

'robot judges'
are a bad idea
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Pact condemns 'hugely disappointing' stats in prison report

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic prison charity Pact has criticised a 'hugely disappointing' prison report which showed most male prisoners live in overcrowded and poor conditions, and there is a lack of progress with prisoner rehabilitation.

In his annual report, Chief Inspector of Prisons Charlie Taylor outlined how, despite the lifting of the final pandemic restrictions in May 2022, many prisons are failing to return to pre-pandemic regimes which support prisoners' rehabilitation.

In response, Andy Keen-Downs, Chief Executive of Pact (the Prison Advice and Care Trust), which provides support to prisoners' and their families, said: "The lack of progress in prisoner rehabilitation since the Chief Inspector of Prisons' last annual report is hugely disappointing, if unsurprising. Despite pandemic restrictions lifting, the report emphasises severe concerns across the estate regarding the time prisoners spend locked up and the lack of purposeful activity."

Other key findings in the report showed that men spent too little time out of cells in most men's prisons, many of which were overcrowded and in poor condition. Noticeably not enough key work was being done with prisoners, largely due to staff shortages which, according to Andy Keen-Downs, the Government 'urgently needs' to address.

"Concerns are compounded by staff shortages across all services - an issue to which the Government urgently needs to respond so that we can ensure safe and stable regimes for prisoners and the staff working hard to support them," he said.

"At many prisons where we work, available visiting places have been permanently reduced since restric-

tions were lifted, and the report states that some prisons now have insufficient places to meet demand 'for no clear reason.' This is very concerning and completely counterproductive in encouraging prisoners to maintain relationships with their children and families."

Another area of concern identified in the report was poor treatment of women in prison suffering from extreme mental health difficulties. Andy Keen-Downs underlined the importance of prioritising prisoners' health and wellbeing in future planning.

"For leaders, plans for progress should now involve prioritising prisoners' health and wellbeing and supporting them to build or maintain positive relationships with family and significant others, or other healthy relationships. Not only is this proven to reduce reoffending, but it also reduces self-harm and violence and ensures better outcomes for prisoners and their families," he said.

The Annual Report covers 83 inspection reports, independent reviews of progress and thematic reports published between April 2022 and the end of March 2023. Charlie Taylor echoed Andy Keen-Downs' call for prisoners to be given the help they need to move away from crime.

"Over the last year I have consistently raised concerns with governors, the prison service and ministers that prisoners who have not had sufficient opportunities to become involved with education, training or work, and have spent their sentences languishing in their cells, are more likely to reoffend when they come out," he said.

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A group of Brazilian missionaries has announced they have left their post in Nicaragua, becoming the latest community of women religious to leave the country, where some Catholics are facing increasing persecution by the government of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo. Full story page 16

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Pact condemns 'hugely disappointing' stats in prison report

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"I have become increasingly frustrated by prisons whose future plans are so vague that it is hard to see when progress is going to be made."



I have become increasingly frustrated by prisons whose future plans are so vague that it is hard to see when progress is going to be made.

The report showed that there were largely positive conditions in immigration removal centres, but serious underlying weaknesses at the Kent short-term holding facilities holding migrants. Those held in court custody received reasonably good care.

Charlie Taylor said that he hoped to 'see a significant improvement in the amount of time prisoners are spending in purposeful activity.'

Put needs of modern slavery victims first, Catholic charity urges MPs

Andy Drozdzia

Catholic charity Medaille Trust has joined opponents of the Illegal Migration Bill amid concerns about modern slavery provisions.

Former prime minister Theresa May was among 16 Conservative MPs who voted against the Government on Tuesday as concerns were shared around modern slavery provisions.

Mrs May told the Commons: "I know that ministers have said this Bill will enable more perpetrators to be stopped, but on modern slavery I genuinely believe it will do the opposite."

"It will enable more slave drivers to operate and make money out of human misery. It will consign more people to slavery."

She said: "But this Bill is not just written to stop the boats, it covers all illegal migration and its unwritten subtext is the stop certain victims' claims of modern slavery bill."

"Not stop false claims of modern slavery, but stop all claims full stop and that is where I depart from the Government. When I was Home



A group of people thought to be migrants are driven from the Border Force compound in Dover, Kent, following a small boat incident in the Channel. Gareth Fuller/PA Wire

the forefront of their thinking as they consider how to vote this week. We have always worked closely with government and with all people of good will to deliver the best possible outcomes for victims of slavery."

MPs spent more than three-and-a-half hours holding 18 votes in the Commons that saw several amendments made by the House of Lords overturned.

The Illegal Migration Bill was mauled by peers, who inflicted 20 defeats on the Government and demanded a raft of revisions.

More than 13,000 migrants have crossed the Channel to the UK so far this year. The Bill is a key part of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's bid to deter people from crossing the Channel in small boats.

Secretary, we were very clear that modern slavery should not be seen as part of the immigration issue, but what the Government has now done is taking these two together and that's one of the difficulties."

The Medaille Trust exists to provide refuge and freedom from modern slavery, and shared their reasons for opposing the Bill.

"We have consistently expressed concerns that the Illegal Migration Bill will be a disastrous misstep that will have the consequence of with-

drawing support from victims of modern slavery, leaving them vulnerable to detention or deportation," the charity said.

"Refusing to grant victims access to modern slavery support will lead to many remaining in situations of slavery and exploitation. We anticipate that it will make it harder to secure prosecutions of those people who profit from the exploitation of human beings."

"We urge politicians of all parties to put the needs of these victims at

Catholic Union welcomes Holy See Ambassador to Parliament

The Catholic Union welcomed His Majesty's Ambassador to the Holy See, Chris Trott, to Parliament on Monday 10th July.

Former Catholic Union President, Lord Brennan, welcomed the Ambassador, for his first visit to Parliament since taking up the post in September 2021.

The Ambassador visited Parliament to address the All Party Parliament Group (APPG) on the Holy

See, a cross party group of MPs and peers who take an interest in relations between the UK and the Vatican.

During the well-attended meeting, the Ambassador reflected on the international impact of the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles, which was a powerful reminder to the Holy See of the Christian origins and traditions of the United Kingdom. He fo-

cused on the areas where the UK and Holy See were able to work together including tackling sexual violence in conflict, interreligious dialogue and "inclusive citizenship" in the Middle East.

The Ambassador said: "I was very pleased to have this opportunity to meet parliamentarians from both Houses and to discuss with them the current UK relationship with the Holy See. I look forward to meeting them again on their next visit to Rome."

The Catholic Union helped to arrange the meeting, which was con-

vened by the Chair of the APPG, Alexander Stafford MP. Former FCO lawyer and Catholic Union Director, Nigel Parker, also attended the meeting in Parliament's Portcullis House, along with staff from the Bishops' Conference.

Nigel Parker said: "This was a useful meeting and parliamentarians clearly enjoyed discussing current developments in Rome and the UK's important relationship with the Holy See."

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Diocese of Westminster announces death of popular priest Fr Mark Leenane



Andy Drozdziak

The Diocese of Westminster has announced the death of popular priest Fr Mark Leenane.

A message on the diocesan website said: "With sadness we announce the news of the death this morning, 6th July, of Fr Mark James

Leenane. Fr Mark was at home, in the presbytery at Osterley, and was anointed by Fr Frans Azzopardi who was in the parish to celebrate the

morning Mass. Despite the efforts of the ambulance crew, Fr Mark was called to the Lord.

"Fr Mark was born in Dublin on 10th January 1964 and ordained at All Hallows Seminary, Dublin in December 1998.

"Condolences are extended to Fr Mark's family, friends, colleagues and parishioners of St Vincent de Paul, Osterley, where he had been Parish Priest since 2004.

"Information about funeral arrangements will be shared when known, as will an obituary in due course."

Dean of Hounslow Fr. Gerard Quinn shared his 'great sadness' at the news.

"It was with great sadness that we heard the news that after his recent illness, Fr. Mark passed away on Thursday morning. We pray for the repose of his soul," Fr. Gerard said.

"I extend my condolences to Fr Mark's family, his friends, colleagues and parishioners of St Vincent de Paul, Osterley, where he had been Parish Priest since 2004."

Fr. Gerard shared the following prayer: "Grant, we pray, O Lord, that the soul of Fr Mark, your servant and priest, whom you honoured with sacred office may exult forever

in the glorious home of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. May the soul of Fr Mark, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace."

St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Isleworth shared condolences, describing Fr. Mark as 'a good friend of the school.'

"It is with great sadness that we share with you that Fr Mark Leenane has passed away," the school said.

"Fr Mark was parish priest at St Vincent De Paul Osterley and a good friend of the school.

"He will be greatly missed by our community and we offer heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and parishioners."

The Diocese of Westminster also shared a reflection from Journal of a Soul, the autobiography of Pope St John XXIII, which included these lines: "When we die we shall change our state, that is all. And with faith in God, it is as easy and natural as going to sleep here and waking up there."

A homily by Fr Mark can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Zx-4NgnmZZpA>

Legalising assisted suicide 'bonkers', doctor tells Westminster inquiry

Pro-life groups have thrown their support behind a leader in the field of palliative care who called a proposal to legalise assisted suicide in England and Wales 'bonkers'.

Speaking at the ongoing assisted suicide inquiry in Westminster, Dr Matthew Doré, honorary secretary at the Association for Palliative Medicine (APM) of Great Britain and Ireland, said: "It is bonkers that we are talking about having an assisted dying/assisted suicide Bill that would be 100% commissioned and funded by the NHS when we leave the palliative care sector to be funded by the charitable sector."

Dr Doré also described the situation in Canada, in which assisted suicide has almost become the default for anyone struggling towards

the end of their life, as a "massive scandal".

Assisted suicide, Dr Doré continued, would suggest to many patients "that there are circumstances in which it is not worth living. He said: "My question to you is: where does suicide prevention begin and promoting suicide end?"

MPs also heard a testimony from Jonathan Ellis, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Clinical Programmes at Hospice UK, who argued that "the support that is provided to loved ones is absolutely central [to palliative care]."

Dr Daniel Frampton, SPUC's Editorial Officer, said: "Britain must not fall into the same trap of viewing suicide as a solution to the undoubted challenges of end-of-life care, and even disability and poverty. What vulnerable people need, as Dr Doré has articulated well, is appropriate care and true compassion."

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said: "These experts are absolutely right to promote the importance of palliative care over assisted suicide. Suicide is always a tragedy that should not be encouraged."



CNS photo/Kieran Doherty, Reuters



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IN BRIEF

Ofwat 'asleep at the wheel'

Ofwat was "complacent" and "asleep at the wheel" over the Thames Water affair, claimed a Tory MP. Thames Water is fighting for survival and has until early next year to avoid temporary nationalisation. "Have Ofwat been asleep at the wheel or have they just not had the powers to inquire into some of the finance structures?" asked Sir Robert Goodwill, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Chair. The regulator told the BBC that "Thames Water need to develop a robust and credible plan to turn around the business."

Rich 'should pay more for BBC'

Richer families should have to pay more for the BBC, said former chairman Richard Sharp. Speaking to the Chopper's Politics podcast in his first interview since standing down from the broadcaster, Sharp said the current system of a flat charge is "regressive" and the licence fee could be replaced by a toll on broadband bills or a household levy based on the value of the property. Labour has said it would consider means-testing the fee.

Stabbing at refugee hotel

A man has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after a double stabbing at a hotel used to house refugees from Afghanistan. According to reports, one man was knifed at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Long Ditton near Surbiton, Surrey and another man was attacked at a BMW garage next door to it. "The man was on a mad one inside the hotel," a source told the Evening Standard. "It's a hotel full of Afghan refugees." A Home Office spokesperson said it takes the "welfare and safety" of those in its care "incredibly seriously".

Calls for stricter climate sentences

Police chiefs and cabinet ministers want judges to hand down tougher sentences for Just Stop Oil protesters. They want courts to stop considering protests in isolation and to factor in the reputational damage to Britain's ability to host sporting events without disruption. Police chiefs cited the jailing in April of two Just Stop Oil protesters, pointing out that there had not been any Just Stop Oil protests on major roads since the pair were handed tough sentences.

Catholic sailor Russ completes 'epic' adventure



Andy Drozdziak

Catholic sailor Russ Fairman has completed an original 2,400 mile tour around Britain in aid of maritime charity Stella Maris.

Russ shared his vision for the trip with the Universe earlier this year, urging people to 'give a hug' to the nation and surround it in prayer. The 70 day pilgrimage began in Southampton on 29th April and stopped at over 50 ports and holy sites along the way.

These included the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, Our Lady of the taper in Wales, as well as the holy island of Lindisfarne. The unforgettable trip concluded on Sea Sunday at Gunwharf Quay, Portsmouth. Russ then met his family at Portsmouth Cathedral for an emotional reunion and a special Mass.

He described the reunion as 'a wonderful ending to this blissful 70 day adventure - thank you to all the

supporters family and friends who welcomed us home at Gunwarf Quay.' He added that it was 'very emotional for me to be reunited with my family in the Cathedral - thanking God for his protection and for the abundant blessings on me, the 60 crew members, supporters at the 28 gatherings, and the whole of Stella Maris. May our witness to the love of the Lord sow seeds in people's hearts.'

The trip was set up to mark the

100th anniversary of Stella Maris, who paid tribute to Russ' 'epic' efforts.

"For the last 2 ½ months, Russ has been sailing around the UK to celebrate 100 years of Stella Maris' service to seafarers and fishers. He has travelled over 2,400 miles, with 60 different crew members, and visited 50 ports and Holy sites. It has been heartwarming to see so many people come out to support Russ and Stella Maris at ports and area gatherings all around the country," the charity said.

"Thank you so much to Russ for undertaking this epic journey to raise awareness of our work and encourage the prayerful support of seafarers and fishers. What an incredible journey."

A highlight for Russ was spending an hour of sailing from Dundee to Stonehaven (Aberdeen), accompanied by a pod of dolphins diving alongside the boat. At each port, Russ shared his mission with groups of people gathered at the ports or in local churches and pubs.

Russ told the Universe: "Through this endeavour, we can hopefully raise further the profile of Stella Maris and the wonderful work it does in helping the people of the sea."

Archdiocese gives church to help housing crisis

The Archdiocese of Liverpool has gifted a vacant church to be used to develop affordable housing in Wigan.

Housing People, Building Communities (HPBC) has been granted planning permission to develop St Williams Church in Wigan into affordable housing for the local community.

HPBC will offer a reduction on the purchase price of properties by £10,000 by offering buyers the chance to pay the deposit through sweat equity hours by working on the development.

The former church and presbytery on Ince Green Lane, Ince, has been empty since 2017 and the archdiocese wanted to explore whether the buildings could be retained and repurposed to provide affordable housing for local people using HPBC's unique model.

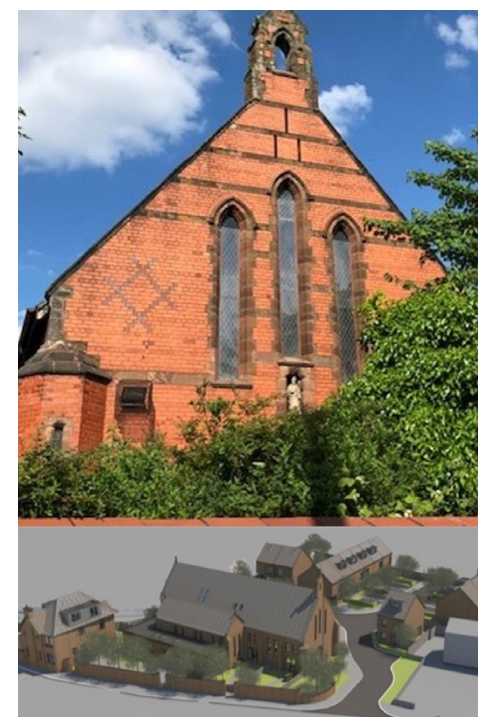
The former church will be converted into 10 two and three bed

houses/apartments, the Presbytery into a three bed, two bed and one bed apartments, and the grounds behind will accommodate 14 three-bed houses.

The appealing design will incorporate the architecture of the church to conserve and retain the character, history and charm of the building, an early twentieth-century red brick lancet Gothic style church, built in 1911.

This latest development comes after the success of HPBC's conversion of St Bernard's Church in Toxteth. The building was converted into 11 three-storey three-bedroom homes; four new-build two-bedroom apartments, and a three-bedroom house which was also built in the grounds whilst still maintaining the unique features of the church.

Pablo Guidi, social action coordinator at the Archdiocese of Liverpool, said: "We have seen first-hand the benefits of this scheme through



St William's church and a model of what the area is going to look like.

and they loved it and were so happy that the building had been put to such good use. We hope the same will happen at St William's."

Liza Parry, HPBC chief executive, added: "We are thrilled to be granted planning permission for St William's, our experience elsewhere has shown us how this development has the potential to be a huge success in the area.

"The church has always been a landmark in the area and the development will help shape a new community, based on shared values and will give a much-needed offering for Wigan.

"The residents will be creating a real community by contributing to building their own homes and those of their neighbours."

St Bernard's. Local people who share the values of the archdiocese and HPBC worked so hard to not just create a happy home for themselves, but a strong community.

"The community at St Bernard's is alive again through the development and parishioners of the church were invited to see the restoration

For further information, visit HPBC's website: hpbc.org.uk

Catherine McKinnell praises 'beacons of solidarity' CAFOD and Catholic Union at pub talk

The Chair of CAFOD's All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Catherine McKinnell MP, has said that "the public has a big heart" when it comes to international development, but the Government "needs to show leadership".

Speaking at the Catholic Union's latest Pub Talk, sponsored by the Universe Catholic Weekly, the Labour MP for Newcastle North said that cutting the international aid budget was "short sighted". She added that it risked contributing to mass migration as UK aid spending had been used to tackle barriers to development in some of the poorest countries around the world.

