kulbokas also spoke

of ‘frustration’ as he tried to respond to, and address, the devastating consequences of the war.

“We have a lot of frustration because humanitarian corridors were impossible to organise in order to evacuate people or bring them food and water. We didn’t manage to receive permission from the Russian military authorities. Jesus says in the Gospel to give food, give water, visit prisoners, give clothes to the ones who have nothing, but we are unable to do this (due to Russia’s actions). It’s a big tragedy,” he said.

“It’s not only politics; it’s a kind of aggression which damages all lives, not only some. And now, the consequences are much, much larger... so it’s much easier to understand what Ukrainians are fearing (from Russia).”



Archbishop Visvaldas Kulbokas, papal nuncio to Ukraine (OSV News/Gina Christian)

Maryknoll programme gives Cambodia's deaf people sign chance for future

Meinrad Scherer-Emunds

Sambath timidly hid behind his parents, not looking anyone in the eye. Slouching in his chair, he tried to make himself as small as possible while his parents met with staff of the Deaf Development Program (DDP) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The youth, then 17, had very little education. He had briefly attended a government school where, as the only deaf student, he was bullied. He soon stopped going to school, but his parents wanted more for Sambath. They inquired about the programme at the DDP office. There, Sambath saw a staffer moving her hands to communicate in Cambodian sign language.

"When he saw us signing, he gave us his full attention by sitting up in his chair, raising his eyes and giving us direct eye contact," said Maryknoll Lay Missioner Julie Lawler, a deaf education teacher from Austin, Texas, who has worked at DDP for the past three and a half years. Sambath started school at DDP the next day.



In Koh Kong, Cambodia, Maryknoll Lay Missioner Julie Lawler leads a team building activity for a Deaf Development Programme youth camp.
(OSV News photo/Sopor Lay, DDP Cambodia)

The Maryknoll Deaf Development Program helps Cambodia's deaf people come into their own through sign language and job training. "Most of our students have never been to school a day in their life," said Father Charlie Dittmeier, co-director of DDP.

Father Dittmeier estimates there are about 61,000 profoundly deaf people

and 600,000 hard of hearing people in Cambodia.

"The first step is giving them a feeling of belonging," Julie Lawler said.

Lawler has a master's degree in deaf education from Gallaudet University in Washington. She taught at the Texas School for the Deaf in Austin, Texas, for 11 years. But "a desire for change and a push from God" led her to join the Maryknoll Lay Missioners in 2019.

"When somebody like her, with her academic background and years of deaf education experience, comes and brings best practices and new techniques and classroom pedagogy and games that deaf children love to play, that is so valuable," Father Dittmeier said of Lawler.

For Sambath, DDP opened up the world. "You could really see the transformation," Lawler said.

"He was no longer lonely, isolated and scared. It was wonderful to see the smile on his face and watch him laugh with his friends."

Today Sambath is eagerly learning how to run a barber shop.

"After a year of training at DDP, in 2023, I plan on going back home to Kandal Province and setting up a barber shop," Sambath said.

Our Lady of Akita's 1973 message to Japanese nun resonates today, experts say

On 6th July 1973, light surrounded a wooden statue of Our Lady of All Nations at a convent in Akita, Japan, and the statue spoke to a novice, asking her to pray for the reparation of the sins of humanity and to be obedient to her superior.

When the statue ceased speaking, it had a bleeding wound in its hand. The novice, Sister Agnes Sasagawa, would hear the statue of Mary talk two other times that year. In the meantime, Sister Agnes would encounter visions of her guardian angel and experience the stigmata, the wounds of Jesus Christ, as a wound in her left hand.

She, the sisters of the Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and hundreds of visitors would also witness the three-foot-tall statue perspiring as well as shedding tears, a phenomenon that continued sporadically, 101 times total, until 1981.

With the 50th anniversary of the miraculous events from Mary now known as "Our Lady of Akita," her messages to Sister Agnes continue to resonate, said Mark Miravalle, a theology professor who holds the St. John Paul II Chair of Mariology at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio.

Like Mary's messages with other



OSV News photo/SICDAMNOME, via Wikipedia CC BY-SA 4.0

apparitions, they compel Catholics to an examination of conscience to "see if we can be more generous" in prayer, especially the rosary, offering sacrifices for the reparation of sins and returning to the Eucharist, he said. "That's the message, and that is as timely now as ever."



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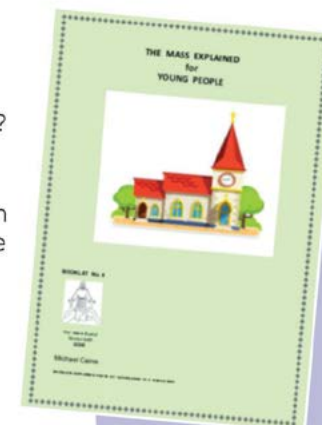
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Bishop: Suffering from Ethiopian war 'beyond human imagination'

Stopping food aid in Ethiopia from the United States and United Nations caused severe hunger that has killed hundreds of people in the northern Tigray region in recent weeks, and one local bishop said the situation is "beyond human imagination."

Bishop Tesfasselassie Medhin of Adigrat stressed that the two-year war forced many to depend solely on humanitarian assistance. Thousands have been displaced into tented camps and schools and constantly cry for peace, he said. Most of them lost everything in the two-year war.

"We are dying to live in peace," Bishop Medhin said. "For the last three years, the situation in Tigray has been something difficult to explain. Words cannot express the situation."

Tigray, a semi-autonomous state in northern Ethiopia, slid into war in November 2020, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali accused Tigray People's Liberation Front, the rulers of the region, of over-running a national army based in Tigray's capital, Mekelle. A peace treaty ended the fighting in November 2022.

The bishop estimates that the war killed at least 1 million people and forced 5 to 6 million people to depend on relief aid. Hundreds also were forced to become refugees.

"The war has been planned ... to crush the population within the shortest time possible," Bishop Medhin said.

During the war, priests were pulled from altars, orphans raped, convents violated and churches crushed, according to the bishop. Human rights groups have



People who fled their homes due to fighting in Berhale, Ethiopia, wait for food near a makeshift compound in Afdera district (OSV News photo/Tiksa Negeri, Reuters)

documented rape and other forms of sexual violence. Massacres of entire populations also have been documented.

Now, the prelate warns that halting humanitarian aid by the world's biggest relief agencies is resulting in even more deaths. Bishop Medhin's warning follows a recent suspension of aid to Ethiopia by the U.N.'s World Food Program and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The agencies had alleged widespread theft of lifesaving aid.

According to The Associated Press, in mid-March, U.S. aid officials found enough food aid for 134,000 people for sale in a local market in Tigray's town of Shire.

An internal memo by a group of foreign donors, as reported by The Guardian, said that Ethiopian government officials are involved in the alleged theft.

"Extensive monitoring indicates this diversion of donor-funded food assistance is a coordinated and criminal scheme, which has prevented life-saving food

assistance from reaching the most vulnerable," the document said. "The scheme appears to be orchestrated by (entities of the) federal and regional government of Ethiopia."

USAID called the theft of food 'unconscionable,' AP said, adding that it is 'horrified by the ongoing suffering experienced by the people of Ethiopia.'

After suspension of the aid, WFP's executive director, Cindy McCain, said: "Food diversion is absolutely unacceptable and we

welcome the Government of Ethiopia's commitment to investigate and hold accountable those responsible."

Bishop Medhin called for investigations and improvement of the distribution system to allow greater transparency and oversight. "I...beg them not pronounce a death sentence upon those trying to survive in the wake of the terrible armed conflict," he said.

At the same time, the bishop said that Eritrean army and Amhara regional troops were still forcefully occupying one-third of the region, making access to the people extremely difficult.



For the last three years, the situation in Tigray has been something difficult to explain. Words cannot express the situation.

The occupation contradicts the peace treaty, which agreed on the withdrawal of foreign and regional forces from the region. It is also blocking the church's pastoral work, the bishop said, adding that he has 'not seen the face of my priests and parishioners for three years.'

Bishop Medhin explained that due to war, 2.3 million children and youths had missed out on education. At the same time, he remains hopeful that Tigray will "rise again and rebuild."

Religious leaders call for dialogue and peace as violent riots consume France



The leaders of the Conference of Religious Leaders in France, representing Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant and Buddhist communities, have issued a joint statement appealing for peace, harmony and fraternity amid violent protests that have engulfed the country.

The unrest broke out on 27th June

after Nahel M., a 17-year-old of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was shot by police during a traffic stop in Nanterre, a Paris suburb. Police violence and racism has been alleged as playing a role in Nahel's killing.

"We share the pain of Nahel's family and pray for them, especially for his mother. We hear the

suffering and anger being expressed," religious leaders wrote in their appeal. "We encourage our leaders and the Nation's elected representatives to work together, with responsibility, to bring back justice and peace," they said. The leaders affirmed in their appeal "with one voice that violence is never the right path," adding a prayer for 'all believers' to be 'servants of peace and the common good.'

President Emmanuel Macron postponed a planned state visit to Germany, and warned against unrest further spreading across France, calling for calm in a situation fraught with racial and religious tension.

Info Chrétienne reported the congregation and pastor of the Philadelphia Evangelical Protestant Church in Marseille on 28th June "discovered their place of worship had been ransacked."

The prayer hall was destroyed, doors and windows smashed and walls were sprayed with provocative messages as "The last prophet is Mohamed" and "Jesus is not God."

Rumours also spread on Twitter that in Saint-Etienne, Father Francis Pelle, 80, was seriously beaten, stripped and left unconscious. However, his diocese clarified Father Pelle was the victim of a robbery in which his money and phone were stolen; but he was not attacked for being a priest or

within the context of the riots.

On 1st July, French bishops published a prayer for peace on their website calling for "the return of calm and peace to our country."

The bishops also prayed for Nahel. They prayed: "We entrust Nahel to you and pray for his loved ones. May the Spirit of light and peace sustain them."

The bishops prayed for law enforcement and the government "under great pressure and sometimes under attack."

The prayer ended: "We beg you again: that even beyond the current explosions, our society will be able to identify the sources of violence with lucidity, and find the means to overcome them."

Picture caption: A person stands near a burning vehicle on 1st July 2023, as unrest continues following the killing of a 17-year-old teenager in Nanterre, France. (REUTERS/Yves Herman)

Icon Writing: My journey from Syria to Byzantium



Possible depiction of Jesus
Tile from Dura-Europos excavations (Yale University Art Gallery)#

Schaher Rhomaei shares how he began to explore the extraordinary art of 'icon writing' -and how icons can be a 'visual Gospel' to inspire a deeper and more profound faith.

My first memory of icons takes me back to my tender years at St John the Baptist Church; a small Byzantine Greek Melkite church in Ma'arouneh, which means 'small cave' in Aramaic. This mountainous suburb of Damascus is a place of natural biblical and spiritual beauty. It was Elijah's last abode before ascending into Heaven.

From this place and time, I began a journey of reflected prayer through the beauty of icons: an encounter with the Divine. One icon that stands out for me in particular was a wooden panel depicting Our Lady tenderly holding her Son on her lap. Somehow, the aura of mystery surrounding this icon created a sacred space for contemplating the striking image of the humble Mother and the Saviour child, which remained with me throughout my childhood.

The word 'Icon' comes from the Ancient Greek (εἰκών/ eikón) meaning 'image or resemblance.' The term was, in fact, coined by Plato, in relation to his theory of knowledge. According to the philosopher, real knowledge is to be found in the intelligible world of Ideas, which is reflected to some degree, as per a shadow, in the

physical world. Likewise, in Christian art, the word "icon" has become synonymous with the depiction of divine subjects and the sacred figures of those in the heavenly world. Icons thus not only communicate a profound and sacred significance, but also create a powerful sense of prayerfulness.

Icons Hold Deep Spiritual Meaning

In the Eastern Church generally and the Syrian Church particularly, icons are an essential pillar of the Christian faith, holding deep spiritual meaning. They serve as windows through which one can approach the Creator, not only by praying and prostrating before Him,



but also by seeking help or forgiveness. Indeed, the Eastern Church understands icons as a visual gospel, proclaiming in colours and images all that is uttered in words and written in syllables (cf. Council of Constantinople).

According to historians, Christian art originated and developed in

Syria before this ancient, original, and spiritual artform was exported to Egypt and Mesopotamia, and then to the wider world. The journey from Syria to Egypt to Byzantium gave birth to different styles of icons: 'Syrian' in Syria, 'Coptic' in Egypt and in Byzantium 'the Byzantine art.' The latter describes the process of creating icons as one of 'writing' rather than 'painting' - an iconographer is a 'writer' not a 'painter' - and we 'read' an icon rather than view or 'see' it.

At Dura-Europos near the Euphrates River in the Syrian Desert lie two living 'witnesses' to early iconography. First, there is the baptismal room of a private house that became the first home church, with murals painted in 232-56 AD, decades before Emperor Constantine recognised Christianity. Then there is a synagogue dating from the third century, with brightly painted walls depicting famous scenes from the Old Testament.

Although the artistry of Dura-Europos might seem simple in nature and battered due to age, fighting, destruction and the like, yet it is astounding in its beauty and depth. Those depictions emerged from the early Christian imagination, from a faith alive with wonder. They give us a precious insight into the emotions and

desires of those isolated faithful on their early journey. It was their way of reaching out to express their faith with confidence. Their belief and trust in Christ were represented quite differently compared to that of, for example, the Christian art of the Renaissance, where great emphasis was placed on an aesthetic and grandiose depiction.

A Contemplative Experience

My journey into icon writing began during what seemed to be an eternal lockdown. This period of transition and discernment drew me deeper into exploring this extraordinary art. Initially, as part of a reflection on art and spirituality to celebrate Eastertide, I wrote my first icon, 'Christ is the Light.' Following that and whilst celebrating Pentecost, another icon followed: 'Mary in the Cenacle.' Both were written in a style that resembled that of the early Christians: simple and expressive. The aim was to understand the mystery of Christ and His Mother's being as they reach out in love, keeping the light aflame in our hearts. I envisaged them as radiant, humble, and modestly dressed with an expression of intensity and invitation. Out of this contemplative experience, two images conceived and set in darkness emerged, of such humanity and yet of such majesty.

In the following year, I completed more icons using oil, but it was not until this year that I embarked on a new journey: that of exploring the Byzantine style using pigments and egg tempera. Drawn by the spirituality of Master *Vladislav Andrejev* at the Prosopon School of Iconology in the US, I took part in an icon writing course at the Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst, facilitated by his Andrejev's son, Nikita, who is a master in his own right. The theme of the workshop was 'Our Lady of Tenderness.' I found the whole experience a complex piece of utmost beauty and delicacy.

To save time, the wooden panels were already prepared. The first stage was applying the gold leaf onto the halos, then the initial underpaint tone, which covers the faces and other parts of the body, and the application of a dark yellow/green pigment called Sankir, thus creating the shadow areas. Here, shadows are not of a physical source as such, but rather ethereal. Similarly, the light areas in an icon indicate the divine nature and not a reflection of the sun. Stage by stage, the image builds as other layers are applied, always lighter than the one before. Patience and thoroughness are required throughout the whole process; from laying the gold leaf, getting the right measurements of pigment and egg tempera, to the right brush strokes. Each step is crucial and has its own logic, as well as consequences if not done in a methodical way. I must admit that, unlike my previous work, this experience was not merely painting, but building.

Taking A Leap Of Faith

We were fifteen people attending this course, some writing their first, second, or even seventh icon. It was my first workshop and although quite apprehensive about the process and outcome, I took a leap of faith and dived into exploring this wonderful art form, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire me as I went along. It was touching to see how some of the other experienced writers, aside from the tutor, mentored the beginners in their struggles. They gently offered advice and even helped to salvage areas that at times seemed almost like a battlefield.



My piece was no exception. I faced a mess right at the start because I applied too much clay, which is used as an adhesive for gold leaf. It was too wet and this meant that the leaf would not stick to the halos and kept peeling. My thanks go to David, a fellow participant who kindly rectified the catastrophe at once. His meticulous application of gold leaf and the right pressure did wonders and was like a sign of light and hope that helped me to go on.

In contemplating this recent experience, three profound insights surfaced for me. The first relates to how the harmony and symmetry of composition must be visible everywhere in the icon, from the poise of the figures to the flow of drapery. These carefully-drawn and harmonious straight lines come to life as flowing lines of Divine energy. Secondly, the role of luminosity in an icon is suggestive of the Holy Spirit within the subject, constantly renewing and creating life. And lastly, the words of my little cousin still echo in my head today, as she sat next to me in that very same church of St John the Baptist, and whispered with a slight giggle and pure innocence: "This is you and your mother..." Indeed, Mary's presence in icons conveys a unique sense of motherhood. She is a source of inspiration, hope, comfort, and support to those in need of her help. <https://www.schaher.com/>

For the Christian Heritage Centre's iconography course, visit <https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/iconography-course/>

REFLECTION

GRETCHEN R. CROWE

Why the rosary, why now?



It's easy for Catholics to take the rosary for granted. We tend to purchase them as souvenirs, or carry them around with us, or even wear them but we forget the immense power that they have when we actually pray them. And that's really too bad, because a devotion to the rosary can be the answer to so many struggles in our 21st-century world.

Our society today faces growing secularism and the disappearance of faith from the public square. We find ourselves confronting a world awash in the spread of evil and terrorism, war and violence. We are plagued by broken families, abounding distractions and a general lack of drive for holiness.

But the rosary can help. And we know this because Mary herself told us this 100 years ago in Fátima, Portugal, when she appeared six times to three shepherd children from May to October 1917. She told them repeatedly: "Recite the rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war." Sister Lucia dos Santos, the eldest Fatima seer whom the church just declared "venerable," emphasised

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Recite the rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war.

the message of Mary, who introduced herself to the children as "Our Lady of the Rosary," throughout her long life.

We also know the great value of the rosary because it has manifested its power time and time again in the lives of men and women of faith throughout history. This, of course, isn't because the rosary is magical; it's because it brings us to Jesus.

In today's typical lifestyle, it is easy to become distracted and overwhelmed by all of the "noise." Technology is constantly demanding our attention. We sit in front of screens and, at the same time, look at smaller screens. We are drawn in by the lure of social media alerts and use texting as a primary form of

communication. We have developed an "always on" or "always available" mentality, and noise no longer knows any boundaries. A recent Nielson report issued said that people on average, spend 11 hours a day looking at some type of screen. It's easy for us to tell ourselves we're being productive and that this abundance of "screen time" is necessary, but the reality is that all that noise is damaging to our relationship with God.

This is not just a 21st-century problem, although it has become more pronounced in recent decades. In 1973, Cardinal Albino Luciani then-archbishop of Venice who would go on to become Pope John Paul I gave a homily that identified a "crisis of prayer" in the world -- adding that part of the reason was due to the fact that "noise has invaded our existence."

If he thought that life was noisy in 1973, what would Papa Luciani think of 2017?

We also face an abundance of internal noise. We are distracted by interior barriers to prayer that often manifest themselves in the form of pride and self-

centeredness. In all of these moments of difficulty, we can turn to the rosary. The meditative quality of the devotion can help focus us and break through the external noise. At the same time, by praying this simple prayer frequently, faithfully and with humility, we can break down our internal barriers.

One of the intellectual, spiritual and even media giants of the 20th century was Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Archbishop Sheen also had a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother, and he dedicated a book to her called "The World's First Love, Mary, Mother of God."

He also spoke much about her in public. In a talk titled "The Woman I Love," Archbishop Sheen indicated how Mary and the Church were intertwined because "as we discontinue our devotion to the Blessed Mother, there is always a decline in the love of the Church." Fascinating, isn't it? The less we pray to and venerate Mary, the less we are connected to the church. It would follow, then, that the opposite also is true. The more we honour and pray to Mary, especially in her signature prayer

of the rosary, the more our love for and devotion to the church will increase.

And this is a devotion that we desperately need today. Catholics in the 21st century are experiencing a massive decline of love of the Church. The country is experiencing a massive decline of love of the Church. The country is experiencing a rise in the religiously unaffiliated, or "nones." It also is facing a large and growing gap between the moral teachings of the Church and the evolution of our secular society. Recent years have seen an increase in cultural mores and public policies at odds with Church teaching, which means that church teaching is increasingly at odds with the laws of the land. Part of the problem is widespread lack of faith formation, particularly for many adult, cradle Catholics.

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The saints and blessed of paradise remind us, as pilgrims on Earth, that prayer, above all, is our sustenance for each day so that we never lose sight of our eternal destiny,

The universal call to holiness is expressed in the Second Vatican Council's "Lumen Gentium" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) which reminds us that we are called to "be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." When wanting to achieve holiness, where else is it better to look than to those men and women who have already done so -- that is, the saints themselves. "The saints and blessed of paradise remind us, as pilgrims on Earth, that prayer, above all, is our sustenance for each day so that we never lose sight of our eternal destiny," St. John Paul said. "For many of them the rosary ... was the privileged instrument for their daily discourse with the Lord. The rosary led them to an ever more profound intimacy with Christ and with the Blessed Virgin."

How to forgive and reconcile after being hurt or hurtful



(c) Tornado07 | Dreamstime.com

Dr Joseph White

Forgiveness is a thread that runs throughout the story of our faith. In the Garden of Eden, we see the frailty of human relationships, both with God and one another. Throughout our history, we also see God's mercy and love, his desire to restore us to relationship with himself and others. In the Old Testament, God proclaims a Year of Jubilee to his people a time when all debts will be forgiven. And it's not just a one-time occurrence: God calls for this celebration to be repeated every seven years. He knows his people will need forgiveness again and again.

Forgiveness was also central to Jesus Christ's teaching. He talked and ate with people known to be sinners. He forgave the woman accused of adultery (and saved her from being stoned to death by the angry crowd). Even after all but one of his disciples abandoned him at his crucifixion, Jesus' first word as he appears to them is "peace."

In a world made imperfect by original sin, human beings make mistakes. We are created to love God and one another, but we often fall short. We act in ways that are impulsive, selfish or inconsiderate.

And our wrong choices have consequences, not only for ourselves, but also for others. Unfortunately, our human failings often hurt the ones we love the most, resulting in broken marriages, "former best friends," severed parent-child relationships, and other family members who no longer speak to one another. These situations often cause great and lasting pain to everyone involved.

When this happens, some basic steps toward reconciliation can be helpful. The following are some recommendations, both for those who have been hurt and for those experiencing the pain and loss of a strained relationship because they have been hurtful themselves.

1. Express the hurt. We can't heal what we won't feel. If we are working with our hands and get a cut, we don't simply ignore it and hope it goes away. Instead, we wash it off, put some antibacterial ointment on it, and bandage the wound. Our emotional wounds need the same care. Ignoring them can allow them to fester and grow worse over time. We need to talk about our hurt in order to heal the relationship. Some infractions may be so small that we can brush them aside and forget about them.

But anything that is important enough to remember is important enough to talk about. Otherwise, we may later be dealing with a long list of grudges instead of just one issue.

2. Practice empathy. Every person has his or her own way of looking at the world. Our perspective can affect our feelings about particular actions and the realization of how those actions affect others.

It's important that we try to imagine ourselves in the other person's shoes and determine why he or she might have acted in a hurtful way. Loved ones often don't set out to be hurtful, but rather hurtful actions arise in a particular circumstance. What made this person feel like it was okay to say or do this? If we don't know, we may need to ask.

3. Make a decision to work toward reconciliation. Deciding that you wish to work toward reconciliation is not the same as saying that things have been resolved. Rather, it is saying that you wish to repair the relationship if possible, and you don't wish to remain "cut off" from the other person.

4. Offer forgiveness. Recognise that saying "I forgive you" does not mean all is forgotten. Rather, it says you want to let go of your anger and may be willing to work toward trust again.

When we have been hurtful, we can take important steps toward reconciliation. First, we should think through the situation carefully, and try to imagine what it must have been like for the other person. We need to hear the other person out and allow ourselves to fully appreciate the consequences of our actions, even if it's painful.

Next, realise that seeking reconciliation means being vulnerable and admitting you were wrong, even if you feel the other person didn't handle it well either. Many long-standing feuds begin when one person is hurtful to another, the hurt person reacting in an angry way, and so on. Some conflicts have a way of perpetuating themselves to the point that both parties forget how they began! The solution is in each party taking responsibility for his or her own actions. Someone has to begin this process. Often this leads to a willingness on the part of the other person to examine his

or her own actions as well.

Tell the other person what you now understand about how they felt, and make a commitment to avoid being hurtful in the future. He or she needs to hear that while you might not have understood the effect your actions would have, you now know the hurt you've caused, and you don't want to cause this hurt again.

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Offer forgiveness. Recognise that saying "I forgive you" does not mean all is forgotten. Rather, it says you want to let go of your anger and may be willing to work toward trust again

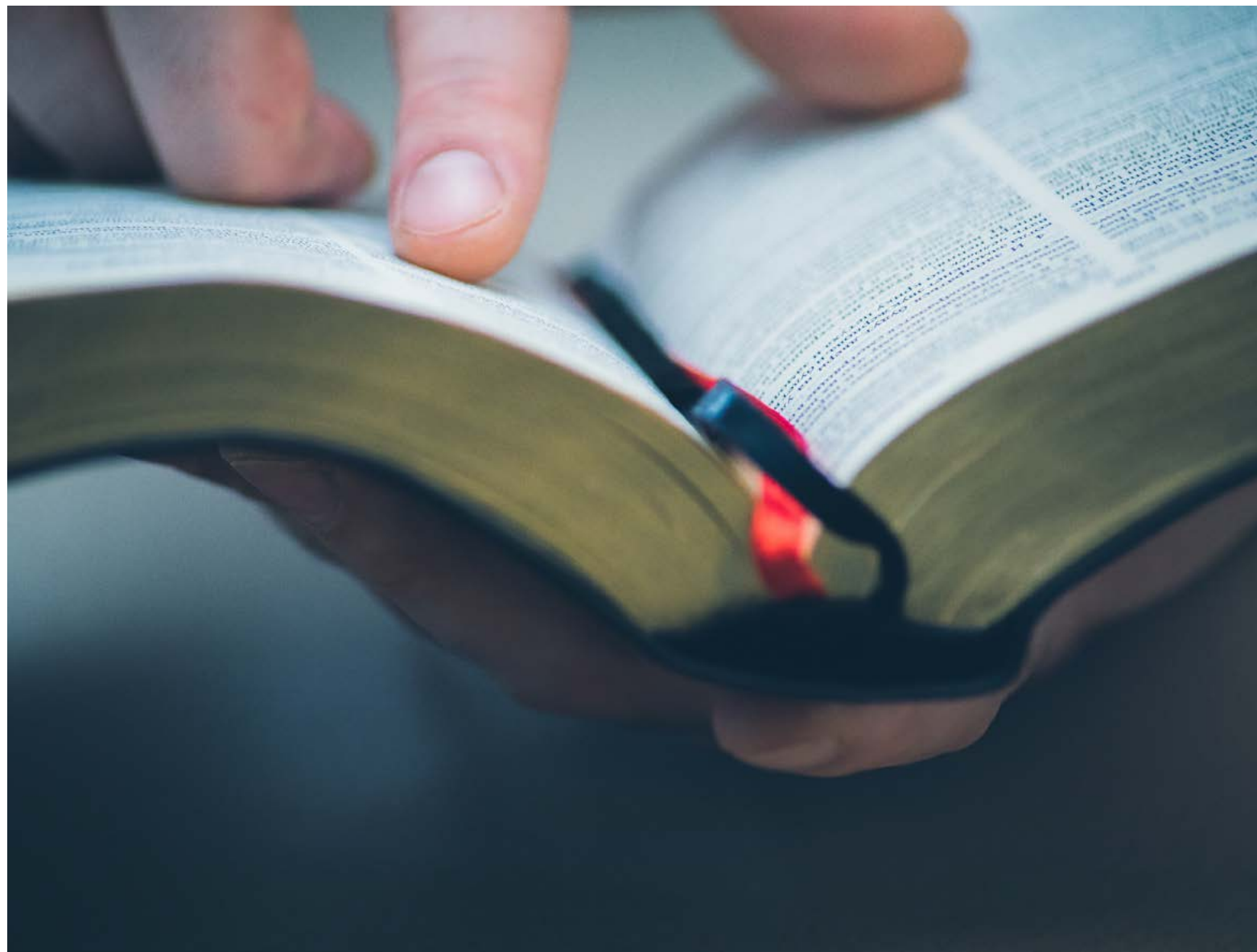
Finally, realise that forgiveness is a choice, but trust is not. While the other person may forgive you, it may take some time for trust to be re-established. Be patient with this process. At times, the person who was hurt may be reminded of what happened when similar circumstances arise. Reassure the other person at these times that you intend to follow through on your commitment.