While policy on international development has changed with different Governments, and sometimes within the same Government, the message of the Church has remained the same.

Ms McKinnell, who is Chair of a cross party group of MPs and peers

who support CAFOD's work, said that groups like CAFOD and the Catholic Union were "beacons of solidarity" in opposing the cut in international aid spending.

Pushed on whether Labour would reverse the cuts and reestablish a Department for International Development, Ms McKinnell said that her party's policy had yet to be agreed, but that she hoped that Labour would increase aid spending and make it a priority if in Government.

Labour's General Election manifesto is expected to be discussed at the party's National Policy Forum later this month. Ms McKinnell, who is also Chair of Parliament's Petitions Committee, said that "writing to your MP is important" when it comes to policy concerns.

Last week, it was reported that the Government might be rowing back on a commitment to spend £11.6 billion on climate finance to help developing countries adapt to climate



Christine Allen and Catherine McKinnell hold copies of the Universe

change. The message of the Church will be needed once again in making the case for why this funding is so necessary and timely.

International development is an area where the lay Church in particular is called to lead, with hope and prayer that others will follow.

CAFOD Director Christine Allen introduced Ms McKinnell and

chaired the discussion. She provided some recent examples of CAFOD's work in supporting sustainable development around the world, from putting solar panels on a farm in Piauí, Brazil, to digging boreholes in Sierra Leone.

The event was the latest in the popular series of "Pub Talks" organised by the Catholic Union at the

Windsor Castle pub in Victoria. Previous speakers have been Lord Alton, Ruth Kelly and Ann Widdecombe. Started at the beginning of the year, the events have reached well over 100 people so far. More information on the Catholic Union's events can be found here: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/eventscalendar/>



Pope Francis appoints Bishop Nicholas Hudson as episcopal Synod member

Pope Francis has nominated Bishop Nicholas Hudson, an Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Westminster, as a member of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will convene from 4th-29th October in Rome.

Bishop Hudson led a team of four 'in-person' delegates at the Synod's European Continental Assembly meeting in Prague in February 2023.

"I feel very honoured to have been nominated by the Holy Father to be a member of the October Synod; and to have been asked to play a part in the contribution of England and Wales to this vital work of the Universal Church," Bishop Hudson said. "I trust that all of us who take part in this Synod will experience something of the same 'transformative power of listening' which character-

ised the European Continental Assembly.

"I hope we will know in Rome the deep sense gained in Prague of standing alongside one another with our gaze fixed on Christ-sometimes even a sense of His walking among us, contemplating with us the mystery of the Church."

He joins Archbishop John Wilson and Bishop Marcus Stock as episcopal members of the Synod from England and Wales. Fr Jan Nowotnik is a non-bishop member with voting rights.

Dominican friar Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP will lead a synod retreat for participants and has been nominated a Spiritual Assistant.

Professor Anna Rowlands and Dr Austen Ivereigh will serve as experts/facilitators.

COMMENT

Ticket office closure will leave vulnerable at risk

There is growing fury from the public over the announcement this week of the planned closure of up to a thousand ticket offices at railway stations around the country. A three-week public consultation has been announced by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents operators. It seems unlikely this somewhat truncated exercise will end up with the status quo remaining in place.

It would be a mistake to assume, as in so many drives for “modernisation” across various sectors, that interactions between utilities and the public should be conducted online and not face to face.

It’s true that many more people now buy tickets through rail company websites: the percentage of tickets bought from offices has dropped from 85 per cent to 14 per cent in the past 30 years. Some 43 per cent of stations currently do not have a ticket office. But this leaves a lot of passengers who still avail themselves of the help and advice a person in an office can provide. Although this is the realm of the railway operators, it is apparent that the Government is egging them on.

To work the railway system needs to be easily accessible. The best way of ensuring that is to have someone to talk to, especially for people who may not have smartphones or aptitude with, or even access to, the internet. Even for people with that aptitude and access the “inadequate” technology at train stations will certainly not be able to replace fully trained staff at ticket offices, leaving vulnerable passengers at risk of being unable to seek help.

The argument that the closures will free up staff to help passengers elsewhere in the station seems disingenuous when many stations consist of just two platforms and a ticket office.

The RDG says it wants to improve the “whole customer experience”. It could help in that endeavour by scrapping these proposals.

Why so many people have had enough of experts – and how to win back trust



Michael Gove claimed in 2016 that ‘people in this country have had enough of experts’

POLITICS

Cara Reed

When senior British politician Michael Gove announced in 2016 that the public had “had enough of experts” in the lead up to the Brexit vote, it highlighted a growing trend for questioning the authority and power of experts.

Only last month, the home secretary, Suella Braverman, took to the stage at the National Conservatism conference to rail against “experts and elites”. Such comments form part of a broader pattern where experts and their authority have faced significant challenges and threats from various economic, political, social and cultural sources.

An expert is conceptualised as someone with knowledge accrued in an accredited fashion, who then operates with a high degree of independence as a result of that knowledge and skill. Their power and influence has traditionally played an important role in society – but this authority is increasingly being questioned from many sides.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there was potential for a restoration of trust in expert authority. Politicians and international bodies talked about the importance of using expertise as the most viable path to navigate the COVID crisis. The public also sought more communication from scientific experts.

Even leaders such as Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, who had previously questioned the credibility of experts, appeared alongside medical professionals during press conferences to reassure the public.

But as the pandemic progressed, the authority of experts declined – with a few noteworthy exceptions such as New Zealand, South Korea and Senegal, which maintained their reliance on expertise to guide their decision-making processes.

My new book, co-authored with Michael Reed, identifies three broad explanations for this decline which we call delegitimation, demystification and decomposition.

Delegitimation

One way the authority of experts diminishes is when societal institutions and structures that have traditionally supported them – such as governments, media and business – themselves face criticism, in particular from populist political movements.

Technology-driven advancements such as social media have accelerated this trend. Social media democratises communication and provides global platforms for those who want to question established societal structures and institutions.

This in turn can lead to these organisations turning on their expert advisors, in addition to populist groups using alternative platforms to directly express their scepticism of experts.

There were examples of this trend during the pandemic. Figures such

as Trump and then Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro openly challenged and dismissed experts. Trump’s position changed as COVID was not quickly “solved”.

The spread of online disinformation and misinformation amplified the decline of expert authority. This led to the emergence of “culture wars” centred around virus control, including mask wearing.

2. Demystification

When people learn more about experts, in terms of who they are, what they do and who they serve, their power can again diminish. Individual experts are increasingly being watched and criticised as they become more closely associated with institutions such as government, corporations and banks. As a result, the lines are increasingly blurred between independent experts and organisational agendas.

The UK government used the country’s leading medical experts such as Chris Whitty and Patrick Vallance to support its political rhetoric during the pandemic. They stood beside the prime minister at press conferences, but were often scapegoated for government decisions that were more politically motivated than based on medical expertise.

Giving evidence at the COVID inquiry, Whitty warned that threats to independent experts could undermine responses to disasters in the future:

We should be very firm in saying that society very much appreciates the work of these people (experts and scientists), who put in considerable amounts of time ...

We, society, need to ensure scientists know their service is valued.

3. Decomposition

Finally, the authority of experts is also declining because there are now more occupations claiming expert status, including management occupations such as human resource management, marketing and project management. While this can democratise expertise, it can also challenge the primacy of the traditional accredited sectors such as law, medicine and accountancy.

The pandemic has highlighted the fragmentation of expert occupations. Many different groups were involved in tackling the crisis, with multiple ideas being debated in public. This led to people questioning expert authority, as they saw different experts giving contrasting advice on issues such as mask use, herd immunity and vaccine efficacy.

Rethinking how experts interact

So, how can experts maintain their authority and power in a world where people are increasingly sceptical of them? We argue the authority and power of expertise can be maintained by rethinking how experts interact with governments and the public.

Traditionally, experts have had autonomy to control their work, but this has led to a lack of trust. In future, experts will need to be more transparent and accountable to the public.

Instead of the traditional, top-down view of expert authority, we can imagine a more reflexive, dynamic and contested form of expert power that is open to other standards. This would broaden decision-making processes to wider audiences, and involve a continual public dialogue between experts and non-experts.

At the same time, experts will need to work more closely with governments and other bodies to ensure their expertise is taken into account.

None of this will be easy. It requires experts to engage with a broader range of people, some of whom they may have had little previous concern with. It may involve persuading others of their expertise, rather than assuming it as a given. And the power dynamics between experts and other people may alter, meaning there is greater potential for experts to be co-opted to other agendas.

Ultimately, whether we have really “had enough of experts” is questionable. But how these experts secure their power, and convince others of their authority, requires a rethink.

Cara Reed

Senior Lecturer in Organisation Studies at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University

Fr Barry's a force to be reckoned with

A diocesan priest is set to take on an exciting new challenge as his ministry takes him from parish life to the thin blue line.

Fr Barry Lomax will leave his parish of the Sacred Heart in Westhoughton this summer to take up the full-time position of Force Lead Chaplain with Greater Manchester Police (GMP).

For 23 years, Fr Barry has been serving as a volunteer chaplain for GMP, as well as carrying out his work as parish priest.

However, GMP recently announced it would be recruiting a full-time chaplain for the first time, and Fr Barry felt called to apply. Bishop John Arnold 'agreed it would be a good move for me', given his long experience.

Fr Barry was successful in his application for the newly created full-time post of Force Lead Chaplain. He explained that the provision of pastoral care is becoming increasingly embedded into Police Culture, with new recruits being introduced to chaplaincy within their very first days.

"I'll be based at Sedgley Park, our Force Police Training School, where I'm already well known as 'Fr. B' who visits and supports the training staff and our latest police student officers as they begin their policing journey," he said.

“

I'm already well known as "Fr. B" who visits and supports the training staff

"On the second day of their induction week, I have the opportunity to talk to our student officers about chaplaincy in general and my role and involvement within the police family."

The nature of police work and discipline of the institution also places emotional and mental burdens on police personnel, but Fr Barry explained how the role of a chaplain can provide much-needed support.



He said: "The role is no different to that of hospital, prison, and armed forces chaplains: you're going along and you're simply listening.

It's about chatting to someone and seeing how they're getting on.

"We also act as a conduit because we take the rank of the person we're

speaking to, so we are able to ask those questions their rank may prohibit them from asking."

As Fr Barry begins his work building up the multi-faith chaplaincy for GMP, he urged parishioners and clergy to keep Greater Manchester Police in prayer.

“

People often think that police officers have got it all covered and it's all fine and dandy but the reality is quite different. They are people going into often stressful situations.

"People often think that police officers have got it all covered and it's all fine and dandy but the reality is quite different," he said.

"They are people going into often stressful situations. Hopefully, and especially with our younger officers, should such difficulties arise, we can detect any first signs of stress and possible PTSD before it becomes a major problem for them."

Fr Barry can be contacted at barry.lomax@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

Associate Pastor resigns from Soul Survivor church

Andy Drozdziak

Church pastor Mike Pilavachi has resigned as associate pastor at Soul Survivor Watford.

The 65-year-old had removed himself from ministry following a series of safeguarding allegations which were made earlier this year, some of which were reported in the mainstream press. This led to an ongoing investigation by the National Safeguarding Team (NST) and the St Albans Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Explaining his departure, Pilavachi said in an Instagram post that the "Church needs to heal" and sought forgiveness.

"I have today resigned as Associate Pastor of Soul Survivor Watford. I have taken this step because the Church needs to heal and I have realised that my continued presence will hinder that process. I seek forgiveness from any whom I have hurt during the course of my

ministry," he wrote.

Responding to the resignation, Soul Survivor's trustees said: "We have informed the NST of Mike's resignation and they have assured us that the investigation will continue as planned until it reaches a conclusion.

"We remain committed to seeking a just, truthful and transparent outcome to the investigation for all those who have bravely stepped forward to share their concerns and experiences with the NST and the St Albans Diocesan Safeguarding Team."

Soul Survivor also praised those who reported the abuse, saying: "It takes a great deal of strength to report abuse and we are grateful to all those who have come forward."

"We would encourage anyone who has concerns related to the investigation to report those to the NST on safeguarding@churchofengland.org and for other concerns to contact thirtyone:eight on 0303 003 1111, or the Safe Spaces helpline on 0300 303 1056."

Mike Pilavachi
(Soul Survivor YouTube screengrab)



The Eyes have it

Sir John Battle



When his team mate Vinicius Junior suffered personal racist abuse after a disappointing football match, Spanish International and former Leeds player Raphina responded with the challenging question; “When will we pay more attention to the brightness of the eyes and not to skin tone?”. Sadly racism is still all too endemic in our European societies and is a serious issue far from rooted out that we should constantly and sensitively address.

The continuing work of organisations within the Church such as CARJ (The Catholic Association for Racial Justice) working with schools and local communities and actively supported by Bishop Paul McAleenan of the National Bishops conference deserves our practical support and renewed commitment at Diocesan and parish levels particularly as it enters into activities for a major Anniversary year in 2024. But it was Raphina’s focus on the eyes that perhaps opened up a new perspective. While there is, encouragingly, a new post Covid emphasis on personal “face to face” encounters, as Pope Francis stresses in his encyclical “Fratelli Tutti”, notably it is the role of our eyes that are vital to our interactions. As the Persian poet Rumi advised “Look at your eyes. They are small but they see enormous things.” Eye contact is usually crucial to human communication. How tragic therefore is it to come across a person, (not least a child or young person) who for whatever reason cannot raise their faces to look a person speaking to them in the eyes. Moreover, failure to do so can indicate the breaking down of a relationship and a sundering of a human connection. One psychologist suggests regular failure to make eye contact (of course for those capable) can indicate a turn away from life altogether and into the direction of death. More positively, it is generally recognised that the way you look at people can actually transform them. Eyes that offer personal recognition and “eyes that smile” help build relationships. The Dominican friar Fr Herbert McCabe was asked about “Christian hope” and he replied “We are not optimists. We do not present a lovely vision of the world. We simply have wherever we are some small task to do on the side of justice for the poor”. Without diminishing the need for structural action on racism that “small task” could also apply to our personal responsibility for racial justice.

AI: why installing ‘robot judges’ in courtrooms is a really bad idea

Rónán Kennedy



Science fiction’s visions of the future include many versions of artificial intelligence (AI), but relatively few examples where software replaces human judges. For once, the real world seems to be changing in ways that are not predicted in stories.

In February, a Colombian judge asked ChatGPT for guidance on how to decide an insurance case. Around the same time, a Pakistani judge used ChatGPT to confirm his decisions in two separate cases. There are also reports of judges in India and Bolivia seeking advice from ChatGPT.

These are unofficial experiments, but some systematic efforts at reform do involve AI. In China, judges are advised and assisted by AI, and this development is likely to continue. In a recent speech, the master of the rolls, Sir Geoffrey Vos – the second most senior judge in England and Wales – suggested that, as the legal system in that jurisdiction is digitised, AI might be used to decide some “less intensely personal disputes”, such as commercial cases.

AI isn’t really that smart

This might initially seem to be a good idea. The law is supposed to be applied impartially and objectively, “without fear or favour”. Some say, what better way to achieve this than to use a computer program? AI doesn’t need a lunch break, can’t be bribed, and doesn’t want a pay rise. AI justice can be applied more quickly and efficiently. Will we, therefore, see “robot judges” in courtrooms in the future?

There are four principal reasons why this might not be a good idea. The first is that, in practice, AI generally acts as an expert system or as a machine learning system. Expert systems involve encoding rules into a model of decisions and their consequences – called a decision tree – in software. These had their heyday in law in the 1980s. However, they ultimately proved unable to deliver good results on a large scale.

Machine learning is a form of AI that improves at what it does over time. It is often quite powerful, but no more so than a very educated guess. One strength is that it can find correlations and patterns in



data that we don’t have the capacity to calculate. However, one of its weaknesses is that it fails in ways that are different to the way people do, reaching conclusions that are obviously incorrect.

In a notable example, an AI was tricked into recognising a turtle as a gun. Facial recognition often has issues correctly identifying women, children and those with dark skin. So it’s possible that AI could also erroneously place someone at a crime scene who wasn’t there. It would be difficult to be confident in a legal system that produced outcomes that were clearly incorrect but also very difficult to review, as the reasoning behind machine learning is not transparent. It has outstripped our ability to understand its inner workings – a phenomenon known as the “black box problem”.

When AI is used in legal processes, and it fails, the consequences can be severe. Large language models, the technology underlying AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, are known to write text that is completely untrue. This is known as an AI hallucination, even though it implies that the software is thinking rather than statistically determining what the next word in its output should be.

This year, it emerged that a New York lawyer had used ChatGPT to write submissions to a court, only to discover that it cited cases that do not exist. This indicates that these types of tools are not capable of

replacing lawyers yet, and in fact, may never be.

Historical biases

Second, machine learning systems rely on historical data. In crime and law, these will often contain bias and prejudice. Marginalised communities will often feature more in records of arrests and convictions, so an AI system might draw the unwarranted conclusion that people from particular backgrounds are more likely to be guilty.

A prominent example of this is the Compas system, an AI algorithm used by US judges to make decisions on granting bail and sentencing. An investigation claimed that it generated “false positives” for people of colour and “false negatives” for white people. In other words, it suggested that people of colour would re-offend when they did not in fact do so, and suggested that white people would not re-offend when they did. However, the developer of the system challenges these claims.

Third, it is not clear that legal rules can be reliably converted into software rules. Individuals will interpret the same rule in different ways. When 52 programmers were assigned the task of automating the enforcement of speed limits, the programs that they wrote issued very different numbers of tickets for the same sample data.

Individual judges may have different interpretations of the law,

but they do so in public and are subject to being overturned on appeal. This should reduce the amount of variation in judgments over time – at least in theory. But if a programmer is too strict or too lenient in their implementation of a rule, that may be very difficult to discover and correct.