Christ's life is the ultimate testament to the transformative power of forgiveness. He knows it is in our nature to hurt one another, and, in doing so, distance ourselves from him. He offers the sacrament of Reconciliation to pour forgiveness into our lives, endlessly sustaining us in our efforts to forgive others.

Forgiveness does not always mean trusting that particular person again, or entering into similar situations with him or her. But forgiveness does mean allowing God to help us free ourselves of the anger, resentment and sorrow that can be destructive to us if we continue to carry them. Letting go of this burden helps us enjoy our futures and approach new relationships with peace and openness.

Dr Joseph White is a clinical psychologist who writes on catechesis, ministry and other topics, and whose books include "Listening for God in Everyday Life."

Lectio divina: Making the Bible a ‘living and timely word’ in our lives



The Bible is the “word of the Lord”: an inspired library of narrative, poetry, letters and literature that God has spoken to us, to benefit our lives. So why is it that many Catholics encounter Scripture only during the readings at Sunday Mass? Pope Benedict XVI understood the challenge of making the Bible an intimate part of our daily lives, which is why he issued a personal plea to each of us to live more fully and consciously in the word of God, “so that the Bible may not be simply a word from the past, but a living and timely word.”

In his apostolic exhortation “*Verbum Domini*” (“The Word of the Lord”), Benedict emphasised three things: individual Bible reading, using Scripture in liturgy and teaching, and employing the word in the church’s expanding mission to the world.

He recognized that looking at the historical nature of salvation in what is called “historical-critical

research” is important, but he also stressed that the divine element of Scripture is essential. He reminded us that we must avoid a split between scientific exegesis and lectio divina, as well as between the literal sense and the spiritual sense, so that we may experience the word of God, living and addressed to each of us in the here and now.

The ancient practice of lectio divina (holy reading) consists of establishing a dialogue through reading of God’s word and responding to that word in prayer. As St. Augustine said, “When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.”

The process involves several movements: a person reads a passage of Scripture, meditates on the words, prays in response to God, contemplates God’s gift of a changed heart and finally arrives at some self-giving action. Origen, one of the earliest masters of lectio divina, encouraged people studying

the Bible to “search diligently and with unshakable trust in God for the meaning of the divine Scripture, which is hidden in great fullness within.”

Benedict encouraged prayerful Scripture reading for individuals, along with actions that he hoped would deepen their relationship with Jesus. Those actions include having a Bible in every home. The New American Bible is most often used during Mass in the United States, while the English Standard Version (Catholic Edition) is gaining ground in other countries such as the United Kingdom and India. The Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition or Second Catholic Edition) and New Jerusalem Bible are also widely used. Catholic Bibles from which all other Bibles have emerged contain certain books that are not in the Protestant canon, so be sure to use a Catholic edition.

Pope Benedict recommended

proclamation and action. This Spirit of Truth inspired the authors of sacred Scripture to commit the message of salvation to writing, and this same divine Spirit reveals the fullest meaning of the sacred texts to the church.

The Bible is the church’s book, and our faith recognises it as God’s own communication, rendered through the human words we need. It is written by the people of God for the people of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the church is the primary setting for the interpretation of sacred Scripture.

In “*Verbum Domini*,” Benedict encouraged the church to use the Bible unsparingly, permeating pastoral activity and catechesis with the spirit of sacred Scripture through reading. He encouraged attentive contact and application of the biblical texts, and he suggested training for catechists and pastoral ministers at institutes for biblical studies and centres of formation, where they can be prepared to understand, live and proclaim the word of God. He urged that the Bible be given a visible place of honour in churches, even outside of liturgical celebrations.

Pope Benedict also exhorted the church to recover its missionary nature, reminding us that the word engages us not only as hearers of divine revelation, but also as its heralds. He called for an increase in ecumenical study amid discussion and celebrations of the word of God. He reminded the church of Jesus’ prayer to the Father that his disciples might be one, so that the world may believe (Jn 17:21), and promoted the shared listening to Scripture in ecumenical work.

Benedict wrote: “Listening together to the word of God, engaging in biblical lectio divina, letting ourselves be struck by the inexhaustible freshness of God’s word which never grows old, overcoming our deafness to those words that do not fit our own opinions or prejudices, listening and studying within the communion of the believers in every age: all these things represent a way of coming to unity in faith as a response to hearing the word of God.”

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knowledge of biblical personages, events and sayings, including memorization of some key verses. Practicing lectio divina exposes us to many verses that can become part of our personal spiritual treasury. Some verses to commit to memory might include: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39); “Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31); and “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105).

Benedict suggested Catholics use Scripture as a source of guidance to problems, a response to our questions, a broadening of our values and the fulfillment of our aspirations. He also encouraged the whole church to realize the movements of the Holy Spirit, explaining that the same Spirit who acted in the incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and guided Christ throughout his mission, continues to sustain and guide the church in both

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

St John the Baptist

If you were on holiday on the island of Menorca on 24th June, the feast day of St John the Baptist, there would be huge fireworks displays, all to honour their patron San Juan. He captured the imagination of the people of Spain and Portugal, and South American countries that were part of their empire. There are two feast days to help us celebrate him:

24th June, celebrating his birth.
29th August, remembering his martyrdom by King Herod.

Of all the stories about St John, the one thing that always fascinated me about him is the story of his birth.

His parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah was a holy man and one day while praying in the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared to him. He told Zechariah that his wife would give birth to a boy and that they were to name him John.

Zechariah told the angel that this was not possible as both he and his wife were too old to have children. The angel told Zechariah that as he had doubted God's abilities, his punishment was that he would be dumb until the day he named the boy.

Elizabeth did have a boy and when friends and neighbours gathered to celebrate the birth, they asked what name would be given the baby. She said John. They were all amazed, because the custom at that time was to name a boy after the father or someone revered in the

family, and they knew of no one called John. They turned to the dumb Zechariah and asked him. He wrote down John and immediately he could speak.

Also involved at that time was Elizabeth's cousin Mary. She too had been told by the angel Gabriel that she was to have a child, and she was to name him Jesus. While pregnant, she visited the pregnant Elizabeth, who told her that when they met the child in her womb leapt. Both women knew that they had been blessed by God and that there was something holy and special about the boys they would have.

John turned out to be a great saint who was held in great esteem in other times and places. During his life he taught continually about the coming of a Messiah and that people should repent their sins.

The people at that time were hopeful of the coming of the Messiah and hearing a special holy man like John continually stating it must have given them real hope.

He also knew how sinful people could be, and never refrained from telling them that they should repent. This message of repentance is as relevant today as it was then, but with the sacrament of Reconciliation available to us today, we do have a great answer for it.

Whenever I hear or read stories from the Bible, I always look for God's wisdom and mercy, which we know are truly beyond our comprehension, yet I still do it. It's now a hobby of mine and a great

help. Take John's death as an example. He was around the same age as Jesus who were told was 33 years old when he died. Is there any great wisdom of God behind John's death?

Why did God allow St John to die so young and by a cruel means, especially as he'd done such a great job? We can only guess, but was this God's way of saying thank you, you've done your job and done it well. You don't have to wait any longer to live with me in the wonder of heaven for all eternity, you can have it all now. Is this why God takes some people at a very young age. It's always a sad time for those who loved the deceased, but would we really like them to come back from heaven and live a human life. I like to think we wouldn't be so selfish.

The story of John's cruel death is a great story in itself. Herod had married his dead brother's wife. This type of marriage was against the Jewish law and therefore sinful. His wife who was called Herodias already had a beautiful daughter called Salome. They plotted St. John's death because he preached often and loudly against Herod marrying Herodias. Did God make sure that St. John's death was gruesome, so that the story would be remembered, warning people about sinning.

John had done his own job faithfully, but lost faith a little while in prison. Who wouldn't in the same circumstances?

When in prison, he sent

MICHAEL CAINE
 ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



Fresco of John the Baptist in Christ Church Basilica di Sant Andrea della Valle by Domenichino, Rome.

messengers to Our Lord asking explicitly for Jesus to say if he was the one who was to come, or ought they to look for someone else? Jesus gave the answer we know, about the dumb speaking, the deaf hearing, all the signs of the coming of a Messiah fulfilled, and he gently reprimanded John saying:

"Blessed is the man who does not lose faith in me."

Soon after this John was cruelly executed. He'd lived a hermit's life in the desert before he began his mission to prepare the way of the Lord. When he saw Jesus, he was quick to say how unimportant he himself was in comparison to the one whose sandals he was not worthy to fasten.

St John's greatest claim to fame was the tribute to him by

Jesus himself.

"Of all the men born of woman, a greater than John had never been seen."

I always like to remember that priests use John's very words in the prayer he says before Holy Communion, as he raises up the Body and Blood of the Lord:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world."

Don't forget to celebrate the two feast days of St John. I have no doubt that John, along with the other holy people who were so close to Jesus during his time on earth, is now enjoying eternal happiness with God in heaven. Never hesitate to ask them to intercede with God on your behalf.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

A Critical View

Some people see art as decoration, which it can be, something to fill a space on an otherwise empty wall.

For others it is a statement of intent, a comment on some social event, a significant memory, a protest. All is explored through colour and form to tell its own peculiar story letting its voice be heard.

In the late 30s the Spanish nation was divided by civil war, a bitter struggle between the political left and right, between communist and fascist, a struggle that was to be the proving ground for the Second world war that was later to ravage Europe and beyond creating massive destruction and colossal loss of life. One small town would be remembered for its experience in late April 1937, it was called Guernica. It fell to this town, the capital of the Basque people, to

experience the first indiscriminate air raid. The raid was undertaken by Franco's allies, the elite Condor legion of the German air force. The attack did not involve a military target but hit a civilian population on Market Day. Hundreds were killed.

The Spanish painter, Pablo Picasso, responded with a huge painting in black grey and white. It is a painting full of symbolism. It was Picasso's way of expressing, through his art, the sheer horror of the aerial bombardment of a civilian community.

Another artist who responded to oppression with his skill, this time by his writing, was the Russian poet and novelist, Boris Pasternak. In the 50s he wrote DOCTOR ZHIVAGO depicting life during the post-revolutionary Civil War that gripped Russia. For this he was vilified in his

own country and had to resort to smuggling copies out of Russia in order for his story to be told. A great work of fiction telling the story of a people's suffering.

But two examples of the response of 20th Century artists responding to their circumstances with skill and fortitude. GUERNICA, following Franco's death now hangs in the Spanish capital, Madrid and DOCTOR ZHIVAGO is available in translation to a worldwide audience. Now we are facing again the use of terror against the civilian population of the Ukraine. How long

will it last? How long before we have a response from Ukrainian artists to the plight of the people? No doubt words have been written and images made that have yet to see the light of

day. We can only hope and pray that people continue to have courage to pursue the critical view.



CHRIS MCDONNELL



“He came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him.”

Gospel of John, chapter 1:11

The saddest words, perhaps in the scriptures are those words in the first chapter of St John's Gospel that Jesus “*came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him.*” How often we make the same mistake when someone offers to help us but we refuse to accept that help.

There is a story about a priest who fell suddenly ill and asked a visiting African priest to help him out by saying mass at a convent. The African priest showed up at the convent and rang the doorbell. He was dressed in casual and not in a clerical outfit. A nun quickly answered the door thinking that their priest had arrived to say Mass. She was taken aback when she saw

the African face. Without giving the priest a chance to say anything, she quickly dismissed him thinking that he came for a hand-out. “*Sorry we cannot help you,*” said the nun. “*We are having Mass now. Come back some other time.*” “*Thank you, Sister!*” said the priest. And he turned away and left. A few minutes later, phones were ringing in the rectory. It was the nuns. They said they were still waiting for the priest. You can imagine their astonishment and embarrassment when they learned that the priest came but they did not receive Him.

The nuns missed the celebration of the Eucharist, not because they were bad people but because the priest that came to them did not

live up to their expectations. The reality before them differed so much from their expectations and they did not seize the moment of their visitation. This is precisely the problem the Jews and Jesus' kinsfolk had with Jesus.

“

Sorry we cannot help you. We are having Mass now. Come back some other time. Thank you, Sister!

You see, the people expected a different kind of Messiah. They were waiting, it seems, for spectacular events and supernatural manifestations in the sky when they would literally see the Anointed one of God coming down in the clouds. So when Jesus came to them as a simple carpenter showing them the way, the truth, and the life, they could not reconcile the reality before them with the expectations in their minds.

We need to think about the ways the Lord comes into our lives. We need to be open to those who offer us help, and not to turn them away as did Jesus' own kinsfolk. The question is not whether God comes to us or not but whether we are able

to recognize Him when He comes. Let us take a second look at those persons we only know too well — or at least we think we do — those people we often take for granted. These men, women and children can be the messengers that God, in His providence, has sent to us to prepare us for eternal life. They can be the ordinary instruments that God uses to lead us to Him.

Do you ever feel that people talk too much? Many of us do for it is so much easier to talk than to act. Talking as a means of self-expression or as a way of getting things off your chest or for the purpose of learning can certainly be beneficial. But, talk for the sake of talk doesn't amount to much good. Such kind of talk is cheap. That is why Jesus says to His followers, “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 11 : 28).

Television shows feature expert communicators who can talk about hunger without ever feeding anyone or who can talk about ending war without ever using their influence to change national policies that lead to war. How people love to talk about family life, about raising children, about being religious, about peace and about the best ways for husbands and wives to get along together! Yet, all the talk in the world rarely accomplishes anything of lasting value. This is a hard-nosed message. Let's stop talking, and start doing something about our problems.

Jesus' parable about the end of time in Matthew 25 has always fascinated his followers. In that parable, He commends those who did good works like feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and condemns those who failed to do these things. There is no word of blessing for those who said they were going to act but did not, no word of forgiveness for those who did the planning or talked about the problem or studied the reasons behind the hunger of their time. The only thing that Jesus blessed

Talk is cheap



was right action. Today, our bureaucracies have study-programmes and more study-programmes, yet little is ever done. It is so much easier to talk about overcoming evil than to get out there and do something about it.

The greatest heroes in the early Church were the martyrs. These were the witnesses to the truth of Jesus by what they did. They put their lives on the line and acted out Jesus' commandment of love. They

called themselves “*people of the way.*” Christians were to live their lives as Jesus had commanded. Let others theorise as much as they wanted, they were simple people with few words and little theoretical background. They knew what Jesus expected of them and they did it as a matter of duty in their everyday lives and surroundings.

St Thomas Aquinas was, many believe, the greatest of the Catholic theologians. He wrote volumes of

the most erudite Christian thinking that the church had ever seen. He was celebrated not only as a scholar but as a poet, too, for he wrote memorable verse that is still used in the Church's liturgy today. Toward the end of his life, he is said to have pointed to all his books and remarked to an assistant: “*This is all straw, nothing but straw.*”

By this he meant that, in comparison with living out the message of the Gospel, words are

mere straw. Talk is cheap!

Christian experience is the primary language of the Gospel. That is why Jesus says: “*when you have done all you have been told to do, say: we have only done our duty*” (Gospel of Luke 17 : 10).

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



“At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”

9th July 2023 – 14th Sunday, (A)
Zechariah 9:9-10

Their king-Messiah will come humbly, riding on a donkey
Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial: Psalm 144:1-2, 8-11, 13-14

R./: I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God. I will give you glory, O God my King, I will bless your name for ever. I will bless you day after day and praise your name for ever. (R./)

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his

creatures. (R./)

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, and your friends shall repeat their blessing.

They shall speak of the glory of your reign and declare your might, O God. (R./)

The Lord is faithful in all his words and loving in all his deeds.

The Lord supports all who fall and raises all who are bowed down. (R./)

Romans 8:9-13

By the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we live the new life of grace

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to

live according to the flesh- for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

Gentle and humble in heart; his yoke is easy and his burden light

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Becoming like children

“Put your hand in the hand of the man from Galilee” was the refrain of a popular Gospel song some

years back. Putting your hand in somebody else’s is a gesture of intimacy, which is very characteristic children with their parents. To a loving father or mother a child will give its hand unquestioningly, with complete trust. Holding his or her father’s hand there is nowhere the child will not venture. It is not only willing to be led, but positively wants to be brought somewhere. Somewhere in the growing up process we outgrow our dependency on our parents, and having lost the need for their guidance, even God can become remote for us. Only those who are children at heart can fully understand what Jesus tells us about God — that God reveals Himself to “mere children.”

Growing up means ceasing to be dependent. We exchange a child’s dependence on people for an adult’s dependence on things, like money, alcohol, success and influence. But these props are notoriously fickle and the adult world is often plagued by stress and anxiety. Our props may provide temporary relief but can still leave us — as Jesus puts it — “labouring and burdened;” labouring under

illusions of grandeur and burdened with unrealistic targets. The heaviest load we have to carry is that of our own unfulfilled ambitions, the burden of our bruised egos. Only a return to humility can restore our lost innocence and our lost paradise., that honest humility that accepts our creature-status, our status as children before God. To enjoy the peace of Christ we must “put our hand in the hand of the man from Galilee”, who guides us along life’s journey and helps us to find the way home.

‘Come to me’, he says, ‘all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.’ In spite of all our problems, we trust him when he says, my yoke is easy and my burden light.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

Go to confession and receive Christ's forgiveness

Q. I have done something terrible. I committed a mortal sin and then I received the Eucharist. Am I going to be condemned? I am very worried. I am 17 years old, and I was baptised just two months ago. If I go to confession, will I be forgiven? I was afraid that my parents would question me if I did not take Communion, so I went up to receive even though I knew it was wrong.) Please help me to know what to do at this point.

A. Please be at peace. You are not going to be condemned, and you will surely be forgiven in the sacrament of penance. It strikes me that some of our best-known saints made their way back from moral wrongs to find healing and joy in God's forgiveness.

I'm thinking of St. Paul, who once persecuted those who believed in Jesus; of St. Peter, who during Christ's Passion denied that he even knew Christ; of St. Augustine, who had fathered a child out of wedlock. God can forgive anything, and he wants to. His very purpose in creating us was so that we could share eternal happiness in his presence.

Just go to confession and tell the priest of your sin and the fact that you went to holy Communion despite recognising its gravity. And congratulations on your recent baptism. Like most Catholics, I was baptised as an infant, but I often find that those who entered the church later on have a faith that is more reflective and stronger.

Q. We Catholics honour many female saints for their outstanding lives of service and virginity. Why do we never mention St. Joseph's virginity, or the virginity of some of our wonderful male saints?

A. I think the main reason is that women religious generally refer to their vow of chastity as virginity, while male religious call it celibacy. An exception does occur in the liturgical prayers marking the feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist on 27th December. There, the antiphons for the feast refer to John as a "virgin." One of them reads: "To the virgin John, Christ, dying on the cross, entrusted his virgin mother." I thought it interesting that your question singled out St. Joseph for special mention as a virgin. As I've mentioned in an earlier column, there are some biblical commentators who believe that



MARYLAND-CHURCH | Bob Roller

Joseph may have been a widower who married the Virgin Mary later in life, after already having a family with his first wife.

Q. In a recent homily, our priest brought up various forms of evil that exist in the world. Among them, he mentioned witchcraft. My father was troubled by this and told the rest of our family after Mass that "real witchcraft," like that practiced by the Wiccans, is not inherently evil since they don't believe in Satan. So I'm wondering: What is the true nature of witchcraft, and are Wiccans and similar groups just misunderstood and not harmful?

A. Among the definitions of witchcraft offered by Merriam-Webster is the following: "rituals and practices that incorporate belief in magic and that are associated especially with neopagan traditions and religions (such as Wicca)." Commonly, witchcraft involves a pact imploring evil spirits for their assistance.

Several passages in the Scriptures warn against such practices. In the Old Testament, the Book of Deuteronomy says: "Let there not be found among you anyone who ... practices divination, or is a soothsayer ... or who casts spells, consults ghosts and spirits, or seeks oracles from the dead" (18:10-11). In the New Testament, amongst other passages, the Book of

Revelation warns: "But as for ... sorcerers ... and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur" (21:8).

The church speaks to this in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. ... All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others ... are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion" (CCC 2116-2117).

It is true, as you say, that Wiccans are continually denying any connection with Satan or devil worship, but it still violates Catholic belief to invoke the aid of various deities and to practice ceremonial magic. In 2009, while visiting Angola, Pope Benedict XVI spoke critically of the practice of witchcraft. Many Africans, the pope said, "are living in fear of spirits, of malign and threatening powers. In their bewilderment, they end up even condemning street children and the elderly as alleged sorcerers."

Q. I have read countless stories of those abused sexually by priests. I was abused by a priest who also drugged me. I took my faith seriously then, and I still do. I think there should be a way to connect with victims who love the

church despite what happened. But most victims' groups I have read about seem to heal by hating the church. Do you have any advice?

A. As you indicate, many victims do bear deep anger toward the aggressor, extend that resentment to the church as a whole and carry it for the rest of their lives. I understand that. I can't even begin to imagine how it must feel to have trusted someone you considered a visible representative of God in your life-and to have had that trust so violated. It doesn't surprise me that, in the wake of this, a person could lose faith in the church (or even in God) and find that faith difficult to regain.

But there are other victims, such as yourself, who are able to make distinctions, to separate in their minds the offender from the church. They realize how far that offending priest strayed from what he was ordained to do: to image the compassion of Jesus, especially to the vulnerable. These victims still love the church; they want simply to be heard, to be healed and to be made whole-and they desire deeply to continue to be nourished by the church's services and its sacraments.

Fortunately, there are some dioceses where retreats are offered specifically for those who were sexually abused by representatives of the church. There you would find, I'm sure, others who feel the

way you do and are able to support you by sharing both their stories and their faith. Perhaps you might inquire from a safeguarding representative in your diocese whether such opportunities might be available.

Q. I took my 4-year-old grandson to Mass. Above the altar, we have a very large crucifix and I noticed that, while looking at it, the boy was visibly shaken and quite upset. How does one explain Jesus on the cross to a 4-year-old?

A. Recognising that I know precious little about child pedagogy, I will nevertheless venture an answer. First, there is no way to prevent children from seeing a crucifix and asking their elders about it. Many years ago, our seminary class was studying sign language so we could transmit the Scriptures to the hearing-impaired. I recall very little from that time, but what I do remember is that the sign for "Jesus" was to point to the centre of both palms. So ingrained in our consciousness is the suffering of Christ that his nail prints identify him. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* stipulates, in No. 308, that, on the altar of every church, or near it, there should be a cross with the figure of Christ crucified, clearly visible to the congregation.

I do take your concern as a helpful caution against display or descriptions that are overly graphic. In explaining the passion of Christ to your grandson, there is no need to highlight the nails, the scourging, the crown of thorns.

I think that I would say something like this: *Many years ago, they used to punish people who had done something very wrong by hanging them on a cross. Jesus didn't do anything wrong at all. In fact, he was the nicest and the kindest man there ever was. But other people have done many wrong things, and Jesus still loves them. So he told his father that he wanted to offer his own life to make up for those other people, so that they could one day be with him in heaven. Jesus suffered a lot that Good Friday, and he died because he loved all of us so much. But the great thing is that three days later, his father brought him back to life again. He saw his friends and his mother some more after that. He gave them new power, and taught them to share the story of his life, death and resurrection, so that all can know God's love and care for them. Now he is very happy and lives in heaven.*

That would be my approach, but you're a parent and I am not and, without a doubt, you can do better.

Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Two Streams of Experience – Religious and Mystical

My family used to spend their summer holidays in our little cottage on the Yorkshire moors just below the mighty Ingleborough, which was the nearest thing I had ever seen to a mountain. I loved to watch and listen to the moorland birds. My favourite of all was the kestrel.

Kestrels were comparatively rare in those days, at least to a townie like me, so I watched it for hours hunting in the heather. I loved the peat moorland and the majestic Ingleborough towering over our little cottage. No other landscape has affected me more deeply, perhaps because it was my first love, and there's always something special about your first love.



My First Love

One day on my beloved moors I had a strange experience as I gazed at the Windhover balancing on high. It was as if something from that landscape was reaching out to envelop me in a way that I could not put into words, so I never tried. The further the kestrel floated away on the wind the smaller it became and the more it drew me in within myself and made me ever more open and sensitive to receive the sense of Presence that raised me up above myself.

I suppose this was the first natural mystical experience that I had ever had, although I did not quite know what it was at the time – I just knew I wanted more of it. To my great disappointment, I discovered that it was even rarer than the bird that drew me out of myself. So I do not want to give the impression that my youth was strewn with natural mystical experiences, because it was not, but they did come to me frequently enough to make me wonder and pause to reflect on their meaning.

Religious Experience and Mystical Experience

As far as I can remember my early spiritual life was composed of two parallel worlds – the world of religious experience and the world of mystical experience that had developed side by side without ever meeting in any way that enabled one to make sense of the other. The world of religious experience was specifically Catholic. It was the world of Sunday Mass and weekly confession, of days of fasting and abstinence, of special feasts and holidays. It was the world of Catholic schools, of catechism to teach me my faith and show me how to live it, of apologetics to show me

how to reason around it and explain it to others; of annual retreats to set me alight in the Church with what bored me to death in the classroom.

The world of what I called my mystical experiences was not specifically Catholic at all. It was an experience that I had in common with others, other Christians of different traditions to my own, with Gnostics and Agnostics and for that matter with Atheists too. They all seemed to have access to the same experience that I had at first thought was personal to me alone, although they all interpreted it according to their own religious or non-religious convictions.