Automated government systems fail at a scale and speed that’s very difficult to recover from. The Dutch government used an automated system (SyRI) to detect benefits fraud, which wrongly accused many families, destroying lives in the process.

The Australian “Online Compliance Intervention” scheme is used to automatically assess debts from recipients of social welfare payments. It’s commonly known as “Robodebt”. The scheme overstepped its bounds, negatively affecting hundreds of thousands of people and was the subject of a Royal Commission in Australia. (Royal Commissions are investigations into matters of public importance in Australia.)

Finally, judging is not all that judges do. They have many other roles in the legal system, such as managing a courtroom, a caseload, and a team of staff, and those would be even more difficult to replace with software programs.

Rónán Kennedy
Associate Professor, University of Galway

New Rector for Catholic National Shrine in Walsingham



The Reverend Dr Robert Billing has been appointed the new Rector of the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham in Norfolk. He will serve for a five-year term and will begin his new role on 1st September 2023.

Fr Billing is a priest of the Diocese of Lancaster and served as Bishop's Secretary to three successive bishops over a period of thirteen years. He is currently parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Carnforth, some seven miles north of Lancaster.

As Rector, Fr Billing will oversee the mission of the National Shrine

and will be responsible for the pastoral and spiritual care of pilgrims, the Shrine Chaplains and visiting clergy. The Rector also promotes the message and work of the Shrine nationally and internationally.

Fr Billing expressed his surprise and joy at his appointment.

"My appointment to serve as the new Rector of the Catholic National Shrine and Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham comes as a big surprise. Of course, it is also a huge joy and honour," he said.

"As I take up this further service to the Church, this time nationally, I

venture, first, as a pilgrim, eager to learn and to serve closely with those who dedicate themselves to make Walsingham 'England's Nazareth' today. I hope to share and confirm that commitment.

The Bishop of Lancaster, the Right Reverend Paul Swarbrick, welcomed the news. "It is an honour for the Diocese of Lancaster for one of our priests to be chosen as Rector for the National Shrine to Our Blessed Lady at Walsingham," he said.

"I have every confidence, given Fr Billing's considerable talents and experience, that he is a good choice for this significant position in the national church."

As Bishop of the Diocese of East Anglia, it was the Right Reverend Peter Collins' responsibility to appoint a new Rector for the National Marian Shrine.

"I am immensely grateful to Bishop Paul Swarbrick of Lancaster for his generosity in releasing Fr Robert for this important role," he said.

"As we look forward to welcoming Fr Robert, let us be united and committed in praying for him in the weeks ahead. Our Lady of Walsingham-pray for us."

Faith and Work summit takes place at 10 Downing St



Wikipedia Commons

Global brands gathered in Downing Street to discuss and share ideas on being faith-friendly employers. The first "Faith and Work" summit held by the government was hosted by Chief Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen MP, who is a Christian.

Google, American Express, Salesforce, Rolls Royce Thames Water

and OVO energy were among many companies present in Downing Street to meet the All Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion and Belief in parliament on Monday 10th July, to discuss how a person's religious beliefs can be an asset and benefit in the workplace.

Speaking on Monday, Geoff Sweeney of the University of Derby's Multifaith Centre agreed that businesses are doing more to embrace faith, which leads to a happier and more productive workforce.

Increasing numbers of businesses and companies are directly striving to meet the needs of employees with faith, offering support where possible and spaces within the workplace to enable workers to practise faith.

Following Monday's summit, Salesforce have announced they will host a Faith and Work Summit on 20th November, which will bring together companies from around the world to meet each other and share best practice.

Brian J. Grim, President of the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation said: "What we're seeing is that companies, especially some of the biggest and best companies, are embracing this and moving in this direction... There's a long way to go, many companies haven't embraced it, but this is a breakthrough, truly a breakthrough."

Ex-primary pupil with heart of gold raises £1,000 for new defibrillator

A schoolgirl, who wants to be a cardiologist when she is older, was thrilled to unveil a new defibrillator at her former primary school after raising crucial funds to buy and install it.

Claudia Collings, 12, was invited back to St Mary Magdalen Catholic primary school, Seaham, to watch the defibrillator being installed.

She spent her final year at primary school raising £1,000 to install the community defibrillator in connection with the charity, Cardioproof, a charity which Professor Michael Norton co-runs. Seaham Town Council funded the installation of a solar-powered cabinet outside the school. It is now registered and ready to be used in an emergency.

"I really enjoyed my time at St Mary Magdalen's and wanted to do something special before I left to go to St Bede's," Claudia said, who is now a pupil of St Bede's Catholic School in Peterlee.

"I decided to raise money for a defibrillator for the school because I know how important it is to get to a defibrillator quickly in an emergency. I wanted the pupils and teachers in my school and people in the community to feel safe knowing there is life-saving equipment close by. I would love to think that this defibrillator will someday save someone's life.



From left to right: Claudia Collings, Professor Michael Norton, Cardioproof Charity, Jennifer Bell, Mayor of Seaham, Andrea Goodwin, Headteacher.

"When I grow up, I would like to be a doctor, preferably a cardiologist. I am fascinated by hearts and how they work. I am interested in learning more about the heart and I already know the basics of CPR, but I am looking forward to expanding my knowledge and would love to teach others one day."

Professor Michael Norton and Jennifer Bell, Mayor of Seaham, joined St Mary Magdalen headteacher Andrea Goodwin and Clau-

dia to officially unveil the life-saving equipment.

"This is a wonderful legacy for Claudia to leave at her primary school," Mrs Goodwin said.

"We are thrilled to have the defibrillator in school to serve our community. Moving forward, we have first aid training for pupils and community awareness workshops planned."

IN BRIEF

Calling God ‘father’ questioned

The Archbishop of York said calling God “our Father” is “problematic”. The Most Rev Stephen Cottrell said the phrase is “problematic” for victims of abuse and those who have suffered under “oppressive patriarchy”. Conservative Christians criticised the Archbishop for taking his “cue from culture rather than scripture”. However, liberal Christians agreed with Cottrell, arguing that “a theological misreading of God as exclusively male is a driver of much continuing discrimination and sexism against women”.

Lineker says climate more important than sport

Gary Lineker said that Just Stop Oil’s cause is “probably more important” than sports events. Hosting an environment panel at Wimbledon, a day after activists halted play by running onto court throwing debris onto the grass, the BBC Match of the Day presenter said: “I completely understand where they’re coming from – disruptive protest is the only one that gets any publicity.” Saying that he “understands” why the public get upset by protests, he added that “what is more important is probably our existence in the future rather than slight disruption of sporting events”.

Labour faces wrath of press barons

Labour is “heading for a potentially bruising clash” with UK news publishers over post-Leveson press regulation, said The Guardian. Shadow ministers are expected to “incur the wrath” of some of Britain’s most powerful newspaper barons, including Rupert Murdoch, by opposing the repeal of a rule designed to force news publishers to sign up to the government-backed regulator. The government plans to repeal the clause in the forthcoming media bill and Labour’s opposition to this will “set it against almost every national news organisation”, said the paper.



Labour is “heading for a potentially bruising clash” with UK news publishers over post-Leveson press regulation

What El Niño means for the world’s perilous climate tipping points



WORLD AFFAIRS

David Armstrong McKay



The UN World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has confirmed it: El Niño conditions have arrived and are expected to become moderate to strong as they develop over the coming year. El Niño is the hot phase of a natural fluctuation in the Earth’s climate system (the full name of which is the El Niño–Southern Oscillation, or ENSO) which normally lasts for a couple of years and is happening on top of a long-term trend of human-driven global warming.

This year is already proving hot. Widespread heat waves have contributed to the hottest June on record, temperatures in parts of the northeast Atlantic were up to 5°C warmer than normal for June and sea ice around Antarctica is 2.5 million square kilometres smaller than average for the time of year, well below any level recorded since 1979.

This El Niño event is just getting started and so is only partially responsible for these recent extremes. But with global average temperatures already high this year, El Niño strengthening into next year could make 2024 the hottest year on record. El Niño can add up to 0.2°C

to global temperatures.

The WMO says it is now very likely that the Earth’s temperature will temporarily exceed 1.5°C above the pre-industrial average by 2027. This is the temperature limit world leaders promised to strive to limit long-term warming to when they signed the Paris Agreement in 2015. Beyond it, scientists predict the impacts of climate change will rapidly escalate.

These impacts could include the triggering of climate tipping points: self-sustaining shifts in the climate system that lock in devastating changes once critical warming levels are passed. An example is the West Antarctic ice sheet, the irreversible collapse of which could be triggered once warming seawater causes it to retreat back in to the deep submarine basin it sits in, eventually adding up to 3 metres to global sea-level rise. Tipping points can also lock in extra global warming by amplifying greenhouse gas emissions from natural sources.

Recent research I led judged that several of these climate tipping points become likely beyond 1.5°C and can’t be ruled out even at current warming of around 1.2°C. So could record global heat turbo-charged by El Niño over the coming years bring these tipping thresholds within reach?

Short-term heat extremes will continue to destabilise systems like coral reefs and the Amazon rainforest which are thought to be vulnerable to tipping. Some smaller

ecosystems may tip too, but probably not over the thousands of kilometres necessary to count as a climate tipping point. The retreat of sea ice near the Antarctic peninsula suggests more warmth is reaching parts of the West Antarctic ice sheet too, which could tip even at current warming levels. However, most scientists don’t expect the world to reach a slew of climate tipping points if El Niño causes the world to cross 1.5°C briefly.

The outcome for tipping points Our estimates for climate tipping point thresholds are based on what would happen if global warming stayed at that level for many years. So a tipping threshold that is estimated to lie at 1.5°C won’t have been reached until global temperatures average 1.5°C for around a decade. Similarly, the Paris Agreement’s lower limit will not be bust upon first contact with 1.5°C – it’s the long-term average rather than a given year (or day) that counts.

The wide ranges over which particular tipping points are estimated to lie mean that we can’t say for sure exactly when tipping becomes inevitable, only that tipping becomes more likely with every fraction of warming within that range. Some systems, like ice sheets, are slow to respond to global warming and may have a window in which conditions can temporarily exceed the critical threshold for a few decades. This offers a chance for warming to be

brought below it again before the system is guaranteed to tip over into a new state.

Some commentators worry that recent temperature and sea ice extremes might themselves be the result of tipping points approaching. This is because some complex systems are thought to “flicker” when under stress, briefly jumping to a new state and back again before they permanently tip over. It’s even been suggested that recent extremes might be evidence that tipping is already underway.

Flickering before tipping is possible, but systems like Antarctic sea ice or ocean currents aren’t known to behave this way.

Rather than an unforeseen tipping point approaching, the dramatic extremes in temperature and sea ice extent are best explained as natural variability on top of long-term warming. In other words, they sit within a natural range that is rapidly shifting upwards as a result of global warming. Emissions of sunlight-reflecting aerosols from shipping also fell sharply with new regulations in 2020. These blocked a small amount of warming which is now starting to reappear.

Broken temperature records during an El Niño event are a symptom of underlying global warming, and it’s this long-term warming which will ultimately trigger climate tipping points, especially once the global average passes 1.5°C. An El Niño event will help destabilise some systems, which could tip if they are smaller or respond quickly.

For example, when average warming reaches around 1.5°C, a future strong El Niño temporarily pushing the world’s average temperature to 1.7°C could cause some coral reefs to start dying off before a cooling La Niña arrives. The same could happen during this El Niño if the tipping thresholds for coral reefs happen to lie towards the bottom of their estimated range. However, lower-end climate tipping point thresholds are less likely. For other systems that respond more slowly to warming like ice sheets, the subsequent La Niña should (temporarily) balance things out.

So, it’s unlikely, but not impossible, that this new El Niño event will directly trigger climate tipping points. Instead, coming El Niño events combined with human-driven global warming will continue to break temperature records, and the chance of tipping points being crossed will continue to grow as long-term warming proceeds.

Increasing global warming by continuing to burn fossil fuels will also make future El Niño events more intense. Modelling suggests this may already be happening. Yet more motivation, if it were needed, to cut greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly as possible to limit their damage.

David Armstrong McKay
Researcher in Earth System Resilience, Stockholm University

Jon Cruddas MP: Restoring dignity in work is essential



Automation, artificial intelligence and the gig economy are changing the value of work, but we can reverse this trend by restoring dignity in labour, Jon Cruddas MP will argue in an upcoming lecture.

Jon Cruddas MP will be speaking on 'Just Working? Why the dignity

of work is at the heart of the new politics for the common good', the latest lecture in the Lincoln Lecture Series exploring how Christian social teaching can be a blessing to public life and discourse.

Jon Cruddas MP will discuss this in his forthcoming lecture, where he



will explore the challenges to human dignity posed by these changes to our understanding of the purpose of work. He will examine the impact of artificial intelligence and the instability of the gig economy, on our wellbeing, and explore whether Universal Basic Income really is the panacea that campaigners believe it could be.

Jon Cruddas, Labour MP for Dagenham and Rainham, said: "During the pandemic, we clapped for nurses, care home workers and

porters. We were moved by the sacrifice of postal workers, delivery drivers, cleaners, refuse operatives and shop workers. These jobs became more visible and acquired a renewed standing in our minds. We recognised the dignity of the labour.

"Yet, few are concerned as so many jobs are under threat due to automation. But it doesn't have to be this way. As we recover from the pandemic, this idea of human dignity, specifically the dignity of labour, could become the organising principle underpinning a new approach to our politics, built around a revived sense of justice and the Common Good – and a new kind of ethical leadership."

The lecture is the sixth in the Lincoln Lecture Series, which is being delivered in partnership by Together for the Common Good, Lincoln Cathedral and CCLA.

Jenny Sinclair, Founder and Director of Together for the Common Good, said: "The Church has been at

the forefront of debates and discussions about the dignity of work for decades. From Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* through to the present day, Catholic Social Teaching has provided a useful framework for good judgement and can help us make sense of these critical issues that affect all our lives."

"Jon Cruddas MP is an intellectual heavyweight who draws on long-standing political experience, expertise in policy and a deep knowledge of Christian social theology to provide a unique analysis into the profound challenges we face and the practical approaches required for meaningful reform."

The Revd Canon Dr Simon Jones, Interim Dean of Lincoln, said: "The common good was a quinquennial goal of the Church of England between 2005 and 2010, helping to shape the Church's engagement in civic and political life. This social mission continues, which is why Lincoln Cathedral is delighted to partner with Together for the Common Good and CCLA to deliver the Lincoln Lecture Series, which will help to shape our social engagement by exploring both Anglican Social Theology and Catholic Social Teaching."

Readers can book a free ticket by following this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/common-good-lecture-6-just-working-tickets-637907106327>

100 years and counting: Thousands flock to Lourdes for 'historic' Liverpool pilgrimage



In July, 1,500 people from the Archdiocese of Liverpool will be heading to Lourdes in a historic year which marks 100 years since the first pilgrimage from Liverpool.

The Archdiocese of Liverpool is the first diocese in England to reach this milestone. Since 1923, hundreds of thousands of people from across the archdiocese have made the journey over to the south of France every

year, with the exception of during World War II and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pilgrimage will begin on Friday 21st July and will be led by The Most Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop of Liverpool. Hundreds of pilgrims along with volunteers and medical staff will travel by air on special flights from Liverpool John Lennon airport. A jumbulance

- a specially adapted and fully accessible coach will travel across land with seven assisted pilgrims.

300 young people will be taking part in the Liverpool Youth Pilgrimage to Lourdes travelling by coach from Chorley, Knowsley, the Isle of Man, Leyland, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, Warrington, Widnes and Wigan. Seven coaches will be leaving from points across the Archdiocese

A group photo from the 1st Liverpool pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1923

in the early hours of Thursday 20 July to begin the twenty-four hour journey.

Whilst in Lourdes and immediately following this arduous journey, the young pilgrims will get up as early as 4:30 am to work in the hospital,

while others follow them down to assist the pilgrims to the different places of devotion and at Mass.

Father Des Seddon, director of the Pilgrimage, said: "The Lourdes pilgrimage is special every year for the people of the archdiocese, but this year it will have much more significance as we reach this historic milestone. We are very much looking forward to being in Lourdes and celebrating with pilgrims, some who have been for several years and those who are new to Lourdes."

Fr Grant Maddock, trustee of the Liverpool Archdiocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage association and one of the lead organisers said, "This year we have a strong focus on living the pilgrimage through the lens of the assisted pilgrims, we have made some changes to make the pilgrimage much more varied for them. We wanted to do this to put them back at the heart of the pilgrimage."

“

We are delighted that the jumbulance will be travelling to Lourdes with us this year, allowing more assisted pilgrims to join us.

"We are delighted that the jumbulance will be travelling to Lourdes with us this year, allowing more assisted pilgrims to join us."



10,000 pro lifers gather in Dublin for Rally For Life

By **Andy Drozdzia**

Doctors would rather resign that perform abortions, the annual Rally for Life in Dublin heard, as 10,000 pro-life advocates gathered in Dublin City Centre.

UK-based Irish doctor Dermot Kearney said that the crowd was reminded by Consultant Obstetrician from Kilkenny Doctor Trevor Hayes that 'the vast majority of doctors in Ireland do not participate in nor support abortion provision.'

"The vast majority who hold a conscientious objection to complicity with abortion would preferably resign their positions as healthcare providers rather than violate their consciences and be involved in any way in the intentional destruction of human life," Dr Kearney told the Universe.

"Dr Hayes reminded the people of Ireland, particularly those with political responsibilities, that the vast majority of doctors in Ireland do not participate in nor support abortion provision."

The rally on 1st July follows an in-

dependent review into Ireland's abortion legislation in May, which recommended the removal of the current mandatory three-day waiting period between the certification of a termination of pregnancy and the procedure taking place. Dr Kearney believes the strong turnout shows that the 'tide' is turning and Ireland may adapt pro-life laws once again.

"(Dr Hayes) reiterated that abortion is not healthcare and that 'true healthcare is life-saving, not life-ending,'" he said.

"While the numbers of babies' lives destroyed by abortion and the numbers of mothers and families seriously injured continue to rise, year after year since 2019, there is reason to hope that it may not be long before the tide in Ireland turns and the nation becomes staunchly pro-life again.

"In Ireland, there is a real sense of optimism among all who advocate for the inherent value of human life from conception."

The rally gathered at the northern

end of Parnell Square and marched through to Custom House Quay, where the speeches were made, after marching through the entire length of O'Connell Street. Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, co-founder of the March for Life UK and the first woman ever to be arrested for silently praying on the streets of Britain, gave one of the speeches.

Before the rally, a special Mass was celebrated at the Church of St Saviour, Dominick Street. Bishop of Elphin Diocese Kevin Doran reminded the packed congregation that the Rally this year coincided with the feast day of St Oliver Plunkett, martyred at Tyburn for his Catholic faith in 1681. He drew parallels between the witness of St Oliver and the witness of those who stand for the dignity of human life in modern day Ireland.

“

In Ireland, there is a real sense of optimism among all who advocate for the inherent value of human life from conception

Bishop Kevin called upon all present to continue boldly proclaiming the truth, regardless of personal attacks and other negative repercussions that may have to be faced for their fidelity. Just like St Oliver, he said, those who value life have to patiently and, in charity, counteract lies and betrayal.

Bernadette Smyth from pro-life group Precious Life said: "No government can take away our right to defend the babies. No law can take away the factual reality that unborn babies are part of the human family."

School says fond farewell to 'real champion' Moira



Greenock Telegraph

Andy Drozdzia

A classroom assistant at a Scottish Catholic primary school has been given a fond farewell at a special assembly in her honour to mark her retirement.

Moira Cook is retiring from St An-

drew's Catholic primary school in Greenock after 24 years of service. She was a classroom assistant at the former St Gabriel's Primary in Braeside for 12 years before the opening of St Andrew's 12 years ago.

During the assembly at the end of term, students sang Moira Cook You've Got A

Friend In Me, the popular song from the film Toy Story.

Moira told the Greenock Telegraph: "It's been absolutely amazing at the school.

"I've always loved working with the children and we have a lot of fun.

I'm a wee bit overwhelmed by it all.

"There have been challenges but an awful lot of fun too. I've enjoyed seeing the kids coming on and improving and enjoying themselves too. It's been a wonderful job.

"I've been in this area all these

“

Moira is a real champion for the children. She will always be on their side and make sure that everybody is delivering for them

Everyone loves Bertie-at hospital and in the SVP group



Diocese of East Anglia

Bertie, the newest member of St Mary's Great Yarmouth Saint Vincent De Paul (SVP) conference, has proved a big hit with hospital patients, young and old as well as school children.

Bertie the dog belongs to Rosemary Williams, an SVP member in Great Yarmouth and a registered Pets As Therapy dog-or PAT dog for short.

Every week, he visits the James Paget University Hospital in Gorleston, where Rosemary is a volunteer.

Rosemary said: "Bertie is a big hit with the patients, especially the children and the very elderly and dementia patients, who love to interact with him. He is so good with them, calm and immensely patient and placid.

"Family members and visitors are often delighted by this and on occasions are moved to tears to see some recognition or reaction to Bertie especially during his visits to the stroke unit."

Bertie, who is a cross-breed Cavapoo, and Rosemary have been asked to visit 'end of life' patients, where his calm presence has brought comfort and sparked conversations with family members and friends.

Rosemary said: "He is popular with staff, who love a few snatched

moments of Bertie time during their busy shifts. In fact, one of the consultants asked me if I could bring Bertie in more than once a week."

Bertie always accompanies Rosemary to the hospital chapel

at the end of each visit to pray for all the people they have seen that morning.

Bertie also visits a local school once a week, where he helps children who are nervous or who have learning difficulties.

“

Family members and visitors are often delighted by this and on occasions are moved to tears to see some recognition or reaction to Bertie especially during his visits to the stroke unit

He and Rosemary accompanied another St Mary's SVP member on a 'one off visit' to a local care home to visit a parishioner who loves dogs.

"Bertie attends our SVP meetings with me," said Rosemary, "and once he has had a treat off one other dog owner in the conference he sits there as good as gold until the last prayer is spoken."

“

Today we say a very big thank you and good luck to the wonderful Mrs Cook. We'll miss her smile and the welcome she gave us all every day. One of our St. Andrew's originals and was a treasured part of St. Gabriel's before that. Happy retirement

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IN BRIEF

Stabbing at China kindergarten

Six people were killed and one injured in a stabbing in a kindergarten in China's south-eastern Guangdong province. "The victims include one teacher, two parents and three students," said a spokeswoman for the city government. Police have arrested a 25-year-old and called it a case of "intentional assault". Violent crime is "relatively rare" in China, said the BBC, but the country has seen a "spate of knife attacks in recent years, including several in schools".

Twitter may sue Meta

Twitter said it is considering legal action against Meta over its rival app Threads. The new platform, which was launched this week, is similar to Twitter and has been branded as a "friendly" alternative. However, Twitter's Elon Musk said "competition is fine, cheating is not" and claimed that former Twitter staff helped create Threads. The "Twitter killer" app is "a nearly direct copy" of Twitter and will "lure users away from the increasingly-dysfunctional Elon Musk-owned company", said The Guardian.

Britney 'hit by security guard'

Britney Spears said she was struck by a security guard who was protecting the basketballer Victor Wembanyama in Las Vegas. The pop singer said she spotted the 19-year-old NBA top draft pick in a restaurant and "decided to approach him and congratulate him on his success". As it was noisy in the restaurant, she "tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention". A security guard protecting Wembanyama is then said to have struck her in the face with the back of his hand. Wembanyama said he "didn't see what happened".

Jews fear France backlash

Jews in France are on "high alert" after the fatal police shooting of a teenager sparked days of riots across the country, said The Telegraph. A Holocaust memorial was defaced in the Paris suburb where Nahel Merzouk was killed. Yonathan Arfi, president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, said that "because Jews are often associated as being an ally of the government, and accused of being given special privileges by the state", the community fears that "post-colonial speeches could designate us as a target as well".

Pope Francis names 21 new cardinals

Pope Francis announced a consistory for the creation of new cardinals from around the world to be held at the Vatican on 30th September 2023.

"Let us pray for the new Cardinals, so that, confirming their adherence to Christ, the merciful and faithful High Priest, they might help me in my ministry as Bishop of Rome for the good of the entire Holy People faithful to God," he said after his recitation of the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter's Square on 9th July.

With this appeal, the Holy Father announced he would hold a consistory for the creation of 21 new cardinals on 30th September 2023 in the Vatican.

The Consistory falls before the beginning of the Synod on Synodality, set to take place with representatives from all over the world in October.

"I would like to announce that next 30 September I will hold a Consistory for the appointment of new Cardinals. Where they come from expresses the universality of the Church, which continues to proclaim the merciful love of God to all people of the earth," Pope Francis said.

The Cardinal-elects hail from around the world. Among them are the Prefects of the Dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez; of the Dicastery for Bishops, Archbishop

Robert Francis Prevost; of the Dicastery for Oriental Churches, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti.

Here are the names of the new Cardinals:

- Archbishop Robert Francis Prevost, O.S.A., Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops
- Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches
- Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith
- Archbishop Emil Paul Tscherri, Apostolic Nunzio
- Archbishop Christophe Louis Yves Georges Pierre, Apostolic Nunzio
- Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
- Archbishop Stephen Brislin, Archbishop of the Capetown (Kapaastad)
- Archbishop Ángel Sixto Rossi, S.J., Archbishop of Córdoba
- Archbishop Luis José Rueda Aparicio, Archbishop of Bogotá
- Archbishop Grzegorz Rys, Archbishop of Łódź
- Archbishop Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla, Archbishop of Juba
- Archbishop José Cobo Cano, Archbishop of Madrid
- Archbishop Protase Rugambwa, Coadjutor Archbishop of Tabora



The pope named 21 new cardinals after his recitation of the Angelus in St. Peter's Square on 9th July. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

- Bishop Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang
- Bishop Stephen Chow Sau-Yan, S.J., Bishop of Hong Kong
- Bishop François-Xavier Bustillo, O.F.M. Conv., Bishop of Ajaccio
- Bishop Américo Manuel Alves Aguiar, Auxiliary Bishop of Lisbon
- Reverend Ángel Fernandez Artime, s.d.b., Rector Major of the Salesians
- Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, Apostolic Nuncio.
- Archbishop Diego Rafael Padrón Sánchez, Archbishop Emeritus of Cumaná
- Father Luis Pascual Dri, OFM Cap., Confessor of the Shrine of Our Lady of Pompei, Buenos Aires

Pope Francis called for prayers for the future cardinals to help him in his service to the Church.

The Pope also said that, along with cardinals elect, two archbishops and one religious who have distinguished themselves for their service to the Church will also be added.

Look to God with childlike wonder, Pope says



Visitors applaud and greet Pope Francis after praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square on 9th July 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

Only by shedding feelings of personal greatness and regaining a sense of wonder in God's love can people welcome Jesus into their hearts and lives, Pope Francis said.

15,000 visitors gathered to pray the Angelus in St. Peter's Square on 9th July, the pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading from St. Matthew in which Jesus praises God the Father for hiding "things" from the

wise and revealing them to the childlike.

Those things, Pope Francis explained, refer to Jesus' miracles-restoring sight to the blind and healing lepers-which are "signs of God acting in the world" that are overlooked by the proud.

God's love, as reflected through Jesus' miracles, "is not understood by those who presume to be great

and manufacture a god in their own image: powerful, unyielding, vengeful," he said.

"These presumptuous ones fail to accept God as Father; those who are full of themselves, proud, concerned only with their own interests: these are the presumptuous ones, convinced that they need no one," Pope Francis said.

"The childlike are those who, like children, feel needy and not self-sufficient. They know how to read his signs, amazed by the miracles of his love."

Pope Francis urged Christians to ask themselves whether they let themselves stop and be amazed by how the signs of God are working or if they notice them only in passing.

"Our lives, if we think about it, are full of miracles, full of signs of love, of signs of God's bounty," he said. "Before these, however, our heart can also remain indifferent and become set in its ways, strangely unable to be amazed."

Pope Francis suggested that Christians should draw attention to

the signs of God's love in daily life in by "photographing" them in their minds and "printing" them onto their heart to then develop them in their lives through positive actions, so that the "photograph" of God's love "becomes brighter in us and through us."

The pope also recalled "with pain" the recent bloodshed in the Holy Land, where on 3rd July Israeli forces launched a two-day ground and aerial attack on the city of Jenin in the West Bank. The Palestinian government reported that 12 Palestinians were killed and at least 120 were wounded.

"I hope that the Israeli and Palestinian Authorities can resume a direct dialogue in order to end the spiral of violence and open paths of reconciliation and peace," the pope said.

“

Our lives, if we think about it, are full of miracles, full of signs of love, of signs of God's bounty

Pope: No one can be indifferent to 'silent massacres' of migrants



Carol Glatz

The world must change its attitude toward migrants and those in need, Pope Francis said.

"The brother who knocks at the door deserves love, hospitality and every care," the pope said in a letter marking the tenth anniversary of his first apostolic journey as pope to the Italian island of Lampedusa in July 2013. "He is a brother who, like me, has been placed on earth to enjoy what exists there and to share it in communion."

Lampedusa, which lies between Sicily and the northern African nations of Tunisia and Libya, has been for decades a major destination point for migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia seeking a new life in Europe. However, many migrants often make the journey in unsafe vessels or without needed provisions like food, water and floatation devices.

At least 2,000 people are believed to have lost their lives in 2022 and 2021 while crossing the Mediterranean. Nearly 26,000 people were recorded dead between 2014 and 2022, and, between 2014 and 2018, about 12,000 people who drowned were never found, according to Statista.

In his letter to Archbishop Alessandro Damiano of Agrigento, Sicily, the pope said he wanted to visit the people of Lampedusa to show support for 'those who, after painful ordeals, at the mercy of the sea, landed on your shores.' The Vatican published the letter on 8th July, in which Pope mourned 'the death of innocents', whose 'painful and deafening cry...cannot leave us indifferent.'

"It is therefore necessary for the church, in order to be truly prophetic, to make a diligent effort to set out on the paths of the forgotten, coming out of herself, soothing with the balm of fraternity and charity the

Pope Francis greets immigrants at the port in Lampedusa, Italy, 8th July 2013. The pope wrote a letter marking the tenth anniversary of the visit to support 'those who, after painful ordeals, at the mercy of the sea, landed on your shores.' (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via CPP)

bleeding sores of those who bear the same wounds of Christ imprinted on their own bodies," he added.

He urged Christians "not to remain imprisoned by fear and partisan logic, but to be Christians capable of replenishing this island."

The pope also marked Sea Sunday on 9th July, to raise awareness of the importance of the work performed by seafarers, after praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square. The international day of prayer for seafarers and their families, workers in the maritime industry, chaplains and volunteers with the apostolate of the sea, was officially established in 1975.

Pope Francis thanked all those at sea "who protect the oceans from various forms of pollution-in addition to their work-and remove from the ocean the garbage that we throw into it, the plastic."

"I would also like to gratefully remember all who work for Mediterranean Saving Humans for saving migrants in the sea," he said.

“

He is a brother who, like me, has been placed on earth to enjoy what exists there and to share it in communion.

Pope appoints hundreds to attend Synod of Bishops on Synodality

Pope Francis has appointed more than 450 participants, including dozens of religious men and women and laypeople from around the world, to attend the first general assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality in October.

Moreover, that list is not even complete, Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, told reporters at a Vatican news conference on 7th July. More names are going to be added to the list of nonvoting members, such as experts and representatives of non-Catholic Christian communities, he said.

For now, the list of voting members is complete, numbering 363 cardinals, bishops, religious and lay men and women—a first in the history of the synod. Pope Francis made significant changes to who can be a voting member of the synod on synodality and he gave women the right to vote in the synod.

Out of the 364 members who can

vote, which includes the pope, 54 are women—either lay or religious; the number of cardinals appointed as members also is 54. More than a quarter of all the voting members, that is 26.4%, are not bishops, according to the 21-page list of the appointments released by the Vatican.

Those the pope appointed to take part in October's synod include: 169 cardinals or bishops representing national bishops' conferences; 20 cardinals or bishops representing Eastern Catholic churches; five cardinals or bishops representing re-

gional federations of bishops' conferences; and 20 heads of Vatican dicasteries, which includes one layman, Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Dicastery for Communication.

Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the synod, said that more names will be added to the 450-strong list of nonvoting members at October's Synod. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



IN BRIEF

**Deaths in Sudan
airstrike**

At least 22 people have been killed in an airstrike in the Sudanese city of Omdurman, reported Reuters. The paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces said that more than 31 people were killed with homes demolished and dozens of civilians injured. The group said it condemns “the most severe aircraft bombing”. Clashes between the group and the Sudanese Armed Forces erupted in April, killing hundreds and injuring thousands more, according to officials. Parts of the capital Khartoum have “become a war zone”, said CNN.

**‘Race-based’ waiting
lists in NZ**

Controversy has erupted in New Zealand over “race-based” waiting lists after several hospitals in Auckland used an algorithm that bumps Maori and Pacific Islanders up the queue for elective surgery. The approach has “become a flashpoint” in the run-up to this autumn’s general election, which is expected to be tight, said The Sunday Times. Medical staff were told the aim of the new approach is to iron out “entrenched inequalities” in the health system because Maori and Pacific Islanders have a lower life expectancy than white New Zealanders of European descent.

**‘Big pharm’ seeks to
influence NHS**

“Pharma giants” are “pouring tens of millions of pounds into struggling NHS services” as they “seek to boost drug sales in the UK”, said The Observer. According to an investigation by the paper, drug firms are bankrolling groups that lobby for greater investment in their disease areas, and in some cases are paying “generous consultancy fees” to influential healthcare professionals, including GPs. “They are certainly not providing this funding as an act of charity,” warned David Rowland, director of the Centre for Health and the Public Interest thinktank.

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Members of the Sisters Poor of Jesus Christ pose with statues after arriving in El Salvador following their departure from Nicaragua on 3rd July 2023. The sisters are the latest community of women religious to leave the country where the regime of President Daniel Ortega has cracked down on the Catholic Church. (OSV News photo/courtesy Sisters Poor of Jesus Christ via Facebook)

Another group of sisters leaves Nicaragua, where church faces increasing persecution

A group of Brazilian missionaries has announced they have left their post in Nicaragua, becoming the latest community of women religious to leave the country, where some Catholics are facing increasing persecution by the government of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo.

The Sisters Poor of Jesus Christ posted their statement on Facebook, announcing the community’s departure from Nicaragua and its arrival in El Salvador.

“We want through this statement

to express our gratitude for the seven years of mission in the lands of Nicaragua; we appreciate the welcome of the church and its people during that time in which our charism remained in the country serving the poor in their multiple facets,” said the statement posted on the *Fraternidade O Caminho* page.

An article in *La Prensa Gráfica*, one of El Salvador’s national newspapers, said the community had expected to leave Nicaragua in the week of 9th July, following the fate of other religious communities with

foreign missionaries who have not been allowed by the government to renew their legal residency.