When I reflected on it, I thought it strange that I had never experienced through the practice of my Catholic faith what I had experienced on my beloved moors through my favourite music, or on those nights when I would gaze for hours at the star-studded sky, experiencing what had made me mourn for days, without knowing for what or for whom I mourned. These two streams of experience seemed to have trickled through my early life side by side without ever converging, at least not in any way that I could understand. The priests who taught us our religion never gave the slightest hint that what I experienced had anything to do with the faith that seemed so important to them. Nor did the priest who introduced us to the romantic poets ever suggest that the sense of the numinous that inspired the poets had anything to do with our spiritual lives.

Nevertheless, we were all profoundly moved and felt we could identify when the priest who taught us English read the following passage from Wordsworth's poem composed above Tintern Abbey: –

“And I have felt A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round oceans and the living air,
And the blue sky, and the mind of man...”

...Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake”.

When one of the students asked whether the poet's experience through creation was one and the same as the One whom we encountered through the sacraments of the Church, the priest became defensive, warning us that such ideas could lead to Pantheism. For my own part, I had no doubt that there was something not only good but also something sacred about them. They always seemed to leave me with a deep desire to raise my horizons high above the ground and to reach for the stars. Noble desires and ambitions inspired me to do something more worthy and more spiritually fulfilling than the ordinary and commonplace pursuits that were expected of me.

St Francis of Assisi Saw Dazzling Truth

When I raised the subject with the Franciscan priest who came to give the school retreat, he gave me an answer that I would never forget. He said that when a great saint like St Francis of Assisi was filled with the Holy Spirit, his whole being was changed, transformed from within

in such a way that he could see and understand truths so dazzling that they blind the rest of us.

What Francis saw was that the little baby born on the first Christmas day who died on the first Easter Day and who ascended into heaven on the first Ascension Day was the One in whom the whole world had been created from the beginning. When therefore we enter into him, we enter into a family that embraces the whole of creation to whom we relate as brothers and sisters.

This led St Francis to realise that, if everyone and everything had been created in the one he called Brother Jesus, then the whole world must be a friary. The Greek philosopher Plato said that the whole world was a prison and men and women merely prisoners. Shakespeare said that all the world was a stage and that men and women were merely players. A President of the United States said that all the world was a marketplace and men and women were merely buyers and sellers.

But for Francis of Assisi, all the world was a friary, and everyone and everything within it were, therefore, brothers and sisters to one another. It is not just Brother Francis and Sister Clare then, but Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wolf and Sister Lamb, Brother Fire and Sister Water, for the whole of creation is a

“

*“And I have felt A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round oceans and the living air,
And the blue sky,
and the mind of man...”*

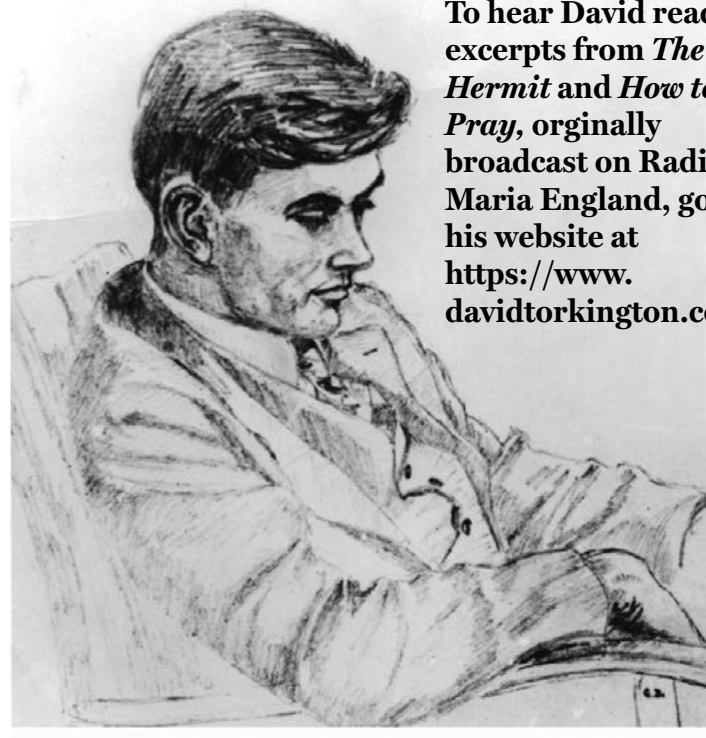
*Wordsworth
Composed above
Tintern Abbey*

brotherhood and sisterhood with a common Father in whose embrace all were created from the beginning.

That is why any man or woman who can be stilled for long enough by the beauty of creation or any part of it, can experience their creator if only for a brief unforgettable moment. For the profound truth is that he is harboured in every part of his creation, for he is the All in all.

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

David Torkington reads from The Hermit



To hear David reading excerpts from *The Hermit and How to Pray*, originally broadcast on Radio Maria England, go to his website at <https://www.davidtorkington.com>



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



'Exciting' progress for fire hit eco-build Catholic primary school

A pioneering new eco building for a Derby Catholic primary school that was destroyed by fire is taking shape.

All of the five main single storey structures of St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy's building on the school's Broadway site have been erected and the process of cladding them with cedar is well underway.

The installation of windows has begun along with the construction of the large central covered walkway which will connect the buildings. A multi-use games area is also being created.

Painters and decorators will begin work in the coming weeks and the building is scheduled to be completed in late autumn.

The biophilic design focuses on connecting those inside the building – set to be the UK's first biophilic school - with nature, with the goal of promoting physical and mental health.

As part of the unique scheme, the site will be planted with 96 new semi mature trees in late autumn.

St Mary's original building, in Broadway, was destroyed by fire in October 2020 and the school has been based at St James House in Mansfield Road, Derby, since April 2021. Work started on the new



building in February 2023.

Amanda Greaves, Executive Headteacher at St Mary's, said: "It is so exciting following the progress of our wonderful new school and we are very much looking forward to returning to our permanent home on the Broadway site. We appreciate how much moving into our new building means to our whole school community and we would like to thank everyone who has supported us on this journey."

Kevin Gritton, Chief Executive of the St Ralph Sherwin Trust, said: "It is fantastic to see work progressing well on the new school for St Mary's. We are all excited to see the finished school, which promises to be a wonderful space for staff and children."

Tilbury Douglas, a leading UK building, infrastructure, engineering and fitout company, is the main contractor for the project, which is a pilot for the Department for Education.

Tilbury Douglas's Project Manager, Neil Holland, said: "Tilbury Douglas have delivered many school projects, and there's no doubt that this school is a real precedent for quality and sustainability. Employing modern methods of construction has really aided this programme to move at pace, and we look forward to handing this project over to the school in the autumn."

Tell your story to the Universe Catholic Weekly!

Let's see your parish and school news in the Universe Catholic Weekly

Submit your stories to Andy Drozdziak

andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

And we love great photos – so send them, too!

St Thomas' school is officially outstanding

St Thomas' Catholic primary school in Tean, Staffordshire, is celebrating success in its recent Catholic School inspection.

It was judged 'Outstanding' in all three areas of the inspection framework: Catholic life and Mission, Collective Worship and Religious Education.

Principal Sarah Baxter said: "We are absolutely delighted with this result as it is truly reflective of the wonderful school community

that we are blessed with at St Thomas's.

"They commented that 'the school's mission statement is fully understood and lived out by the whole school community.'"

"Thank you to the children for being wonderful as always, the staff, governors and directors for their unwavering support and to parents/carers/grandparents for the support that you provide for both your children and St Thomas."



They commented that 'the school's mission statement is fully understood and lived out by the whole school community.'



Cardinal Nichols marks 50 years of Catholic education at St Margaret Clitheroe

On Wednesday 28th June 2023, Cardinal Vincent Nichols visited Wembley for the 50th anniversary of St Margaret Clitheroe School.

He celebrated Mass at the school, along with Fr Albert Ofere, parish Priest of English Martyrs Church, Wembley, to give thanks for 50 years of Catholic education in Wembley.

In the afternoon, the school enjoyed another celebration with parents and carers of the pupils in attendance.

The school was founded in 1973. There have been various additions and improvements since then, most notably a completely new building which was opened in 2020.

Cardinal Nichols said: "My thanks to Fr Albert Ofere, Mrs Heath and everyone at St Margaret Clitheroe Catholic primary school in Wembley for the warm welcome. It was a joy to celebrate with you the school's 50th anniversary. May the Lord bless you for all you do in service to Catholic education."

St Margaret Clitheroe is part of the All Saints Academy Trust. Its mission statement of 'We live to love, learn, respect and follow Jesus who says "Love One Another as I have loved you"' permeates all



Cardinal Nichols and Fr Albert Ofere join Headteacher Mrs Ilira Heath, along with a statue of the school's patron saint.

aspects of school life.

They add: "We value and respect all; growing and learning together as part of God's family, to be the best we can be."

"As part of the community of Catholic schools who work alongside the Catholic Church, there is a clear purpose for the existence of St. Margaret Clitheroe Catholic School.

"It is the mission of all Catholic schools that we contribute to the 'common good' of our community and society as a whole in response to the Church's teaching on social justice."

Bishop Brignall: Evangelisation characterised by encounter with living Jesus

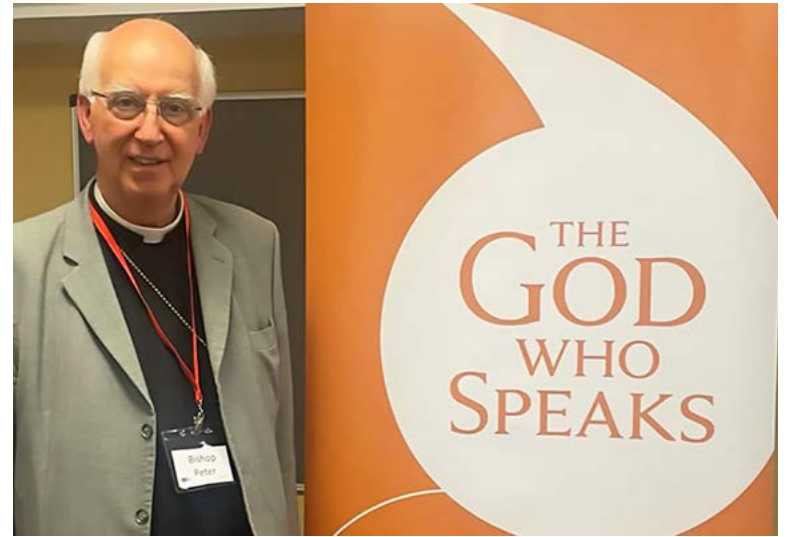
Bishop Peter Brignall, preaching in Liverpool Hope University's chapel, used a familiar Old Testament story to illustrate the key principles of evangelisation that have care and accompaniment at heart.

Bishop Brignall, who leads on the Scripture initiative 'The God Who Speaks', was in Liverpool for a three-day evangelisation conference entitled 'The Art of Accompaniment.' Giving his homily at Mass on Saturday 1st July, Bishop Brignall presented the story of Tobit, Tobias and Sarah as the plot for a film with contemporary themes – the archangel Raphael taking the lead role. He offered the story as an example of God's providential care for his people and his continual accompaniment of them through the life of this one particular family.

Bishop Brignall also used Psalms and New Testament stories, like the account of Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to demonstrate the eternal truth that the Lord accompanies us in our lives and we journey together to the Lord.

This brings us to the three-fold nub of it, said Bishop Brignall: "Evangelisation is characterised by an encounter with the living Jesus, formation in discipleship and mission in the world."

He quoted Pope Francis, from his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, asserting that, first and



foremost, one's own encounter lie at the very heart of evangelisation: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."

"That encounter entertains baptised discipleship, being called to listen with openness and generosity to God's Word, responding to the deeply personal invitation to follow after Jesus as friend and shepherd, that one might live out his commandment of love in a community committed to service and witness.

"That commitment to service and witness is the Church's mission to which equally, ordained and lay, are co-responsible in their own particular and vocational way."

Bishop Brignall concluded by returning to Tobit.

"Keep doing what is good, and evil will not come upon you. Prayer with sincerity, practising mercy and righteousness is better than wealth with injustice. It is a more honourable thing to do a work of mercy than to store up gold. Practicing mercy delivers from death, and it purges away every sin. (Tob. 12:6-9)," he said.

"Living in this way is to evangelise, as it enables the world to experience in the lives of fellow travellers the presence of God -our accompaniment in life's journey through the joy of encounter, discipleship and mission in the name and person of Jesus, Lord and Saviour."

We're no longer strangers but friends, Bishop John tells Methodists

Bishop John Sherrington attended the Methodist Conference held in Birmingham on Tuesday 27th June. He presented a greeting from Cardinal Vincent Nichols which was warmly welcomed, and was asked to lead evening prayers. In his greeting the Cardinal reassured attendees of his prayers and expressed his gratitude for the dialogue that Catholics and Methodists share in Britain: "I know that the theological discussions which form such an important part of our dialogue, alongside the opportunities for prayer together, help us to seek the unity for which Christ Our Lord prayed on the night before his passion and death."

Bishop John, former Co-Chair of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Catholic Church, spoke movingly of the opening of the eleventh dialogue in 2017 which was held in Rome. That meeting opened with an audience

granted by Pope Francis to the World Methodist Council and members of the Commission. Both Pope Francis and Bishop Ivan Abrahams, WMC General Secretary, recognised that, after fifty years, we are no longer strangers, but brothers and sisters committed to the journey of walking together towards unity. Members of the Joint Commission then descended to the tomb of St Peter through the Roman scavi (the caves and the Roman necropolis) and prayed the 'Our Father' at that holy place. Two traditions united in the prayer of Jesus at the tomb of St Peter.