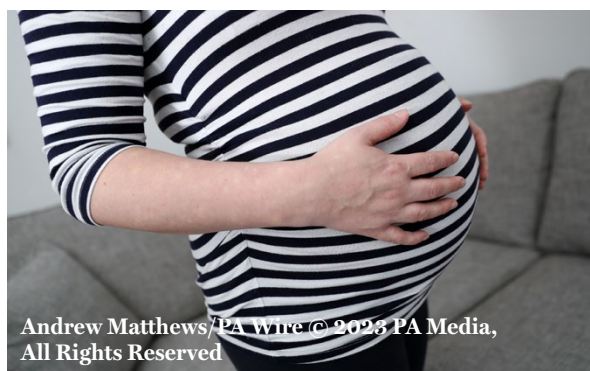
News of the Sisters Poor of Jesus Christ leaving Nicaragua came just ahead of Reuters reporting on 5th July that Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, sentenced in February to 26 years after being accused of treason, had been released from prison on 4th July.

But Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Baez of Managua, Nicaragua, who has been living in exile in Miami for some time, tweeted on 5th July that

As U.S. maternal mortality rises, pro-life leaders call for ‘Care for Her Act’

The proposed “Care for Her Act” promises to provide what its title suggests: support for women, specifically pregnant and parenting women. National pro-life leaders also stress the importance of the bill, which the House has not yet taken up this term, and similar pieces of legislation, as the maternal mortality rate continues to rise in the U.S.

While marking the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., chair of the House Republican Conference and a Catholic, expressed support for the Care for Her Act in remarks at the National Press Club. “I truly believe that the Supreme Court entrusted all of us with the responsibility of taking an important and deeply personal issue and building consensus to provide every child, mother, family, and espe-



Andrew Matthews/PA Wire © 2023 PA Media, All Rights Reserved

cially the unborn, this truly precious and sacred opportunity at life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” she said.

Many leaders focus on four particular features of the bill: A federal-state collaborative to assess and compile available support for pregnant women; an expansion of the child tax credit to include unborn

children; federal grants for women’s practical needs, including maternal housing, job training, and other educational opportunities; and incentives to improve maternal and infant health

while reducing mortality.

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released in March, 1,205 women died of maternal causes in 2021, which has risen since 658 maternal deaths were recorded in 2018. The bill “would address some of the major issues pregnant and parenting women face,” Serrin M. Foster, president of

he has received no information about Bishop Álvarez’s reported release.

The Sisters Poor of Jesus Christ did not say what hastened their departure or even mention that they were expelled, but thanked all “who built the mission with us making it possible to bring Christ to the poor” in Nicaragua.

In June 2022, a group of 18 Missionaries of Charity was expelled from the country and settled in nearby Costa Rica. This March a group of Trappist sisters from Argentina, who had been in Nicaragua for 22 years, announced they were leaving Nicaragua because of a lack of vocations. Shortly after, the government confiscated their property, something that almost all expelled communities later reported.

The present tension between the Catholic Church and the government began in April 2018 after churches opened their doors to people injured during clashes with government forces and pro-government groups. But by then the relationship between the country’s bishops and the government had been on the downslide.

Holy Week celebrations, which largely take place outdoors, were greatly limited and celebrated mostly inside churches in the country this year.

Feminists for Life, told OSV News.

“The pro-life movement should absolutely support legislation of this sort as it acknowledges the reality of a preborn child and how expectant women and families need to be connected with life-affirming resources,” Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action, told OSV News.

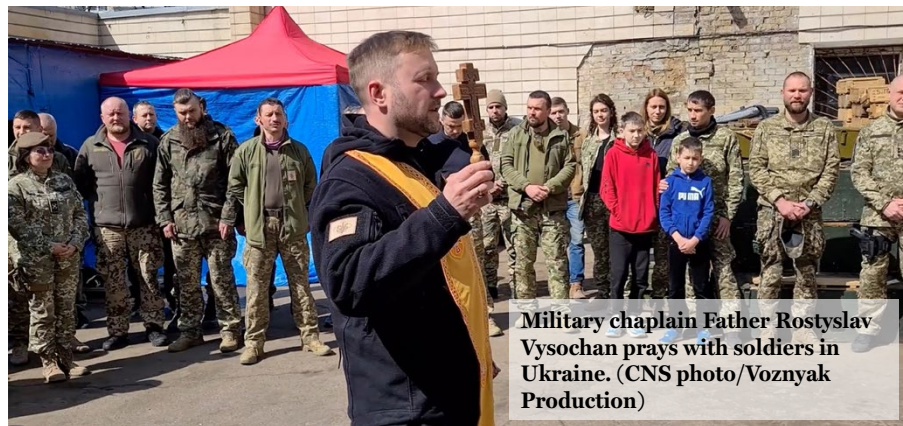
Hawkins, who leads the nation’s largest pro-life young adult organisation, highlighted features of the Care for Her Act, such as the expansion of the child tax credit.

“As a mother of four, I know the expenses that come with having a child don’t just start when they’re born,” she said.

“Allowing expectant parents to use the Child Tax Credit prior to birth respects this fact and aids in creating financially stable atmospheres.”

“Promoting pregnancy and parenting resources to provide support both before and after birth ... also increases healthy and happy families,” she added.

Ukraine's military chaplains 'in position' on front line, 'ready to heal the wounds of war'



Military chaplain Father Rostyslav Vysochan prays with soldiers in Ukraine. (CNS photo/Voznyak Production)

By **Gina Christian**

Ukrainian military chaplains are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their troops across a long front line, while readying themselves for a post-war ministry of healing throughout their nation.

"We're in our positions, and we're right next to our soldiers," said Jesuit Father Andriy Zelinsky, chief chaplain for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. "The Ukrainian front line today is

more than 1,200 kilometres (900 miles) long. And the chaplains are everywhere, with their units, wherever the units are."

Father Rostyslav Vysochan, a Ukrainian Catholic priest and a second lieutenant in Ukraine's armed forces, said his first experience in the trenches proved to be "the greatest time to be a priest."

He was first deployed to the front line in February 2015, one year after

helped wounded people. I was praying so hard," he said.

Father Vysochan said he was moved by the chance to "(close) the eyes of a soldier who was passing away."

"I gave him anointing," he said. "I also helped another soldier with some different psychological and moral problems. I recognised I was put by God in the right place, at the right time."

Russia launched its attacks against Ukraine by illegally annexing the Crimean peninsula and fomenting separatist activities in the country's Donetsk and Luhansk provinces.

One particular assault by Russian rockets marked "the best hours of my priesthood," said Father Vysochan, who drew on both his pastoral and medical skills while in the field. "I

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022 and is ongoing, has made for a "huge battlefield" that requires its chaplains to be "flexible," said Father Vysochan.

Working on the "second line," where soldiers rest from battle, "you can celebrate Mass, you speak, you can pray, you can motivate and listen," he said.

During those moments, Father Vysochan helps soldiers grapple with the burden of having to kill in order to preserve lives.

"This is our church tradition of just war," he said. "We have to talk about that ... in order to explain that you are not killers, you are defenders. And you defend your families, you defend your brothers, you defend your land, you defend your country. That is the main point of the Catholic Church's just war theory—that you are the defender."

Through the sacrament of confession, soldiers "receive peace in their hearts," he said. "You can always

come to holy confession, (and seek) the special prayers of your priest, of your chaplains. This is our role."

"The chaplains take part in the rehabilitation," said Father Zelinsky. "They're present to go through this process of coming back to life, coming back to yourself."

That process will become even more critical following the war's end, he said.

"After the victory, we're going to have approximately 15 to 20% of the Ukrainian population as veterans and their families," he said. "We are already thinking of how to provide support, how to provide help. ... We're going to be faced with the challenge that other contemporary states haven't faced since World War II."

“

you can celebrate Mass, you speak, you can pray, you can motivate and listen

Chaplains will be ready for their next "main task, to heal the wounds of war," said Father Vysochan.

"I think this is a moment for transformation of the Ukrainian society, and the church has definitely its role in this process," said Father Zelinsky.

Crowdfunding helps Spanish film company create series on life-changing stories of faith



Spanish actor and producer **Juan Manuel Coteló** (OSV News photo/courtesy Infinito Mas Uno)

Spanish actor and producer Juan Manuel Coteló is using his filmmaking skills to expose extraordinary testimonies of faithful men and women.

He said he wants to encourage many more people to live out faith with conviction. He embarked on a new Catholic-filmmaking mission in 2008 and now runs a production company called Infinito Mas Uno, based in Valencia, Spain. Similar to

the hit series "The Chosen," Coteló's productions are crowdfunded, so that the most popular projects are first to move forward.

His most recent crowdfunding effort has raised money for a documentary series called "Let's Be Bold" in English to tell stories that "are truly good news," he said. Six documentaries are now scheduled to move into production, giving 12 examples of people and groups showing courageous faith in action. One of the first in the series will be about food charity Mary's Meals, which provides daily school meals for 2.4 million children.

Coteló hopes that making such stories more widely known will show a "beautiful face of the church" and inspire "many others to take a leap of faith to follow their own calling in life."

"I could tell you lots of miracles that we have seen in only 14 years. From people who were desperate because they have done something really, really bad, to people who were really sad," Coteló said.

After the initial six documentaries, another six will be made after the next wave of fundraising. The public will ultimately decide how many stories Coteló will tell.

Lithuania church faces ‘urgent call’ for action on abuse

Catholics in Lithuania have urged their bishops to follow other countries’ example in setting up an inquiry on sexual abuse in the church in the wake of scandals that shocked the Catholic community.

“Recent experience by local churches across Europe and the world shows the most productive way to reunite the Catholic community, reclaim society’s trust and heal wounds is through investigations by an independent commission of experts. Only with the revelation of past events, acknowledgement of guilt, compensation of victims and an examination of conscience is a new path forward made possible,” they said in an open letter.

The letter, signed by over 150 Catholic professors, school directors, media workers and public figures, as well as priests and nuns, said recent abuse cases from Vilnius and other dioceses had been confirmed by court hearings. The letter added that the pope had warned that failure to act to stop this evil and to come to the aid of its victims would sully the church’s “witness to God’s love.”

“Only the most reliable knowledge and complete transparency can help avoid lies, ambiguities and cover-ups in future-alongside an effective system of preventing and reporting inappropriate behaviour and assisting victims,” the letter, addressed in early July to the country’s seven diocesan bishops and the Vatican’s nuncio, Archbishop Petar Rajic, said.

In May, the Vilnius Archdiocese’s chancellor, Father Kestutis Palikša, was sentenced to a 4,000-euro



(\$4,348) fine for purchasing child pornography on his computer, after police searched his curia offices following a tip-off from a former victim, who claimed to have been paid for sex at age 15.

A separate charge of forcing a minor to have sexual relations was dropped, and the priest, who contested some accusations, is currently suspended pending a Vatican ruling.

In a statement on 2nd June, Archbishop Gintaras Grusas of Vilnius, president of the Lithuanian bishops’ conference, said he had launched an internal investigation into Father Palikša’s offenses, but regretted he had not “delved

deeper,” and issued apologies to the victim and to church members in Vilnius.

“I failed to be a good pastor-to see all those entrusted to me and protecting the weak,” said Archbishop Grusas.

However, the press spokesman for Lithuania’s neighbouring Kaunas Archdiocese, Darius Chmieliauskas, told OSV News there had been no official church reaction to the open letter, adding that he had signed it himself, after notifying his ordinary, Archbishop Kestutis Kevalas, hoping “serious preventive action” would now be taken.

Meanwhile, another signatory

Archbishop Gintaras Grusas of Vilnius, Lithuania

Ruta Tumenaite, who heads Catholic programmes in Lithuania’s state radio, said she feared church leaders would ignore the letter, adding that Catholics would go on “demanding action, rather than words.”

The Catholic Church makes up four-fifths of Lithuania’s 2.73 million inhabitants. In 2018, after abuse claims were made against another Vilnius priest, while in 2020, church leaders passed the material to the Vatican on two priests accused of sharing child

pornography.

Calls for an independent commission on clerical abuse parallel moves by bishops’ conferences in France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. Vatican procedures for tackling abuse, established in 2011, require bishops’ conferences to draw up their own guidelines for preventing abuse and caring for victims in cooperation with Vatican dicasteries. In 2019, Pope Francis issued the motu proprio “Vox Estis Lux Mundi”, outlining global legal procedures for how the church should deal with clergy sexual abuse. In June 2022, the pope promulgated an updated version of the recommendations.

In his June 2 statement, Archbishop Grusas thanked journalists and prosecutors for highlighting Father Palikša’s crimes, but added that current Lithuanian church guidelines were “insufficient”, adding that he would gather a team to “build an effective prevention, whistleblowing and victim support system.”

In their open letter, Catholics said an independent commission should be led by a publicly trusted “impartial academic expert” without institutional links to the church, and given “access to all necessary data, including archival ones” by local bishops.

Chmieliauskas said it was essential for victims to come forward. A Lithuanian bishops’ conference statement said a church seminar on safeguarding was held in June with a Vatican expert for bishops, lawyers, psychologists and pastoral workers in the Panevezys Dioceses.

Prayer, fasting and ‘speaking the truth’ will restore religious freedom in Nicaragua, says Nicaraguan priest

Father Bismarck Chau remembers the religious processions of his childhood growing up in Nicaragua. The streets were filled with music and singing and the passion of the people was overflowing, especially during his favorite season of Lent. During the public Stations of the Cross, he would admire the statue of Jesus carrying the cross. He recalls being drawn to that statue and his faith inspired by it.

Decades later, Father Chau is now the pastor of Newark’s Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. This year, as he led his flock through the stations around the cathedral, he could not separate Lent from Nicaragua because back in his home country the streets were silent and empty, due to President Daniel Ortega’s ban on public displays of



Father Bismarck Chau leads a “Rosary for Peace for Nicaragua” at Newark’s Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart. (OSV News photo/courtesy Damaris Rostran)

the Catholic faith in February. The national police carried out the order throughout all the dioceses of the

country after Ortega branded priests, bishops, cardinals, and Pope Francis himself, as “a mafia.”

Catholics and the church in the Central American country continue to suffer oppression at the hands of the Ortega regime. This is the reality of religious freedom in Nicaragua right now-and it’s not just the clergy that the government seeks to

intimidate.

According to Damaris Rostran, who fled Nicaragua for America in 2003, if a church or a home flies the Vatican flag, they run the strong possibility of being sentenced to jail. “You can practice any religion, but if you are Catholic the police can march into your home,” she said.

She attributes the government’s antagonistic attitude toward Catholics to the fact that the church in Nicaragua always shielded the people from persecution.

“In 200 years of turmoil and civil war, the church was like a sheriff who would defend our basic rights. Our priests were the leaders of the people. And so, when the Sandinistas (and Ortega) came into power in 2007, they punished the Catholics,” she said.

Father Chau added that he feels worry and sadness for his half-brother and half-sister in Nicaragua, whom he barely communicates with to protect them from knowing too much. Ortega’s regime censors information and its citizens often learn of news weeks after the rest of the world.

While Rostran and Father Chau help their native country in their own respective ways, they are united in their belief that it will be the faith of all Catholic Nicaraguans that overcomes the regime that wishes to destroy it.

Father Chau believes “that through prayer, through fasting, and through speaking the truth, we will be free again.”

Getting to the ‘Heart of the Matter’ with Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh

By **Kenneth Craycraft**

In July 1948, Evelyn Waugh reviewed Graham Greene’s new novel, “The Heart of the Matter” for “Commonweal” magazine. Waugh used the opportunity not merely to review the book, but to discuss the purpose of the Catholic artist.

“There are ... Catholics ... who think it the function of the Catholic writer to produce only advertising brochures setting out in attractive terms the advantages of Church membership,” Waugh observed.

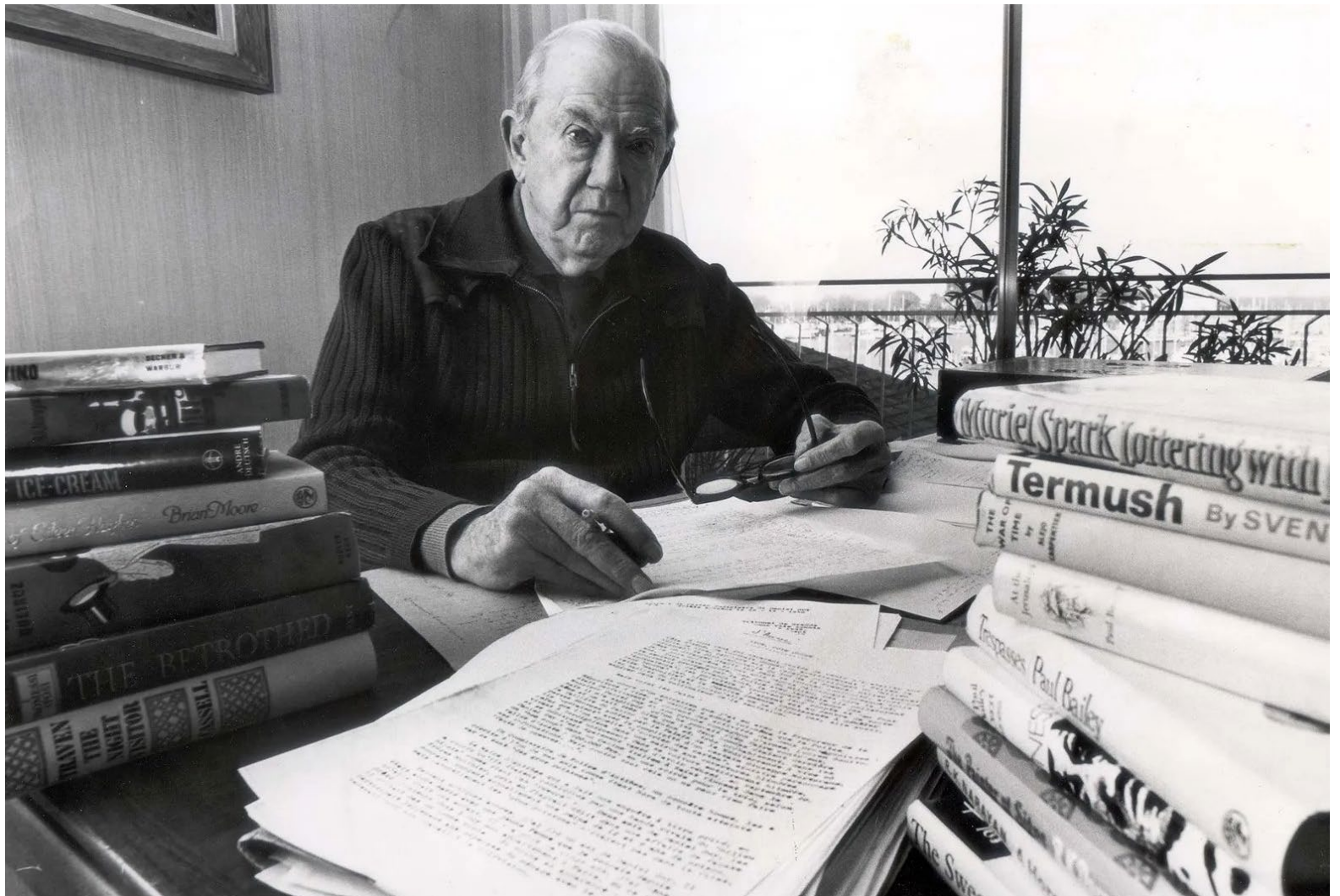
“To them this profoundly reverent book will seem a scandal,” he continued, “for it not only betrays Catholics as unlikeable human beings but shows them tortured by their faith.” Waugh predicted that “The Heart of the Matter” would “be the object of controversy and perhaps even of condemnation.”