In an evening 'fringe' session of the 2017 Conference, Bishop John and Rev Dr David Chapman, former Methodist Co-Chair, presented the report, entitled *God in Christ Reconciling: On the Way to Full Communion in Faith, Sacraments and Mission*. They outlined the structure and content of the report which begins with a

reflection on Luke 15:11-32, the parable of the two sons, to emphasise that, "The focus of the story is the father's overflowing love, expressed in mercy and generosity towards his sons, rather than the spendthrift behaviour of the younger son."

The document, in five chapters concluding with a Liturgy of Reconciliation for ecumenical meetings, focuses on God's reconciling work in Christ, structures of holding unity for Catholics and Methodists, rites and practices of reconciliation, the continuing work of God's reconciliation in the world, and a summary of learning and further questions. We recognise that whilst more work is needed to reflect on theological challenges of structure and sacramental practices, common prayer and witness is an imperative for all Christians.

Bishop John commented that he had listened to the way in which



(l-r): Rev Dr David Chapman, current Co-Chair of British Methodist Catholic Dialogue, Rev Leo Osborn, and Bishop John Sherrington

Methodists have a much richer understanding of rites and practices of reconciliation than he had first thought. David Chapman spoke of Methodist learning about the role of

the papacy in holding unity in the Church and recognition of the many ways in which the Pope can speak with conviction and authority on behalf of all Christians.



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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Iraqi cardinal urges global unity in Walsingham visit

Joshua Clovis

Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon and Head of the Chaldean Church, underscored the urgent need for global Christian unity and solidarity during a recent significant visit to Walsingham on Saturday 17th June, accompanied by Bishop Peter Collins and several Iraqi clergy.

His Beatitude, Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, recently undertook a significant visit to Walsingham. He was accompanied by Bishop Peter Collins, the Bishop of East Anglia, and several other Iraqi clergy, underscoring the pressing need for Christian unity and solidarity in these challenging times.

Their visit to Walsingham began with a stop at the Orthodox chapel, St Seraphim's in Walsingham. They then visited the Abbey grounds, which is the site of the original Holy House. They were given a tour of the site, accompanied by a comprehensive talk on the history of Walsingham by Fr Michael Rear.

After their tour, the group shared a meal, followed by a visit to the Slipper Chapel at the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady.

A notable moment during the visit was Cardinal Sako's in-depth interview with EWTN GB, where

he addressed the challenges faced by Christians in Iraq and called for support from Western Christian communities.

The Cardinal began by expressing the hopes and aspirations of his clergy for the future.

"All the Iraqi bishops are with me, trying to keep our people busy, and also hoping for a better future, and I am sure the future will be much better than now. What we need is the proximity of our sisters

and brothers, Christians in the West, and also this solidarity to support Christians there, and to support them morally, humanly, and spiritually, especially because in Iraq and other oriental countries the system is tribal, but Christians only have the Church, so their force is the Church."

Turning to the role of Britain in Iraq, he said: "First of all, the British have a responsibility towards Iraq, because we were a British colony for years, and also



Photo: Joshua Clovis/rcdea.org.uk



Photo: Bishop Peter Collins (left), with His Beatitude, Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako at the Abbey Grounds site.

the British were a part of the coalition to change the old regime.

"I think the duty of Britain and other Western states is to establish one standard of human rights, not a double standard. We have rights, all Iraqis, Muslims and Christians to live in freedom and dignity. This kind of conviviality cannot be done without a state of citizenship and a state of equality and justice."

He then suggested the idea of partnerships and dialogue: "Maybe there are two ways to influence political leaders, but also Church leaders. Maybe at the beginning you can invite deputies or prime ministers, or the speaker of the Parliament, to speak to them directly here in Britain, a kind of

symposium or a conference on how to develop Iraq, how to help Iraq to be a real state with its own sovereignty."

Regarding the future of his Church and Iraq, Cardinal Sako remained optimistic. "I am hopeful not only for the Church, but also for the Iraqi people. Overcoming the evil doesn't remain impossible. The good is a little bit slow, but it remains."

This visit marked a significant moment for the whole Christian community. It brings to the fore the pressing need for unity and support, echoing Cardinal Sako's call for solidarity among Christians globally, irrespective of geographical boundaries.

Sacred Heart celebrates after 'showstopping' dance performance

A Catholic Primary school in Coventry is celebrating having all the right moves after launching a city-wide dance competition and claiming second place at a major national competition.

Staff and pupils at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, part of the Romero Catholic Academy, are celebrating after the school's dance team claimed second place in the national final of the Great Big Dance Off, putting in a showstopping performance in front of a national audience.

The competition saw the best 31 primary school dance teams from across England perform at The New Theatre in Oxford, with the panel of judges ranking Sacred Heart in second place after progressing from the regional heats in March.

Sophie Newman of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School paid tribute to the 'hard work' of the students in the national



competition. "We were ecstatic to make it through to the National Finals again this year. After coming fourth at last year's finals, all of our dancers were really enthused to keep performing and training hard, and their hard work has paid off with an incredible result considering the strength of the competition," she said. Sophie

added that the students have been extremely well supported.

"Our dance team are such a dedicated and energetic group, and we had some fantastic feedback from judges and audience members. We are extremely proud of everyone who took part, and would like to thank all parents, carers and support on our journey

over the last year," she said.

The achievement came just days after the Romero Catholic Academy launched the Cov Schools Dance Off, which saw 80 youngsters take part in the first city-wide entry level dance competition for primary school pupils, with Sacred Heart claiming the top prize.

Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, which are also part of the Romero Catholic Academy, as well as St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Eastern Green Junior School and Grangehurst Primary School also took part in the event. It was held at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, with many youngsters performing on stage and competing in a dance competition for the first time.

Eastern Green Junior School claimed second place, with Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School picking up third.

Sophie Newman congratulated

all who took part, whilst sharing plans for the event to take place annually.

"Everyone who took part can be proud of their performances, with some great teamwork and enthusiasm on show throughout the evening. We are extremely proud of our Sacred Heart team who all put in magnificent performances on their way to claiming top prize and would like to congratulate everyone who took part," she said.

"It's the first year we've run this competition which we've set up especially as a local, fun opportunity for Coventry Primary school dancers to compete in an entry level competition.

"We hope to continue this as a yearly event and grow in size with even more schools and pupils to celebrate the talent and love for dance across our city's primary schools."

Care for our common home: St John Vianney eco warriors spread the word

Young campaigners at a Newcastle Catholic primary school have been promoting environmental awareness during a special eco day. All year groups at St John Vianney Primary School took part in the event which was the inspiration of the school's eco group.

"Green Day was an idea which came from the Eco Warrior meetings," explained teacher Katherine Dolphin, Eco Co-ordinator at the school.

"One of our Key Stage 1 Eco Warriors is very passionate about protecting our planet and the environment, and said that we should have special days just to dedicate to saving the planet. The whole school took part in the day,

from Nursery up to Year 6 – our Nursery Teacher even had two Green Days to ensure all the children in Nursery could take part."

"All the staff and children were encouraged to wear something green to mark that as a collective we were taking part in Green Day to help the environment," she continued. "The Eco Warriors encouraged staff not to buy new items of clothing, but instead to reuse and recycle wherever possible."

Inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, the children also participated in a range of activities based around themes of

stewardship, recycling and the environment. The nursery class took part in a litter-pick and made musical instruments from recycled material. Reception children fashioned models from recycled items, learnt about waste and litter, and enjoyed a litter-picking song.



In Year 1, the children produced 'Save the Oceans' artwork from single-use plastic, while Year 2 made mini-beast 'bug hotels' using sticks, leaves and stones, and looked at which materials can be composted and which reused.

In Year 4, the group designed products to improve the environment; in Year 5, they made lighthouses from recycled materials, as well as leading younger children in a lunch-time litter pick; and, in Year 6, they studied deforestation and the destruction of the rainforest.

"The aim of Green Day was to educate all members of the school community on ways to be more sustainable and to look after the planet," added Miss Dolphin. "As a Catholic school, we learn about being 'stewards of the Earth', and this was also central to the day. We feel it's very important to give children the opportunity to experience learning in a variety of ways. We think designating specific days of the year to celebrate different areas of the curriculum is a great way of promoting a love for those areas."

Two friends celebrate 70 years of priesthood

A special double celebration took place in the diocese of Plymouth in June: two priest friends – Fr Denis Collin and Fr Paddy Kilgarriff – celebrated their platinum jubilees of priesthood.

Both came to the diocese from Ireland in the early 1950s. Canon Denis Collin, born in Sligo in 1929, was ordained for the diocese of Plymouth on 14th June 1953 by Bishop Grimshaw (later Archbishop of Birmingham).

Father Patrick Kilgarriff, born on 12th October 1927 in Ballaghadereen, County Roscommon, Ireland, was ordained in Dublin on 21st June 1953.

A friendship spanning over 70 years was marked during their platinum jubilee celebrations. Fr Denis joined Fr Paddy on the altar in Sidmouth. Both men continue to be valued and treasured members of their parishes of Poole and Sidmouth, and throughout the diocese.

As Vocations Director, Fr Denis' pastoral care extended to priests who left ministry. Formerly a marathon runner, he still concelebrates Mass and shares wisdom and experience at Deanery meetings. An accomplished



preacher, Fr Paddy makes people feel welcomed and his pastoral gifts are legendary.

Both are committed to ecumenism. The Anglican rector described Fr Paddy as the longest serving minister of religion in the town, widely respected and appreciated.

At their respective celebrations, Canon Paul Cummins, Plymouth Diocesan Administrator, presented both with Papal Blessings, to which they were visibly delighted. The homilies preached also reflected the genuine gratitude felt by many across the diocese of Plymouth, both laity and clergy, for their loving service.

Congratulations, Fr Paddy and Fr Denis.

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The Universe Catholic Weekly's guide to the more leisurely side of life

GARDENING

Four dangers lurking in your garden – and how to protect yourself

Many people see gardening as a relaxing pastime – an easy going way to spend hours outdoors when the weather's nice. But as a consultant in emergency medicine, I deal with all manner of medical emergencies and injuries arising from what may appear to be a harmless hobby.

Over the years, I have seen hand wounds from cutting implements and foot wounds from lawn mowers and garden forks. In recent weeks, I have seen falls from ladders, head wounds from falls on concrete – and, sadly, confirmed the death of a person in their later years whose enthusiastic shovelling proved too much.

Even in times past, the garden could be quite the health hazard. One of the first patients to be treated with penicillin was a police officer who had apparently contracted sepsis after a scratch from a rose thorn. In those days, the most minor of wounds could have the deadliest of consequences – and it turns out this can still happen, with a UK woman recently dying from sepsis after scratching her hand while gardening.

But these aren't the only dangers lurking in your garden. Here are just a few things to look out for before you next head out to tend your plants:

1. Tetanus

Tetanus is a particularly nasty disease. The muscles go into spasm due to the effects of the toxin from the bacteria, *Clostridium tetani*. The suffering is almost indescribable, causing painful muscle spasms and a locked jaw.

Many associate tetanus with objects such as rusty nails. But this surprisingly common organism is also found in the soil, particularly if manured, because *clostridia* are found in the gut. Roses like soil with



The soil you use for your roses may contain something sinister.

manure, so this could turn these beloved flowers deadly if you get cut by contaminated thorns or if the soil gets into a cut.

Luckily, I have yet to see any cases in the emergency room because the UK immunises against tetanus. And I never want to see a case, because of how nasty it is. The case fatality rate can exceed 50 per cent in people who aren't immunised. This is why it's important to check that your tetanus jab is up to date.

2. Bacteria and fungi

Lurking in a humble bag of compost is an ingredient many of us wouldn't expect: *Legionella*.

This bacteria can cause an infection called Legionnaires' disease which is particularly harmful for the elderly and people with a compromised immune system. It can lead to a nasty and often fatal pneumonia when inhaled. Warm, stagnant water involved in the composting process may account for its presence.

It isn't only pre-packaged compost that's hazardous. Your own compost heap is also be filled with various bacteria and fungi, which, if properly maintained, should cause you no trouble. But often the mould

Aspergillus can grow when it's hot outside. This can give rise to some nasty lung lesions and may even become more widespread in the body – especially in the elderly and immunosuppressed and can be fatal.

Mould spores can also trigger allergies in some people, a condition known as extrinsic allergic alveolitis or "farmer's lung". This condition was classically due to exposure to mouldy hay, but compost heaps can also do the same because of the presence of organisms such as *Aspergillus* and the bacteria *Actinomyces*.

3. Leptospirosis

Leptospira is a bacterium that may be found in water contaminated with rat urine. With rats often building habitats near humans, it might be best to take care near the pond or rainwater barrels when gardening.

Leptospira can cause leptospirosis, a rather unpleasant infection that causes headaches, fevers, chills, vomiting, jaundice and then later, liver failure, kidney failure and meningitis.

4. Power tools

While power tools can make

our work easier in the garden, they can also make it much easier to injure ourselves, too. Hedge trimmers may be a great way to tame trees and bushes, but they can also amputate digits and inflict wounds very efficiently. Be sure to wait until the hedge trimmer is fully turned off before clearing any branches you've removed.

Hedge trimmers and lawn mowers can also easily cut through electric cables, which can lead to electrocution. Power tools can also be disastrous if you fall while up a ladder and if you have power lines crossing your garden, then please avoid them.

Stay safe

While these hidden dangers are certainly a risk, luckily there are many simple things you can do to avoid harm from them, including:

- Cleaning and covering wounds while gardening.
- Make sure your immunisations are up to date (especially for tetanus).
- Keeping compost bags away from your face when you open them.