I hope I can be forgiven for saying that Waugh’s review truly gets to the heart of the matter, both with regard to Greene’s book and its argument that good Catholic art may portray Catholics as disagreeable and haunted by their faith.

Waugh’s own greatest novel, “Brideshead Revisited,” can be described in precisely this way. The most (relatively) sympathetic character in “Brideshead”—its protagonist and narrator, Charles Ryder—is an adulterer who abandoned his wife and children before his conversion to Catholicism, and is churlish and rude after. And I know of no character in Catholic literature more tortured by his faith than Sebastian Flyte, the novel’s other central character, who can neither accept nor reject God’s grace.

One might suggest that the Catholic novel is plausible only to the extent that it is filled with unpleasant Catholics who wrestle with their faith. “I do believe, help my unbelief,” pleads the man in Mark 9:24. Greene wove the essence of this prayer into all of his novels, including “The Heart of the Matter.” If that is not the continuing prayer of every Catholic, pleasant or otherwise, we probably do not understand the nature of faith.

Unpleasant characters are not necessarily uninteresting, and Greene’s characters are always acutely drawn and richly developed. Whether the “whiskey priest” in “The Power and the Glory,” Pinkie in “Brighton Rock,” Bendrix in “The End of the Affair,” or Query in “A Burnt-Out Case,” they demonstrate Greene’s acute insight into the psychological, moral and spiritual nature of the fallen human person. Greene unfailingly places them in a complex web of conflict and tension, probing the depth and richness of Catholic theology and morality that resonates with the



scope of the human condition. As Waugh notes, Greene’s “characters are real people whose moral and spiritual predicament is our own because they are part of our personal experience.”

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To them this profoundly reverent book will seem a scandal, for it not only betrays Catholics as unlikeable human beings but shows them tortured by their faith.

“The Heart of the Matter” may be the best example of Greene’s gift, and possibly his finest novel, thus the anniversary of its publication is an opportune time to revisit its characters and themes. Its protagonist, Henry Scobie, is the deputy police commissioner in a fictional West African port city during World War II. He converted to Catholicism to marry his cradle-Catholic wife, Louise, but his conversion seems sincere and his

faith genuine. Indeed, as the novel develops, the authenticity of Scobie’s faith becomes the central device of the novel’s narrative arc. Louise is insufferable; she endlessly complains of climate-illness and constantly nags Scobie to send her to South Africa for a holiday to cure her unnamed ailments. Scobie’s efforts to finance this holiday lead to a series of unfortunate events—among them bribery, blackmail, adultery and murder—culminating in Scobie’s fate.

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Le pécheur es au coeur même de chrétienté ..., Nul n’est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n’est le saint

While the external narrative events are important, Scobie’s moral and spiritual struggles drive the novel. More to the point, Scobie’s sins expose both the depth of Greene’s theological reflection and his skill at probing the shared

boundaries of belief and unbelief, salvation and condemnation, heaven and hell. Greene placed a

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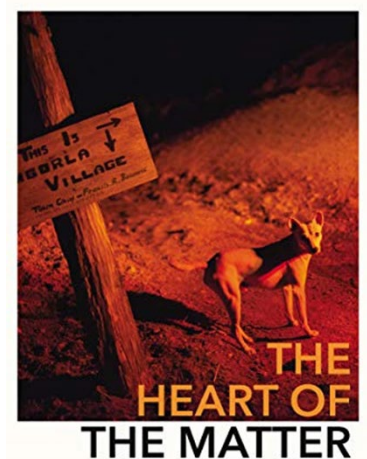
The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity No one is as competent as the sinner in matters of Christianity. No one except the saint.

quotation from Charles Péguy in the front matter of the book: “Le pécheur es au coeur même de chrétienté ..., Nul n’est aussi compétent que le pécheur en matière de chrétienté. Nul, si ce n’est le saint,” which translates as, “The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity No one is as competent as the sinner in matters of Christianity. No one except the saint.”

I do not think, as some of Greene’s critics contend, that Greene included the aphorism to imply that Scobie’s sins were a perverse kind of virtue. Rather, the

quote reflects his understanding that the glory of God’s grace is only known in relief to the depths of man’s depravity. Scobie’s transgressions do not bring him closer to God. Rather, they suggest to us that God’s mercy is most acutely known by those who need it most.

GRAHAM GREENE



As Waugh would concur, this is the heart of Greene’s “profoundly reverent book,” and it’s as true today as it was in 1948.

Seeking truth in the struggle with our sins



Sincerity is the life blood of a robust spiritual life. It's one of those good habits I call "worldly virtues," meaning virtues essential for living a good life in the middle of the world -- in this case, by being honest about our weaknesses along with our strengths, our confusions along with our certainties.

But honest with whom? With God, obviously. With other people no doubt. But first, as the basis and starting-point for honesty with God and others, we have to be consistently sincere with ourselves.

That isn't as easy as it sounds. Not everything that passes for sincerity is the genuine article. Pope St John Paul II got to the heart of the problem in its contemporary form in a 1993 encyclical, 'Veritatis Splendor' (The Splendour of Truth). He wrote of "currents of modern thought" that consider a judgment regarding a moral question to be true "merely by the fact that it has its origin in conscience."

Where that kind of thinking prevails, St John Paul said, "sincerity, authenticity and 'being at peace with oneself'" replace fidelity to objective truth.

He says that to have a "good conscience" to be genuinely sincere, people "must seek the truth and must make judgments in

accordance with that same truth" ('Veritatis Splendor,' No. 62).

Today, nevertheless, it's widely supposed that in matters of morality there is no such thing as objective truth. There's your truth and my truth and everybody else's separate version of truth, and each one is as good as any other.

Instead of simplifying the quest for sincerity, this makes it nearly impossible to be sincere, honest with God, with other people, and with oneself. Seeking the truth and judging and acting in its light are difficult enough for imperfect people in a fallen world. Today's moral relativism and subjectivism only make it harder.

There's a powerful illustration of self-deception and its cure in a memorable short story called "Revelation" by the American Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor.

The central character is Mrs Turpin, a middle-aged farmers wife who scorns poor whites, African Americans, and anyone else who doesn't meet her personal standards. But one day a series of events shakes her complacency. At day's end, Mrs Turpin has a vision "a vast horde of souls ... rumbling toward heaven."

Prominent in this multitude are "whole companies of white-trash," crowds of Black people, and

"battalions of freaks and lunatics." Bringing up the rear is a cluster of upstanding personages very much like herself.

"They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behaviour. They alone were on key. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces that even their virtues were being burned away. She lowered her hands and gripped the rail of the hog pen, her eyes small but fixed unblinkingly on what lay ahead."

Most of us won't have our eyes opened to the truth about ourselves in a manner as dramatic as that. It will be an arduous, lifelong process. "We often do wrong, and what is worse, we excuse ourselves," says 'The Imitation of Christ.'

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We often do wrong, and what is worse, we excuse ourselves

Sincerity is crucial to overcoming this tendency to self-deception. People serious about the spiritual

life generally do try to be sincere, knowing that a famous passage in the first letter of St John speaks the simple truth when it says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

But if we face up to our sinfulness, the passage continues, God "will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:8-9).

God's forgiveness waits on our acknowledgment of sin. That acknowledgment is a key part of being sincere.

Usually it isn't difficult for good people to recognise the specific, concrete evil actions they perform. Sins like anger, stealing and lust are ordinarily hard to overlook.

But it's different with sins of omission, the failures of love, honesty, compassion and generosity that easily escape our notice. For instance: a husband and father who's consistently patient and kind with his wife and children but short changes them when it comes to giving them his time. He buries himself in unnecessary after-hours work ("That's how you get ahead," he rationalises) along with frequent socialising with colleagues ("We need to relax once in a while"). The result is a persistent neglect of home and family obligations that he chooses to ignore.

This man needs to take an honest look at what he's doing. Or, more precisely, not doing. He needs to be sincere with himself.

And how crucial that is! St John Henry Newman in one of his homilies declares: "Without self-knowledge you have no root ... you may endure for a time, but under affliction or persecution your faith will not last.

This, he reasons, is why people become "infidels, heretics, schismatics, disloyal despisers of the Church. They endure not, because they never have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and they never have had experience of his power and love, because they have never known their own weakness and need."

Examination of conscience and spiritual direction are the two principal means of acquiring sincerity. They are or ought to be key parts of the spiritual lives of all who aspire not just to be good enough to scrape by and make it into heaven after a long stay in purgatory, but to be true saints, as the Second Vatican Council said they should. Neither is intended only for a small number of elitists. Supposing otherwise is a serious, destructive and all-too-common mistake.

Examination of conscience is ordinarily a daily affair, a few minutes spent in prayerful review of the day's successes and failures in the ascetical struggle, capped off with a concrete resolution for improvement. Daily examination is remote preparation for sacramental confession, which also should be part of the schedule, say, every two weeks. (Longer, more in-depth examination is appropriate on special occasions such as retreats and days of recollection.)

Spiritual direction also should be a regular exercise, perhaps once a month. The sessions needn't be lengthy, but they should be honest and to the point: serious conversations with a reliable guide (a committed Christian, of course, who shares the same values and beliefs as oneself) that help us achieve a clearer picture of our spiritual selves than we're likely to get alone. Direction doesn't replace the sacrament of penance, but is complementary to it.

To get good results, we have to use the means.

Examination of conscience and spiritual direction are means to becoming and remaining sincere.

Russell Shaw is the author of more than twenty books. He is a consultant of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

What the church teaches: End-of-life issues



By **Woodeene Koenig-Bricker, Robert Fastiggi**

The Catholic Church teaches that all life, from conception to natural death, is sacred. However, modern medical advances have made end-of-life issues increasingly difficult to sort out. Here is an overview of important moral issues surrounding life and death.

Why should I turn to the Church when a loved one is facing an end-of-life decision? Since such decisions are often made in times of great stress, talking to a priest can help you and your family understand Church directives, assuring that your decisions are both compassionate and morally ethical. Moreover, the Church offers not only the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist to help those who are sick or dying, but also provides the special graces of the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

What does the Church teach about the end of life? First, because God is the author of all life, God forbids the intentional killing of human life, by direct or indirect means. Second, life in all its stages is sacred, and “Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect” (CCC, 2276).

Third, human beings, regardless of their age, illness, social station or abilities are never to be considered

less than fully human. St John Paul II explained: “Even our brothers and sisters who find themselves in the clinical condition of a ‘vegetative state’ retain their human dignity in all its fullness. The loving gaze of God the Father continues to fall upon them, acknowledging them as his sons and daughters, especially in need of help.”

Finally, the Church does not say that life must be prolonged at all costs. Patients or their rightfully designated authorities may refuse “overzealous” treatments that are “burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome” (CCC, 2278). In short, only “ordinary means” of prolonging life are morally required in the case of illness and imminent death.

What does the Church mean by “ordinary means?”

“Ordinary means” refer to “the normal care due to the sick person,” including those remedies “that seem necessary or useful” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Declaration on Euthanasia”). The sick are to be kept clean, warm and protected from infection and pain as far as possible. They are to be given nutrition and hydration, even when these are provided by artificial means.

These “ordinary means” should

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Even our brothers and sisters who find themselves in the clinical condition of a ‘vegetative state’ retain their human dignity in all its fullness. The loving gaze of God the Father continues to fall upon them, acknowledging them as his sons and daughters, especially in need of help.

be distinguished from medical treatments that are overly burdensome, risky or painful when compared to the reasonable benefit they might offer. Practically, this means that a procedure that is experimental, offers little hope of success, or is too much to bear is not obligatory. For example, a 93-year-old grandmother who is partially paralysed by a stroke is diagnosed with breast cancer. She may decide that the risks of a

mastectomy coupled with chemotherapy are more than she is willing to endure. For her, the treatment would constitute “extraordinary means.” On the other hand, for a 33-year-old mother in otherwise good health, such an operation may be merely the “ordinary” means of dealing with her cancer.

Why shouldn’t I rely on medical professionals alone to make these decisions?

Medicine is an art as much as a science. Medical professionals can provide their best guesses as to the outcome of an illness but ultimately God determines the span of our days. After gathering all the medical facts, it is helpful to have the advice of a priest or moral counsellor to determine not only what may be considered extraordinary treatment in general, but also what may be considered extraordinary treatment in your particular case.

Why is euthanasia wrong?

Sometimes, in a misguided attempt to alleviate suffering, people believe that euthanasia, the direct ending of life, is an act of mercy. But the Church teaches that euthanasia is a “murderous act” and is always forbidden. Special consideration must be given to painkillers that could hasten death.

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Medical professionals can provide their best guesses as to the outcome of an illness but ultimately God determines the span of our days

The Church teaches that the use of painkillers “can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable. Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity. As such it should be encouraged” (CCC, 2279). In any event, the normal care owed to a sick (even terminally ill) person must be continued. Food and fluids normally should be provided. –

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Accepting the suffering that comes with illness, old age and the process of dying can “make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is.

The value of suffering Following Jesus’ example, the Church has always considered care for the sick and dying an essential part of its ministry. Accepting the suffering that comes with illness, old age and the process of dying can “make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him. ... By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion” (CCC, 1501, 1505).

Woodeene Koenig-Bricker is an author and editor Her latest book is “Dinner Party with the Saints” (Paraclete Press, 2021). Robert Fastiggi is the Bishop Britt Chair of Dogmatic Theology and Christology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, where he has taught since 1999. He has authored, co-edited, or co-authored 15 books most recently, ‘Virgin, Mother, Queen: Encountering Mary in Time and Tradition’ (Ave Maria Press, 2019) with Michael O’Neill.

Rome's underground: Ancient hidden histories



Pope Francis walks through the crypt of St Peter's Basilica as he visits the tombs of deceased popes at the Vatican on All Souls' Day, 2nd November 2020. (OSV News photo/Vatican Media)

In Rome, the churches are legion. Little parishes and great basilicas alike meet travellers on every block of the ancient city.

Although unique visions of beauty and faith greet all those who cross the thresholds of these churches, on the outside precious few stand out, their sheer number often giving architectural wonders the appearance of sameness. What's true above is also true below.

Beneath the great basilicas of Rome, beneath the masterpieces of Raphael, Michelangelo and Bernini, are the ruins of temples and domiciles, shops and baths. The same white marble remnants of the pagan past that lie scattered about Rome's city centre also lie buried in the basements of cathedrals. Upon them, the churches were built.

A journey down into the dark, humid corridors that snake below Rome's houses of prayer reveal some surprising Christian foundations.

Consider the Basilica of Ss John and Paul.

Originally constructed in the early fifth century, the basilica pays tribute not to the apostles John and Paul, but rather the martyrs John and Paul, saints of the Roman Canon. Today, its interior bears few traces of its paleo-Christian beginnings. But below, it's a

different story.

There, more than 20 interweaving rooms tell the tale of the church's origins.

The tale is a layered one.

It begins in the second century A.D. when two apartment complexes were constructed near the Roman Forum. Joined by a courtyard, the buildings' windows afforded the families who dwelt there a bird's-eye view of military parades and the travels of the great.

Decades later, in the third century, the lower level of the complex was converted into an arcade of shops.

Later still, in the early fourth century, Rome's population waned and the complex was once more restyled, this time into a single, noble dwelling. The home's first owners are unknown, but eventually two eunuchs of the emperor's court, the imperial guards John and Paul, took up residence there.

For a time, they served the emperor and practiced their Christian faith freely. But that changed with the accession of Julian the Apostate. Julian's reign was short, from 360-363, but not short enough for John and Paul. Someone betrayed their secret, soldiers were sent to their home, and when they refused to worship Julian, they were murdered on the spot.

Fellow Christians buried the martyrs in the home's walls. Soon afterward, three of them, Ss Crispus, Crispiniano and Benedetta, were caught praying at the tomb. More martyrs were made, and they too were buried inside the home. Eventually, Christians arranged for the purchase of the building, and under the auspices of the senator Bizante, remodelled the space for worship.

A few decades later, Bizante's son Pammachio undertook the building of the great basilica above, using the pillars of the martyrs' home as his foundation. The rooms beneath and the story they told were forgotten.

The martyrs alone were remembered until, in the late 19th century, the Passionist fathers who ran the basilica went exploring. In 1857, they went poking around the foundations of the Basilica of St Clement, discovering not only the original fourth-century basilica, but also another, lower level, which formed the foundation of the first basilica. That basilica was destroyed in 1084 when Norman soldiers sacked the streets of Rome. Rather than restore the original, builders filled in the lower level with rubble and dirt and used its walls as the new building's foundation.

Historically, it's important. From its beginnings as one of the first

churches of the newly Christian empire to its more recent history as a shelter for Jewish refugees during World War II, its walls have many stories to tell. But the most interesting stories may lie one level deeper.

There's always something appropriate about building a Catholic church over a pagan temple but the real reason for the location of the Basilica of St Clement may have more to do with the adjacent building, which was at first thought to be a government building.

But later research turned up evidence of a much different history. That evidence suggests that a wealthy Christian named Clement bought the property from Nero and there built an office for his freed slave, a Jewish convert to Christianity. That slave had taken his former master's name and now shepherded the Church as its fourth pope: St Clement. In short, the building upon which the Basilica of St Clement was built may have been nothing less than the first Vatican.

The modern-day Vatican has an underground story of its own, a story of buildings and bones uncovered at the height of World War II.

At the same time Pope Pius XII was hiding Jews in the Basilica of

St Clement, he also commissioned digging beneath the main altar of St Peter's. There, archaeologists found narrow streets paved with brick and lined with mausoleums. It was a necropolis, a long forgotten burial ground of ancient Rome hidden from view since the early fourth century, when Constantine, needing flat ground upon which to construct the first Basilica of St Peter, razed the hill upon which the mausoleums sat.

It had to be that hill, of course, because Christian tradition held that St Peter was crucified and buried there. Instead of an elaborate mausoleum, his resting place was a humble hole in the ground, marked at first by the hidden tributes of Christians, then later by a small marble monument, the Trophy of Gaius.

Above that Trophy, Constantine was said to have placed his basilica's altar. And in that same spot, more than a millennium later, Bernini too placed his altar.

Some believed the stories. Others thought them to be pious legends. But when Pope Pius XII's archaeologists went exploring, they found the Trophy of Gaius right where it was supposed to be, directly under the main altar of St Peter's Basilica. They also found a wall covered in early Christian graffiti, marked again and again with one name: Peter. Most importantly, they found, wrapped in an ancient purple cloth, what likely are the skeletal remains of the fisherman pope.

Each of these underground worlds through which privileged pilgrims now pass, shed light on a different aspect of early Christian history. But each in its own way tells the same story, a story of a faith so vibrant, beautiful and true that it permeated the very stones of a wayward world.

They also remind all Christians that it's not enough to have penetrated the past. The faith must also penetrate the present. It must penetrate what lies all around its churches, the streets and shops, offices and souls of the postmodern world. It happened once before. And with grace, it can happen again.

Emily Stimpson Chapman is a bestselling Catholic author of nearly a dozen books. Her writing can be found at <https://substack.com/@emilystimpsonchapman>.

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

Eat my body and drink my blood



One of the things we accept in the Catholic Church but which some find difficult to comprehend is the changing of bread and wine at the consecration during mass, into the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I've been asked many times; how can this be?

When Jesus told, not asked his

disciples to eat his body and drink his blood, some of them were a bit worried. If you were told to do this, what would you do?

Many people look at the consecrated host and wine they've been given at communion and wonder how this can be the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It always looks like bread and wine.

I got an inkling, not an absolute answer to this when I watched that fantastic film:

"The Student Prince"

This is a story about a young prince of a tiny European kingdom, who has been sent by the king, his

father, to a university. Having no real responsibilities, he has a marvellous time with fellow pupils, and he even falls for the local barmaid.

I'll always remember the wonderful music and songs of this musical. One day a senior advisor to the king arrives at the university and demands to see the prince. The prince is sent for, and the advisor bows before him and tells him his father has died, and that he is now the king.

He leaves immediately, one painful thing being he knows his affection to the barmaid cannot continue, he must take over the reigns and responsibilities of the kingdom and see to his father's funeral.

On returning to the royal palace, he is introduced to all his ministers and what their responsibilities are. These are the people he will have to rely on to give him accurate information about any decisions he has to make as king. It does not take him long to realise the awesome responsibilities he's just inherited.

There is a very poignant scene in the film showing the prince in military uniform standing before the coffin of his father. Whilst there,

he shows his acceptance of his responsibilities when he sings that marvellous song:

'I'll Walk with God'

The words show us that the prince has changed significantly, understanding the awesome responsibilities he's taken on, and that he's going to need all the help he can get from God.

There has now been a complete change in the character of the prince, from a young student with no responsibilities into a man who has the enormous responsibilities of a kingdom, but the fact that he still looks the same, is what I found interesting.

I know that this does not answer the bread and wine becoming Christ's Body and Blood after the Consecration, but it does show that a thing can change considerably and still look the same.

Just because the bread and wine look the same before and after the consecration, never doubt that it has changed. What we receive at Holy Communion is the body and blood of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, never did things by halves. If he said receive my body and my blood, then we receive his body and blood.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

And Jesus wept

The insistent crying of a child is hard to ignore. When the time for a feed arrives, an infant makes their demand very clear until the bottle or breast satisfy hunger and an instant suck replaces the crying demand.

Yet tears can express opposite emotions. We speak of tears of sorrow and tears of joy. We cry when we are hurt or feel sorrow on behalf of someone else. In Seamus Heaney's poem, 'Mid Term Break', he describes returning from school following the death of his younger brother Christopher, and being met on the doorstep by his father.

The impact of the occasion is made clear. His father cried.

Padraig Daly in his translation from the Irish, 'Lament', describes seeing his friends gravestone in these two lines.

Yet a joyous event can also result in tears, this time tears of joy and elation. The joy of a birth or recovery from illness can also result in the emotional outpouring of tears, of a joy to behold.

The sorrow over loss is recorded in the Gospel account of the death

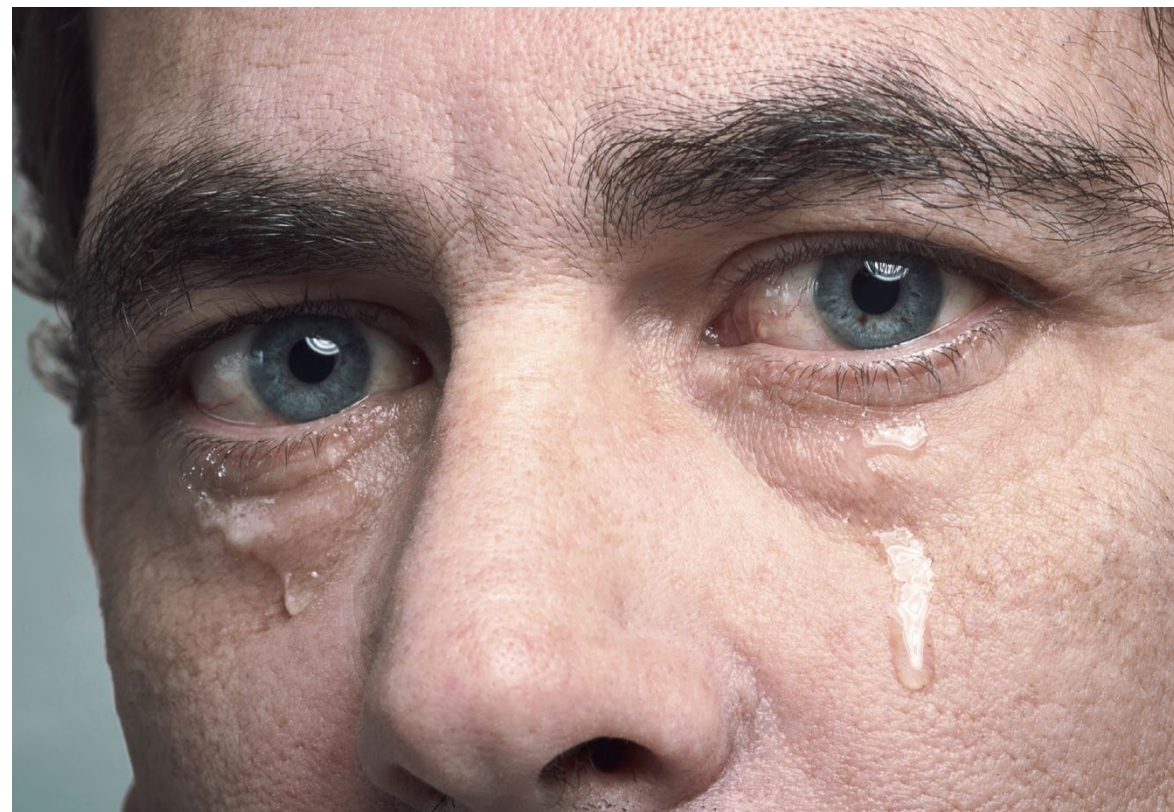
of Lazarus in three simple words 'And Jesus wept'.

We are sometimes reluctant to show our feelings- the phrase 'men don't cry' epitomizes this position. Yet the shedding of tears can bring relief as well as showing compassion for another or a sharing in a friend's joy.

Time and again our television newscasts show weeping groups of people after another terrorist outrage as families weep for those who have been killed or injured or for the loss of their home together with their few belongings. Their tear-streaked faces and part closed eyes challenge us to respond.

During the Biafran civil war in the 60s, one very graphic Charity appeal poster depicted a crying mother holding her distraught child, her hand outstretched for help. It required few words. Shedding tears is an expression of love that not only shows our concern for another person's grief but it is a way of coping with our own

Shedding tears is an expression of loving concern that not only shows our concern for another person's



grief but also helps us cope with our own sorrow.

Tears can express opposite emotions

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Saving Your Life



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Jesus tells us: “The person who loses his life will save it” (Matthew 10 : 39). What is meant by this? This expression is called a paradox, a way of conveying the truth through an apparent contradiction. It is meant to make us think, so let’s mediate on its meaning.

always be successful. Success is being yourself, not other people. Most people want to be other people. As someone said, its better to be a first rate example of yourself than a second rate example of someone else. Doing what you love, not lording it over others but helping them, is the key to a happy life. Losing ourselves to the attachments of material things and to the self, is the key to freedom and growth. A mother loses herself for love of her child. An artist loses himself for his art. The world of nature has to die to produce new life. So too with all flesh.

When we lose ourselves and touch base with the source of our being, we have a new feeling about ourselves and the world around us. This feeling is one of exuberance in the joy of living. To see and experience God in all of creation and know we can do nothing without his help, is to be part of something beautiful and permanent.

It is to be united with the source of our very being, and with everyone.

Have you ever felt weary, unfulfilled and unhappy? You don’t have to be unusual to feel this way once in a while. Most people feel that way at some time in their lives. We wonder if life is worth living, if it’s worth the effort to keep going. When we feel that way, we have just a glimpse of what it means to be lost. We feel inside us the need for someone or something to reach down and lift us out of our inner chaos. What we want is to be saved from our own emptiness and the world’s weariness. What we want is meaning in our lives. Everyone wants to be fulfilled. In a theological sense, everyone wants to be saved, both from themselves and from the machinations of the

world. How can this be done? There is an answer in Matthew’s gospel.

Jesus tells us: “The person who loses his life will save it” (Matthew 10 : 39). What is meant by this? This expression is called a paradox, a way of conveying the truth through an apparent contradiction. It is meant to make us think, so let’s mediate on its meaning.

Saving your life comes about in two ways:

The first comes from the realisation we cannot be saved through possessions, power, and privilege. These material obsessions will only turn to naught and will leave us even emptier than we were before we had them. The world is

full of examples of disappointed people who strove for happiness in all the above ways, in all the wrong ways. You are more important than money, than the exercise of power or the acquisition of positions of privilege in life. You are a child of God, and of the universe. Don’t throw your life away on the pursuit of material things that corrode and wither away. Lose your interest in those things if you want to rise to new life, if you want to know how to love the way the Lord showed us.

The second way is to put your trust in God, in a higher power than yourself. People who have turned to AA have learned the wisdom of this. We may study the gospels, we may be the product of a

strict religious upbringing, we may imagine that we have it all together and can control every appetite and every inclination of our unruly selves. This, too, is an illusion. No matter how much we try, we must always rely on God and not on ourselves. He is the source of our existence, and without him, we can do nothing.

Only God can save us from ourselves, and fulfil our desire for happiness. Thus, Jesus asks us to lose our life in order to save it. Many people think that success is the key to happiness. But, they have it all wrong. They have it backwards. If you are content doing what you love, no matter how small or great it may be, you will

The Child within

“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me.”
Mark 9 : 37

When Jesus announced to His followers His mission to fulfil God’s will by being handed over to suffering and death, you could almost feel the tension in the air (Mark 10 : 30-37). The scene quickly deteriorated into ironic comedy. The disciples not only did not get it, they began to bicker among themselves about who was the greatest in the Lord’s kingdom. Jesus doesn’t allow his disciples

to get away with their misinterpretation and ensuing childishness. Instead, He takes advantage of the situation to teach them that true greatness is coextensive with childlikeness. In contrast to their childishness, Jesus urges His followers to be childlike, to be open and receptive like a child. He rescues His followers from their adult foolishness by offering them the image of the child and by calling upon all who would follow Him to become like little children in spirit.

This was a revolutionary doctrine then and it still is today. In Jesus’ day children had no rights. But, Jesus was driving at something deep within our spiritual psyches. He was pointing out the need to strip away appearances as does the unassuming child and to open ourselves up to God’s love. “The child,” as the poet Wordsworth remarked, is “the father of the man,” because the innocence of the child can liberate the adult from the burdens of prejudice and sin, from the accumulation of bad habits and bad influences, acquired through compromise with the ‘world.’ Throughout His life, Jesus was

criticised and mocked by the ‘clever’ people of His day, those self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees and Saducees who tried to undermine His message of love by quoting and twisting to their advantage minute details of the law. In instance after instances, the lord exposed their insincerity by showing how they abused their authority as teachers by perverting the spirit of the law to suit their own selfish desires. It was to the decent people with the spirit of the child that the Lord announced the good news.

Jesus is asking His followers to awaken to the spirit of the child within.

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unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

That is why He says: “unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

16th July 2023 – 15th Sunday, (A)
Isaiah 55:10-11

God's word is like rain which fertilises the Earth

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Romans 8:18-23

All creation eagerly waits for God to reveal his glory in us

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23

The Sower and the seed. The good soil of the receptive heart

Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great

crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.' With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: 'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with

their ears, and understand with their heart and turn-and I would heal them.'

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The Power of the Word

As a former teacher, I'm often surprised at what some past-pupils remember. It would be less embarrassing on occasions if they conveniently forgot. "I remember you saying one time. ..." and out it comes, if not word for word, at least in its general thrust as they heard it.

Even merely spoken words can have an extraordinary life-span. Sometimes we remember things our parents said, long after they are gone; their words are not dead so long as we are alive and recall them.

What's true of the ordinary word is even more true of God's. That's what's stressed in today's readings. It's put in the strongest of terms in the reading from Isaiah 55:10-11: "So it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled, or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do." The only defence against God's word is inadvertent or deliberate deafness. And being deaf or hard of hearing is something today's Gospel does not recommend. In fact, it urges us to hve our ears cocked. But it conveys that message in a different image. It urges us to let the Word fall into good soil, so that it can yield a rich harvest in our lives.

Even though we're meant to have our ears cocked in church, and even though there's no substitute for hearing God's word as a worshipping community, the richest soil in any parish has to be in the home. The home, more than any place else, is a good place for growth. If space is made for God in the home, if parents pray with their children from an early age, if parents treat one another well, if the relationships within the home are basically sound, if Mass, as Christ's memorial, is seen to matter to the older people, then there is a fair old chance that in the hearts and minds of the children, the seed

will take root and grow! It doesn't always happen, but on balance, if we do the best we can, there's a fair old chance that it will! In a sense, education is what remains when you have forgotten the texts themselves. We forget so easily what was said in church or school. We never forget what happens in the home. The hate and the tension and the fighting, or the hope and the love and the peace. I knew a person once who used to get up every night and do a Holy Hour for one of their children who was sick. Wasn't that extraordinary? What family could ever forget that? What family could fail to be influenced by it? But in a sense it's a bad example because it's so exceptional. It's the ordinary things that make the impact on most of us, the daily effort, the daily drudgery, the repeated efforts a father or mother make separately or together to think of us and to remind us of God. It's only when somebody dies and people start looking back that the ordinary daily sacrifices take on a heroic pattern, and people say, "God, she was a great woman" or "he was a great man." If we receive God's word every day in our lives and try to live it, then we are scattering the seed ourselves for the younger generation and generations to come.

I wouldn't like to give the impression that it's only parents or older people who are expected to receive God's word and live it! I think God's call comes to us at its most personal and urgent when we are young. That's when most of us felt called to our particular vocations. That's when I felt the call to be a priest! God's word has fresh soil and a great future when it falls in a young heart. So if you are young, be generous with God. Be truthful and just and caring and good-living. Be faithful to your Sunday Eucharist and give it continued life throughout the week in the great commandment of love. One of the greatest saints the Church has ever produced, St Thérèse of Lisieux, "the little flower," was only twenty-four when she died. What use she made of her youth! She had one great objective: At the heart of the Church, my mother," she said, "I shall be love." Make that your own. Make it your personal resolution, your greatest objective, your life-long ambition! At the heart of the Church, my mother, I shall be love."

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

'Son of Man' title shows Jesus was both human and divine

Q. We refer to Christ by various titles: the Messiah, the Lamb of God, Son of the Father, etc. But I have never understood why, in the Scriptures, Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man." That sounds, to me, a little less than divine. Why does Christ call himself that?