- Deter rats by not putting cooked food on compost heaps, covering water butts and setting up traps if you have an infestation.
- Set up ladders firmly on even ground away from power lines.
- Enjoy having wildlife but leave it alone (snakes can be just as much a danger as rats).

And one last piece of advice from me. Every year the burns unit at my hospital sees a number of people who have tried to speed up the process of lighting their barbecue or bonfire by using petrol. Not all survive. So if you are planning to cook the fruits of your labours on a barbecue in your garden, make sure you don't use inflammable liquids to get the flame started, and have a fire extinguisher on hand just in case.

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that has many health benefits. Just be sure to take sensible precautions.

Stephen Hughes
Senior Lecturer in Medicine,
Anglia Ruskin University

HEALTH

Intermittent fasting and calorie counting about equal for weight loss – new study



The traditional approach to weight loss is to count calories and try to reduce the number consumed each day. This is a time-consuming and error-prone process – often with disappointing results. Intermittent fasting – and the popular version known as time-restricted eating – could be a simpler option for people wanting to achieve a healthy weight.

But is intermittent fasting any better than calorie counting for losing weight? A new study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, aimed to provide the answer. It showed that the two methods could be equally effective – if undertaken with professional counselling.

In this year-long study, researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago recruited 90

adults with obesity, aged 18 to 65. The participants were randomly allocated to one of three groups:

- a time-restricted eating group who were required to consume all their calories each day between noon and 8pm
- a daily calorie restriction group, who were required to reduce their calorie intake by 25 per cent by closely tracking their diet
- a control group who maintained their normal dietary patterns throughout the study.

The participants lost about 5 per cent of their starting body weight on both diets in the first six months. The diets were then adjusted to help maintain this weight loss over the next

six months.

The time-restricted eating group extended their eating window to ten hours (10am to 8pm) and the daily calorie restriction group increased their calorie intake to match their requirements, which was calculated based on their weight, height, age and activity levels. The control group maintained the same eating pattern.

The researchers hypothesised that participants focusing on reducing the number of hours they ate would achieve and maintain weight loss better than participants focusing on counting calories. The effects of these two diets on body composition (muscle, fat and bone mass), waist circumference, and a range of health markers were also assessed.

The study found that restricting the time during which you can eat and restricting the number of calories were equally effective for losing weight. Participants in both groups lost about 4 per cent of their starting body weight after 12 months.

Both diets also reduced waist circumference and fat mass to a similar extent. Diet records revealed that calorie intake was reduced to a similar extent with both diets, despite the different approaches.

Neither diet showed any changes in health markers, such as glucose, insulin or cholesterol levels. One reason for this may be the use of a late time-restricted eating window (12pm to 8pm), which was considered to be more acceptable for participants.

There is evidence an early time-restricted eating window (8am to 4pm, for instance) can achieve greater weight loss and improve blood glucose regulation.

Scientists aren't certain why this is the case. However, research suggests that our metabolism is more efficient earlier in the day, aligning with our natural waking and sleeping patterns. This means that the body may be better at using nutrients consumed early in the day.

These findings support previous studies that have found similar weight loss when comparing time-restricted eating and other popular versions of intermittent fasting (such as the 5:2 diet), to daily calorie restriction.

These studies all show that calorie restriction – whether achieved by reducing the time during which people are allowed to eat or counting the number of calories eaten – is the main thing that determines weight loss.

The new study shows that time-restricted eating can lead to weight loss without explicit instruction to reduce calorie intake. Another strength of this study was the racial diversity of the participants (79 per cent were black or Hispanic), meaning these results can be applied more widely than most previous studies.

Substantial counselling

However, one important aspect of this study that makes it difficult to conclude that these interventions alone are enough to help people lose weight is the fact that

participants in both dietary intervention groups received a lot of counselling during the study.

This included healthy-eating guidance and cognitive behavioural therapy (a type of talk therapy) to reduce impulse eating. This probably helped participants reduce the urge to eat high-calorie food after completing their fasting window.

Whether this study shows that time-restricted eating and daily calorie restriction are equally effective for weight loss, or whether professional support with healthy eating helps with weight loss, is debatable.

Interestingly, a recent study found that time-restricted eating without additional support did not lead to weight loss after three months.

There were also substantial differences in weight loss between individual participants on each diet. This suggests there may be factors that allow time-restricted eating or daily calorie restriction to be more effective for some people than others.

Dieting is difficult, regardless of the method used. This new study suggests weight loss can be achieved using intermittent fasting, but some people will probably benefit more than others. Why that is, we don't currently know.

David Clayton
Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology,
Nottingham Trent University



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GARDENING

3 ways your antiperspirant can help improve your well-being



Constantly worrying whether you're sweaty or smelly is as much an emotional challenge as it is a physical one, but sweaty pits don't have to put a damper on your mood this summer. While it may seem (and feel) gross at times,

everyone sweats, and body odour often follows. So, what can we do about it?

Many women go to great lengths to hide sweat and odour, like wearing dark colours, putting panty liners or pads in their armpits, using men's

deodorant and even keeping their arms down by their sides. "For many people, excessive sweating and the fear of visible sweat stains and body odour can lead to social anxiety," said Dr. Evan Rieder, a physician who is dual board-certified in psychiatry and dermatology. "If left unaddressed it can take an emotional toll."

Psychodermatology studies the intersection between skin health and mental health and can be useful in understanding how pit problems can affect well-being. Luckily, with a little mindfulness and a reliable antiperspirant like Secret Clinical, stressing over sweat and odour will be a thing of the past.

Not all sweat is created equal

Your body makes three different types of sweat - stress, heat and activity sweat. When

you're hot or active, your body releases sweat made of salt and water to cool you down. But when you're stressed, your body releases sweat that feeds odour-causing bacteria on the skin, creating that distinctive BO smell that can make you feel self-conscious. "For many people stress sweat smells the worst," said Rieder, "so I recommend using a clinically proven antiperspirant that fights all three types of sweat and provides long-lasting odour protection."

The mind-body-sweat connection

Ever been nervous before an important presentation, started sweating and couldn't seem to stop? That's an example of the mind-body-sweat connection. "Sweating is your body's natural response to stress, heat and activity," said Rieder, "but

excessive sweating can substantially affect your quality of life and negatively impact emotional well-being." Secret Clinical deodorant fights all three types of sweat and provides 72 hours of clinically proven sweat and odour protection so you'll be covered no matter what the day brings.

Take control and keep your stress a secret

While it might be hard to eliminate all of life's stressors, knowing your personal triggers can help you mitigate stress-related sweat and odour. Remember that managing your emotional well-being can impact your physical health and help you enjoy the warmer months to the fullest.

HEALTH

Millionaire's Shortbread

Sweet, tasty and totally delicious, these rich biscuits are a real treat, perfect for a special occasion and great to share.

INGREDIENTS

Shortbread base
150g butter, softened
4 tbsp caster sugar
150g plain flour
Caramel filling
110g butter
110g light brown soft sugar
2 tbsp golden syrup
150g condensed sweetened milk
Chocolate topping
225g plain or milk chocolate, chopped


METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180 C.
2. Mix together 150g butter, caster sugar and flour until evenly crumbly. Press into a 23cm square baking tin. Bake for 20 minutes, then let cool.
3. In a saucepan, combine 110g butter, brown sugar, golden syrup and condensed sweetened milk.
4. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly and then continue to boil for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and beat with a wooden spoon for about 3 minutes.

5. Pour the mixture over the baked shortbread base. Leave to cool until the caramel sets.
6. Heat the chocolate in a microwave safe bowl, in the microwave, for one minute. Then stir and continue to heat and stir at 20 second intervals until chocolate is melted and smooth.

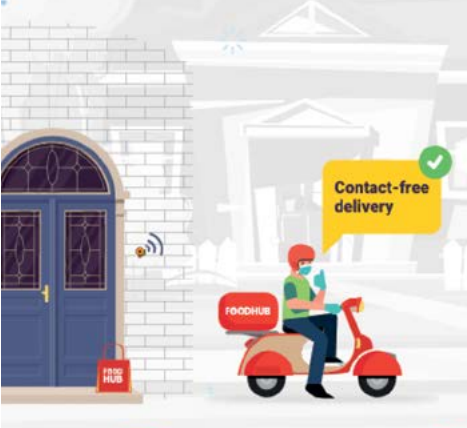
7. Pour the chocolate over the set caramel layer and spread evenly to cover completely. Chill again until the chocolate has set. Cut into 2-3cm squares.





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FILMS

'Asteroid City'-A Baffling Tour Of Post-War America

It's a play, it's a television show, it's a film: Ostensibly, at least, writer-director Wes Anderson's highly creative, characteristically quirky blend of comedy and drama "Asteroid City" (Focus) is all three. Confused yet? You will be.

Doubly framed as a Broadway production showcased on a golden-age-of-TV anthology series-the former penned by celebrated author Conrad Earl (Edward Norton), the latter introduced by a grave but unnamed host (Bryan Cranston)- the film is a mannered exploration of familiar tropes in post-war American life.

Thus viewers are shortly transported to the Southwest in 1955 and to the tiny desert town of the title. In keeping with the absurdist tone of the proceedings, the testing of atomic weapons in the distance causes periodic booms which are briefly noted but nonchalantly dismissed.

The action centres on a group of parents and children who are visiting Asteroid City for an Army-sponsored gathering of young astronomy enthusiasts. The high point of the program will be an awards ceremony, presided over by Gen. Grif Gibson (Jeffrey Wright), at which the kids will be honoured for their prowess in science.

Military-industrial complex? Check. Widespread interest in the possibilities of space exploration and the existence of life on other planets? Double check.

An ensemble cast portrays a score of characters. The most prominent of these are Jason Schwartzman's eccentrically buttoned up war photographer, Augie Steenbeck, Augie's nerdy son Woodrow (Jake Ryan), nicknamed Brainiac, and Scarlett Johanson's Marilyn Monroe-like actress, Midge Campbell.

Like Woodrow, Midge's daughter, Dinah (Grace



OSV News photo/Pop. 87 Productions, Focus Features

Edwards), is due to receive a prize-although not, presumably, as the result of much encouragement on the part of her career-focused, inattentive mother. Eventually Tom Hanks also joins the scrum in the part of Woodrow's maternal grandfather, Stanley Zak.

Recently widowed Augie bonds with Midge whose own vulnerabilities may or may not be reflected in those of the character she's preparing to portray. Thus, behind sunglasses, Midge wears makeup designed to look like a black eye, practices a scene of drug-overdose suicide and, like

Monroe, is not shy of appearing in the nude, at least briefly.

The medal presentation, once underway, is suddenly interrupted by a history-altering event. Without being too specific, it's enough to say that, in its wake, Asteroid City temporarily becomes a version of Area 51.

Filmed in the washed-out hues of a cheap mid-20th-century postcard, Anderson's cultural survey touches on a number of fundamental themes. These include the meaning (if any) of life and death as well as the nature of

love, loss and grief.

Additionally, there's an incidental treatment of religion marked by a lazy, shorthand sort of irreverence. The script seems to imply that faith is both a symptom of unthinking social conformity and a means of falsely masking unpleasant truths.

"Asteroid City" is, accordingly, inappropriate for those lacking mature discernment. Even those possessing it, however, may find Anderson's odd oeuvre baffling.

Caviezel battles child trafficking in 'Sound of Freedom'

Passion of the Christ actor Jim Caviezel tackles the 'revolting evil' of child trafficking in his latest film.

"God's children are not for sale." Such is the motto of Tim Ballard, the indefatigably determined real-life crimefighter portrayed by Jim Caviezel in the fact-based drama "Sound of Freedom" (Angel Studios).

The story of Ballard's battle against the sexual enslavement of kids-a horrifying form of depravity that's disturbingly widespread-makes for a valuable and ultimately uplifting experience. But that payoff comes at an emotional cost.

Initially, viewers are taken on a heartrending descent into an underworld of utterly vicious cruelty and exploitation via the tale of two young Honduran siblings kidnapped by a ring of

traffickers. While working as a U.S. Homeland Security agent, Ballard becomes passionately dedicated to resolving the pair's case and to bringing down their abductors.

Thus the mood lightens as Ballard first devises and then leads a clever sting operation. He's aided by Vampiro (Bill Camp), a colourful reformed gang member, and by Paul (Eduardo Verástegui), a wealthy businessman with an amateur's interest in detective work. Ballard is also consistently cheered on by his supportive wife, Katherine (Mira Sorvino).

Ballard's indefatigable determination-which not only drives him to imperil his career for altruistic reasons but subsequently to undertake a perilous rescue mission as well-is admirably heroic. And, as suggested by the quotation



OSV News photo/Angel Studios

above, director and co-writer Alejandro Monteverde's script, penned with Rod Barr, is tinged with references to faith.

Yet Ballard's bravery is inextricably linked to the revolting evil he confronts. As a result, while moving and well-crafted, "Sound of Freedom" is also undeniably challenging. Parents may nonetheless feel that the movie's educational impact will be sufficient to make it acceptable fare for older adolescents.

The film contains stylised

violence, mature themes, a couple of mild oaths and a smattering of crude and crass language.

Caviezel and Verástegui drew on their deeply held Catholic faith to overcome what the latter called "so many obstacles" that gave way to "so many miracles" in making the film.

"Every time I do a film, I pray the rosary and my prayer is that God would use us to really be whatever he needs us to be," said Caviezel. "In this particular case, it's a weapon against the

greatest evil right now we've ever seen. And when the public really wakes up and sees this, it's going to blow their minds how wicked those people (are) that do what they do with these children."

"I pray the rosary every day," said Verástegui. "That's my biggest weapon. I go to Mass every day. ... Without that, there's no way I can do what I'm doing right now."

Caviezel also prepared for filming by attending Mass and receiving the sacrament of reconciliation "to get as pure as I can in my soul," he said, admitting that researching the horrors of child sex trafficking by working with law enforcement provoked both nightmares and tears.

In addition, "fasting had to happen," said Caviezel, especially for a project that sought to expose the sexual slavery of children. "You're going to have a lot of bad demons that are not going to like that. ... Scripture says some demons can only be removed by prayer and fasting."

Caviezel said that the Holy Spirit provided inspiration for "taking and elevating" the script by Monteverde and Rod Barr into a triumphant story of good conquering evil.

Disaster, opulence, and the merciless ocean: why the Titanic disaster continues to enthral

HISTORY

Kristie Patricia Flannery

The question on many minds is why did some of the world's richest men risk death to venture to the bottom of the sea in a cold and cramped "experimental" submersible for a chance to glimpse the wreck of the Titanic?

The "unsinkable" ship that sunk on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic in 1912 after colliding with an iceberg is arguably the world's most well-known boat. The Titanic is recognisable to more of the world's population than, say, the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria (Christopher Columbus' fleet that launched the Spanish conquest of the Americas), or Captain Cook's HMS Endeavour (the tall ship that set in motion the British colonisation of Australia). The Endeavour's long-forgotten wreck was found scuttled off the coast of Rhode Island just last year.

The Titanic's maiden voyage and calamitous end was one of the biggest news stories of 1912, and has continued to fascinate us ever since. The disaster inspired songs and multiple films in the twentieth century, including James Cameron's 1997 epic romance, which long reigned as the highest-grossing film of all time. More recently, Titanic exhibitions that invite visitors to examine relics and explore the ship's recreated rooms have attracted huge crowds in New York, Seville and Hong Kong.

Opulence and immigrants

There are two reasons why we are so drawn to the Titanic, and why the super-rich are apparently willing to part with their money and even risk their lives to catch a glimpse of its broken hull.

The first is its opulence. The White Star Line that built the Titanic advertised the ship as the most luxurious ever to set sail. Wealthy passengers paid up to £870 for the privilege of occupying the Titanic's most expensive and spacious first-class cabins. To put this 110-year-old money in perspective, when the first world war broke out in 1914, infantry soldiers in the British army were paid a basic salary of around £20 per year.

Titanic movies and exhibitions are popular because audiences enjoy the voyeurism of gazing on



the ship's beautiful furnishings, the stunning clothes worn by its rich and beautiful passengers, and their elaborate meals in fancy restaurants. First-class passengers feasted on multi-course dinners with salmon, steak, and pâté de foie gras. Chefs around the globe occasionally recreate Titanic meals for curious clients.

Hundreds of poor immigrant passengers, represented by Jack (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) in Cameron's movie, were also aboard the Titanic. They lived in crowded quarters and enjoyed less thrilling meals such as boiled beef and potatoes. If their ilk were the only people on board the Titanic, the ship would arguably have faded quickly from memory.

The power of the sea

The fact the Titanic was touted as unsinkable also adds to its allure. The ship, whose name evoked its massive size, was engineered to cheat the ocean. When it departed England it symbolised man's

domination over nature. At the bottom of the Atlantic, it serves as a visceral reminder of the indomitable sea's awesome power.

The same two factors - the excess of the voyage, and its defeat by the sea - are now driving the current global interest in the Titan submersible disaster. Few world events garner so much attention, including statements from Downing Street and the White House, and live news blogs from The New York Times and the Guardian.



The Titan, like the Titanic, commands our attention because of its obscenely rich passengers, who each reportedly paid US\$250,000 (or between four and five times the average US salary) to visit the wreck of the famous ship that battled the sea and lost.

And then there is the intriguing mystery and power of the sea. News outlets are publishing helpful graphics that try to teach our terrestrial brains to comprehend just how deep the ocean is, and how far below the sea's surface the Titanic and possibly the Titan lie.

The limits of human knowledge

Last night I spied Neal Argawal's Deep Sea website circulating on social media. The site allows viewers to scroll from the sea surface to the sea floor, diving down past images of various marine animals that inhabit different oceanic depths.

At 114 metres is an orca, and 332m marks the the deepest depth a human has ever reached using

Photo: Svenbachstroem Dreamstime.com

SCUBA gear. It takes a lot of scrolling to descend to the Titanic almost 4,000m below the waves.

Besides gross income inequality, reflecting on the Titan and the Titanic invite us to confront just how little we can "see" of the sea in this age of mass surveillance. Not even the powerful US navy, assisted by the Canadian, UK and French governments, can muster the resources and technology required to locate, let alone rescue, the missing submersible.

As the sea seems to have swallowed yet another ship, we are reminded of limits of human knowledge and mastery over the ocean.

Kristie Patricia Flannery
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'By a nose' and 'going overboard': How Sport Enriches Language

FAITH IN SPORT

Fr Vlad Felzmann

Sport, a metaphor for life, has had a profound affect on our language. Many people, ever since St Paul, see life like a game, a sport. You can look up Paul's words in Hebrews 12:1, Philippians 2:16, Galatians 2:2, and 5:7 as well as 2 Timothy 4:7

So here you have a list of sport idioms which I have, over my 84 years+ on this world breathing, come across.

Across the board - as in cards = Equal for everyone.

Ahead of the pack - in say, fox hunting = To be more successful than the competition.

At this stage in the game - any sport = At this time.

Back to square one - as in board game = To start something over again, because a previous attempt failed

Ball is in somebody's court - tennis = It is up to somebody to make the next decision or step.

Blind-sided - American football = To not see something coming.

Blow the competition away - any sport = Win easily.

By a nose or short head in horse-racing. At the 1974 General Election, the Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson, won with a majority of just three seats - by a nose or short head in horse-racing parlance.
Call the shots - billiards and snooker = Make the decisions.

Champion, the winner of first prize or first place in a competition = One showing superior skill or ability. Also, of course, a person who fights or speaks for another person or in favour of a cause.

Dig in your heels - in a tug of war = Refuse to compromise or change your mind.

Down to the wire (an idiom that was first seen in print in 1880. Officials ran a wire above the finish line in order to make it easier to judge which horse's nose crossed the line first, in close races. When a race

was too close for the casual observer to call, the outcome was said to have "come down to the wire". The term quickly took on a figurative meaning and passed into everyday English.) = To the last minute; to the very end.

Foul play, unfair play - in a game or sport = Criminal or violent behaviour, in particular when resulting in another's death, resulting in another's death.

Front runner - track = One of the people who is expected to win.
Game plan - as worked out by, say the manager or coach = A strategy or plan for achieving success

Get into the full swing - tennis = Be comfortable doing something after some time.

Get off the hook - fishing = Escape, have responsibility removed.

Give something or someone a fair shake - gambling = Try for a while before giving up.

Get a head start - horse racing = Start before all others

Get a second wind - sailing = Have a burst of energy after tiring.

Get out of hand - lose grip on reins when riding a horse = Lose control of things.

Give it your best shot - hunting = Try your hardest.

Give one a run for one's money - horseracing = Try one's hardest to defeat another person.

Go overboard - sailing = To do something in a way that is excessive or extreme: to do too much of something, or say more than you need to.

Have the upper hand - cards = Have a better chance of winning or succeeding.

Hit below the belt - boxing = Do or say something that is very unfair or cruel.

Hit a snag - boating = Come up against a problem.

Hit the nail on the head - mediaeval archery when targets were pinned to trees by a nail at the centre if the bull's eye = Get something spot-on, absolutely right.

Hold all the aces - cards = Expected



AP McCoy and Jason Maguire are 'neck and neck' at Bangor On Dee Race Course before McCoy won it 'by a nose'.

to win or succeed.

Hot shot (big shot) - hunting = An important or very successful person.

Keep one's eye on the ball - any ball sport = To give something one's full attention and to not lose focus.
Jump the gun - track = Start too early, unfairly.

Keep one's head above water - swimming = Try not to fall behind in work or other duties.

Knockout (also knock-out) - in boxing: "to stun by a blow for a 10-count" = In slang, an "excellent thing or person" from 1892; a "beautiful woman" by 1953.

Learn the ropes - sailing = If you learn the ropes, you learn how to do a job properly, or how things work and how to get things done.

Let her rip - sailing = Go ahead now.

Level playing field - any field sport = Everyone has an equal chance.

Long shot - hunting = A very difficult thing to accomplish.

Neck and neck - horse racing = When two people or things are neck and neck, they are so close or similar that it's impossible to tell who's better or winning. A neck and neck race is too close to call.

Low blow - boxing: An illegal punch that hits a boxer below the waist. : an action or comment that is very hurtful and unfair.

No sweat - any sport = No problem.

Not up to par - golf = Not good enough for a job or position.

Not playing with a full deck (of cards) - cards = Not having full brain capacity.

On target - darts = Doing the right thing to succeed.

Out of someone's league - team sport = Not at a level where one is as

good as someone else at something. When, as a teenager, I played chess with my Dad, I was way out of my league. Once, just once, I just managed a draw.

Own goal - in soccer, hockey, etc - something that you do because you think it will help you but that actually hurts you. "The workers scored an own goal by demanding such high wages that no one could afford to employ them."

Off side in a position in a game (such as football or hockey) on the opponent's part of the field where you are not allowed to be = In the wrong - illegal - place. It comes from a military term for a man trapped behind enemy lines, where he is said to be "off the strength of his side". Offside rules date back to codes of football developed at English public schools in the early nineteenth century.

Par for the course - golf = An expected circumstance.

Race against time - track = There is almost no time left to accomplish something.

Raise the bar - as in high jumping or pole-vaulting = To set standards or expectations higher.

So close to the finishing line - any sport = Almost there.

Step up to the plate - baseball = Do the honourable thing, take responsibility.

Step up your game = Start performing better

Safe bet - as in horse racing = A thing very likely to happen. Skate on thin ice - skating = Do something risky.

Start the ball rolling - ball sports = Begin something.

Smooth sailing = A situation where success is achieved without

difficulties.

Take the bull by the horns - bull fighting = Accept the challenge and try your hardest.

Take the wind out of one's sails - sailing = To cause someone to lose confidence or energy.

Touch base - In baseball, players must touch each of four bases in order to score a run = To contact someone.

The ball is in your court - tennis = It's your responsibility to do something now.

To take a rain check, is a term that originated in USA baseball in the 1800s. Spectators, who paid to attend games that were postponed or cancelled because of weather, could receive a check - or voucher - to attend a future game at no extra charge = Refuse an invitation politely, or say that you would like to accept it - but at a later date.

The home stretch - horse racing = Almost the end.

Throw in the towel - boxing = Give up.

Time out - any sport = To stop doing what one is doing in order to do something else for a while. usually used with 'from.' She took time out from her career to raise her children."

Three strikes and you're out - baseball = You only get three chances. A country or an organization has a policy or law, according to which people who commit three offences are punished very severely, even if the individual offences are not very serious.

Under the table - gambling = Illegally.

Win hands down - gambling = To win by a large amount or very easily.

If you can think of any others, please let me know at vladimirfelzmann@rcdow.org.uk. Thank you.

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



NHS - The Princess of Wales attended an NHS Big Tea party in the wellbeing garden of St Thomas' Hospital in London, to mark the NHS 75th anniversary.



Former English footballer Faye White adds to a 100-metre tall by 20-metre wide message of good-luck as it is unveiled by KIND Snacks, official partners of the England Football Team, on the Heathrow flight path at Thornbury Park ahead of the Lionesses departing for Australia.



A cigar smoked by Winston Churchill, which is expected to fetch £600-800 is pictured on his statue in Westerham, Kent, before it goes up for auction later this month at Catherine Southon Auctioneers. The part smoked and chewed Romeo Y Julieta Havana brand cigar, which comes accompanied by a 1963 Christmas card from Winston and Clementine Churchill, was kept as a memento by Pc Anthony Gundry whilst on security duty at Chartwell in 1963.



Lauren Stark experiences the new Skytrek treetop high ropes course at Hangloose Adventure Bluewater in Kent, ahead of it opening to the public this week.



Full moon - The Full Buck supermoon rises over St Mary's Lighthouse in Whitley Bay on the North East coast of England.



Cabin crew member for EasyJet, Pam Clark celebrates her 73rd birthday as one of the UK's oldest cabin crew and is appointed the airline's over 45's recruitment ambassador



The King meets with royal yachtsmen during a tour of the Royal Yacht Britannia, to mark 25 years since her arrival in Edinburgh, as part of the first Holyrood Week since his coronation.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, July 9:

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zech. 9:9-10; Ps. 145: 1-2, 8-11, 13-14 r. 1; Rom. 8:9, 11-13; Mt. 11:25-30

Monday, July 10:

Weekday of Ordinary Time

Gen.28:10-22; Ps. 91:1-4,14-15; Mt.9:18-26

Tuesday, July 11:

St Benedict, Abbot, Co-patron of Europe

Prov.2:1-9; Ps. 34:2-11; Mt.19: 27-29

Wednesday, July 12:

Weekday of Ordinary Time

Gen.41:55-57,42:5-7,17-24; Ps.33:2-3,10-11,18-19; Mt.10:1-7

Thursday, July 13:

Weekday of Ordinary Time or St Henry

Gen.44:18-21,23-29,45:1-5; Ps. 105:16-21; Mt.10:7-15

Friday, July 14:

Weekday of Ordinary Time or St Camillus de Lellis, Priest

Gen.46:1-7,28-30; Ps. 37:3-4,18-19,27-28,39-40; Mt.10:16-23

Saturday, July 15:

St Bonaventure, Bishop, Doctor of the Church

Gen.49:29-33,50:15-26; Ps.105:1-4,6-7; Mt.10:24-33

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