A. Your question is an insightful one and has been the subject of considerable discussion by Scripture scholars. Pope St. John Paul II (on April 29th 1987) devoted one of his weekly audience talks to explaining what Jesus meant when he called himself "Son of Man." That title is used in the four Gospels, always within the sayings of Jesus; and depending on the context, it can refer either to Christ's humanity or to his divinity.

At certain times, the pope pointed out, Jesus seems to be highlighting the fact that "he took his place with that same name as a true man among men, as a son of a woman, Mary of Nazareth," one who shares entirely our earthly condition and suffering.

An example comes in Matthew's Gospel (8:20) where Jesus says, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

In other passages, though, Jesus uses the title with clear reference to the prophecy of Daniel (7:13-14), which was viewed by all as messianic: "I saw coming with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man. ... He received dominion, splendour and kingship; all nations, peoples and tongues will serve him."

When Jesus cures the paralytic who has been lowered through the roof, for example, he ascribes divinity to himself by first saying to those looking on with these words: "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth..." (Mk. 2:10).

Even more patently, when on trial before the Sanhedrin, he was asked, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus answers, "I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk. 14:61-62).

So the one title, Son of Man, had a dual purpose: to lay claim to Christ's unique nature, which was both human and divine.

Q. When I was an Evangelical Christian, the standard take on Mary's virginity was that she remained a virgin until after the birth of Jesus, but afterward went

on to have normal marital relations with Joseph, which produced up to six more children. These ideas were based on passages like Matthew 1:25: "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus" Now, as a Catholic, I am told that Joseph was significantly older than Mary, was a widower with adult children from his first marriage and that Jesus' "brothers and sisters" were more like stepbrothers and stepsisters. Could not Mary still have attained "Queen of Heaven and Earth" status without being a perpetual virgin?

A. As to your specific question, whether Mary could be thought of as queen of heaven and earth without having been a perpetual virgin, the answer of course is yes. But that is not the issue here.

The teaching of Mary's perpetual virginity is one of the longest defined dogmas of the church. It was taught by the earliest church fathers, including Tertullian, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and it was officially declared a dogma at the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople in 553.

As to the scriptural passages to which you refer, I would make two points. First, the footnote in the New American Bible explains Matthew 1:25: "The Greek word translated 'until' does not imply normal marital conduct after Jesus' birth, nor does it exclude it."

As to your other scriptural reference, the words here in their original language do not mean simply biological brothers or sisters, but could apply to other relatives such as stepbrothers or stepsisters or cousins.

There is one tradition that says that Joseph was a widower who married the Virgin Mary later in life after already having a family with his first wife. One is free to believe that, but here is why I would have my doubts: from the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary's care to the apostle John.

If Jesus had had surviving siblings, that would most likely not have happened. Normal Jewish practice would have Jesus' siblings at the cross, and the eldest surviving son would be entrusted with the care of his mother.

Q. My question is related to our Holy Father, in light of my admiration for him. Is Pope

Francis still bound by the religious vows he professed as a Jesuit? I would imagine that Ignatian spirituality still plays a large role in his daily life, but is he still technically a member of the religious order? As pope, would he no longer be subject in obedience to the Jesuit Superior General?

A. The question you raise—whether Pope Francis is still a Jesuit—is an interesting one and is, in fact, disputed by canonists. Some say that years ago, when he became a bishop, he was dispensed from his vows of poverty and obedience and therefore exited the Jesuits. I think that's being over-technical.

He was dispensed from poverty because, canonically, a bishop owns diocesan property, and from obedience, because from episcopal ordination on, a bishop is subject to the pope rather than to his religious superior. I consider Francis to be still a Jesuit, and I think that he does, too.

Just a few days after his election to the papacy in 2013, Francis wrote a letter to the Jesuit Superior General in which the pope referred to the Jesuits as "our beloved order", and his papal coat of arms contains the official seal of the Jesuit order.

I would hold that Francis remains a Jesuit and is still bound by his Jesuit vows, but with an asterisk—and I would quote Code of Canon Law No. 705 in defence of that position. Nothing is said directly in the church's code about a religious who has been elected pope, but Canon No. 705 does state that "A religious raised to the episcopate remains a member of his institute but is subject only to the Roman Pontiff by virtue of the vow of obedience..."

So, Francis, I would conclude, continues to be bound by the vows of chastity and poverty (simplicity of lifestyle) but not by obedience. Father Ladislav M. Orsy, a Jesuit canon lawyer who teaches at Georgetown University Law Center, said of the pope: "His vow of obedience ... loses its meaning because he has no Superior to obey."

Ignatian spirituality (St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Jesuits in 1534) clearly threads its way through much of what Pope Francis says and writes. Jesuit Father James Martin has pointed out that Pope Francis has more than once invited his hearers to picture themselves present at a Gospel scene and to consider how they would have



'Just a few days after his election to the papacy in 2013, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the Jesuit Superior General in which the pope referred to the Jesuits as "our beloved order"'

responded to Jesus—a meditation technique favoured by Ignatius in his spiritual exercises.

Q. I am confused about the terminology used in my parish for confession. We are a rural parish and have very few opportunities for confession, but there is always the chance to make a private appointment for confession. Any scheduled confessions are now announced as reconciliation, and I am not clear as to what to expect when I go. Sometimes there is a reconciliation service followed by confessions; other times there are only confessions. Does the church no longer recognise a difference between the reconciliation service (which was to prepare us for confession) and the sacrament of confession (which is private). In other words, is there still a sacrament of confession or is it now called the sacrament of reconciliation?

A. Generally, the sacrament of penance can be called confession or reconciliation, and the three terms are used interchangeably. In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Nos. 1423-24) lists several names by which the same sacrament can be designated.

These include: the sacrament of conversion, the sacrament of penance, the sacrament of confession, the sacrament of forgiveness and the sacrament of reconciliation.

The catechism notes that "the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament" (No. 1424).

Sometimes parishes offer reconciliation services that include prayers and scriptural readings on forgiveness, as well as a homily on the same topic. It would be good for a local church to mention in advance what the format will be for the sacrament—in particular so that parishioners can know how much time to allow.

Q. I have recently volunteered to attend adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as a "guardian." I do this

twice a week. I have been wondering this: What happens if the monstrance and Eucharist is stolen? The monstrance can be replaced, but I have heard that a priest may have to reconsecrate the church itself.

A. Because of the church's belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, desecration of the host is considered a grave sin. In fact, Canon 1367 of the Code of Canon Law says that a person who takes or retains the consecrated species for a sacrilegious purpose incurs an excommunication that can only be lifted by the Holy See.

Unfortunately, this scenario is not hypothetical. In 2020, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Manhattan, a thief took from the parish's adoration chapel a small gold monstrance that contained the Blessed Sacrament. A few days later, an auxiliary bishop of New York led a prayer service at the church that included an act of reparation for the theft.

At the service, Bishop Edmund J. Whalen spoke of the centrality of the Eucharist, saying that "Jesus lives in us through the Eucharist, he nourishes the world with his presence... This is the realisation of our faith."

The parish administrator noted: "We ask for forgiveness from the Lord for the person who has done this."

In 2019, at Holy Spirit Parish in El Paso, Texas, intruders broke into the church and stole items including the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament. The pastor of the parish, calling the theft "the desecration of the greatest gift possessed by the church," invited parishioners to make reparation by visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

In both thefts, there was no mention of a ceremony to "reconsecrate" the church building, and I am not aware of any canonical mandate to that effect.

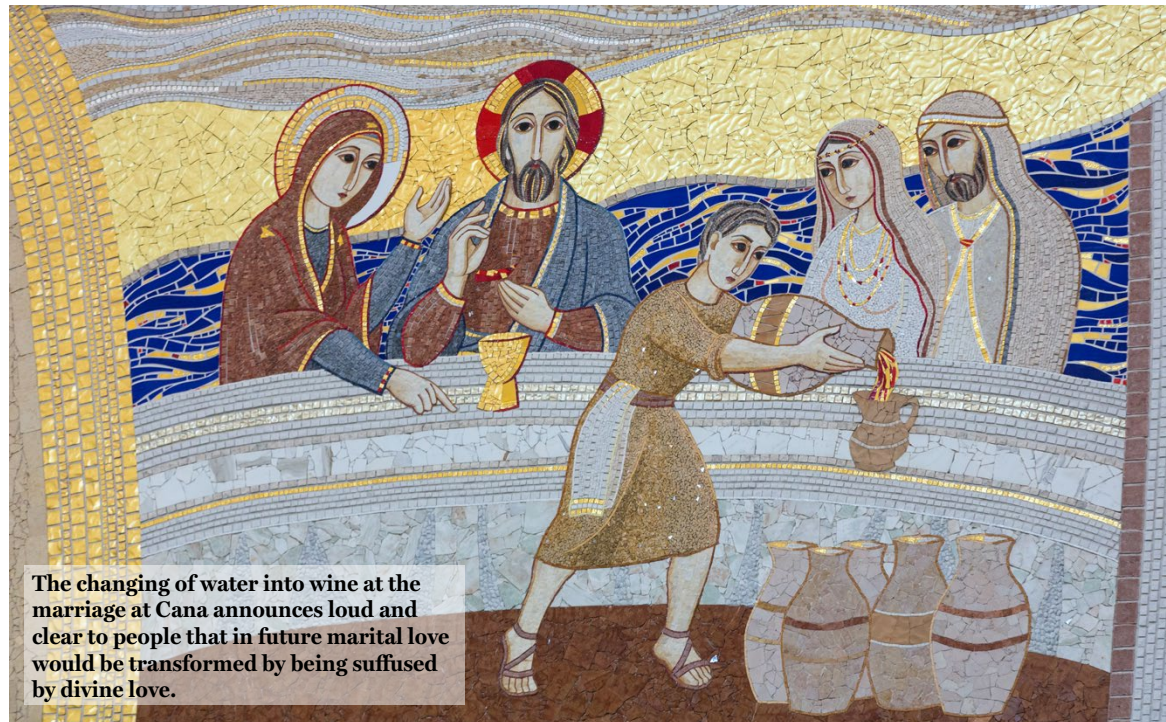
Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Human Loving Suffused by the Divine



The changing of water into wine at the marriage at Cana announces loud and clear to people that in future marital love would be transformed by being suffused by divine love.

When Helen, said to be the most beautiful woman in Greek antiquity fled with her lover to Troy, she did not receive the reception that she expected. Although her lover was Paris, the son of the King, he and his courtiers were reluctant to admit her. One look at her face rightly confirmed that her husband, the King of Sparta would indeed launch a thousand ships to retrieve her. She was therefore understandably interrogated about her motives for deserting him. The king was on the point of rejecting her when she cried out in her defence, "Do we not all know that the gods have made us to love and to be loved, and so achieve our destiny? I can only achieve that destiny here in Troy and with your son, Paris, whom I love with all my heart."

To Love and be Loved

One thousand years later Jesus came to tell us that our God has also created us to love and to be loved, as part of the preparation for the infinite loving that is our ultimate destiny. Learning to love here on earth, prepares us for the ultimate love for which we all yearn in heaven. That is why marriage is a sacrament and that is why, first and foremost and before all else, Jesus went to Cana in Galilee, not just to give his blessing to human marriage, but to show how human loving can be transformed when, as it is being learnt, it is suffused with and surcharged by the divine.

This was for St John, who tells the story in his own unique way, the meaning of the miracle of the changing of the water into wine. He does not call it a miracle, but a sign because what the miracle

signifies is more important than the miracle itself. This sign has long since been interpreted as symbolising how, just as Jesus can change water into wine, he can change the old order into the new; the Old Covenant into the New Covenant. However, the context in which he performs this action gives it a more specific meaning. Now, and in future, thanks to the incarnation, human love will be suffused through and through with the divine.

Cana in Galilee

Water can indeed quench our thirst, but when water is permeated through and through with the fruit of the vine and allowed to ferment, it is filled with properties and powers that far surpass water alone. This is what happens when human love is permeated by divine love. At Cana in Galilee Christ's first miracle demonstrated this, as a sign, by transforming water into wine. The sign announces loud and clear, at least to people who knew the meaning of signs and symbols in a way that was lost to later generations, that in future marital love would be transformed by being suffused by divine love. That is why this sacrament is so special.

It is the only sacrament of the seven in which the husband and wife, and not the priest or the bishop are the normal ministers. In other words, it is they who transmit the love of God to one another through each other's love for one another, through the selfless sacrifices that they make for each other every day and every moment of every day for the rest of their lives. This love is then literally handed on to their children, even

before it is received directly and independently from God.

Bonaventure – Contemplation is Learnt at the Mother's Breast

I first experienced God's love through my parents' love as an infant, even before I was baptised. In my case my baptism confirmed what had already happened, was happening and would continue to happen through my parents' love for each other that overflowed onto me. Long before my mother taught me how to pray, how to turn to receive God's love independently, and long afterwards for that matter, her love continued to sustain me. I well remember when I was ill as a very small child, how my mother swept me up into her arms and placed me in my parent's bed between her and my father where I felt safe, secure and loved. When I was later handicapped with an ongoing incapacity, her love was lavished on me, eventually giving me the security to live my life independently. Without her love for me that would not have been possible, nor would it have been possible for me to journey on through the dark nights of spiritual purification where the fire of the Holy Spirit would begin to purify me.

I would never have persevered, nor ever have come to experience, albeit in brief glimpses, the love that surpasses the understanding. That is why St Bonaventure said that contemplation is first learnt at the mother's breast. For myself I know this to be true. However, the sacramental marriage sanctified at Cana depended on another previous mystical marriage for the first Christians that was solemnised at

baptism during the rites of Christian initiation. All are called to this mystical marriage, whether married or not.

All the great spiritual writers from the beginning used the analogy of human love to show how this mystical marriage with Christ takes us up and into the love of God. That is why they repeatedly used the most beautiful love poem in the Old Testament, the Song of Songs, or the Song of Solomon, to describe and detail the mystical journey through Christ into God.

It was originally sung as part of every Jewish marriage ceremony. It would have been sung by Jesus himself with all the other guests at Cana as they escorted the bride from her old home to the new home that she would henceforth share with her husband. It should not therefore be surprising that for centuries to come, this mystical marriage with Christ was the high point of the spiritual life for religious and lay people alike.

Later however, although many spiritual writers rightly used the mystical marriage to denote the high point of the mystic way, they wrongly believed that it is only for a chosen few, usually only for those dedicated to God in religious life. This is not the case, and never was in the profound mystical spirituality taught to the first Christians by the Fathers of the Church. They received this teaching from Jesus himself, long before religious life as we know it ever existed. It is for all.

Spiritual Marriage

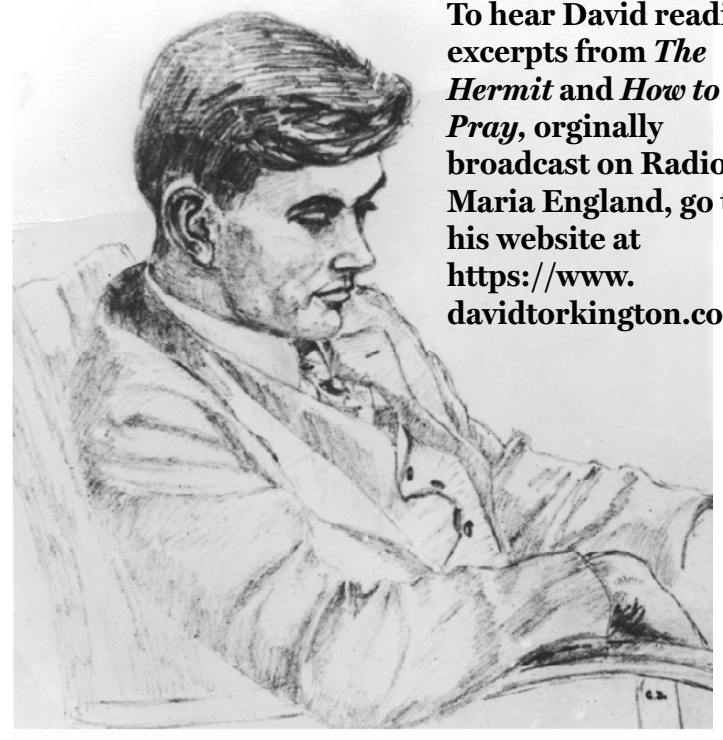
There are therefore two marriages for a Christian, the sacrament of marriage and the mystical marriage to which we have all been called at baptism. When the new Christians emerged from the baptismal pool as one with Christ, they were led in procession into the Christian community where their spiritual marriage was consummated for the first time in Holy Communion. This Marriage however, was not the end of, but the beginning of love, a love that would be demonstrated time and time again every day and in every moment of every day, for the rest of their lives through all that they said and did.

The Great Amen

That is why, when the early Christians came to offer themselves to God in an act of communal worship at the end of the great Eucharistic prayer, St Justin said that the sound of the great *Amen* was proclaimed with such power and gusto that it all but took the roof off. Why? Because that *Amen* represented all that they had done, all that they had given, and all the sacrifices that they had been making to God, in both their spiritual and their human marriages that complement each other.

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
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St Bonaventure's triumphs at 2023 Brentwood Catholic Schools Citizenship Awards

St Bonaventure's School in East Ham, known for its commitment to excellence in education and character development for boys in the East End of London since 1873, has secured three prestigious awards at the 2023 Brentwood Catholic Schools Citizenship Awards.

The school's students, Desmond, Ehsan, and Kaylan, have been recognised for their exemplary display of good citizenship and exceptional contributions to their community.

Year 7 student, Desmond, 12, was lauded for his unwavering fortitude and tenacity. Desmond embodies the school's cherished virtues of Faith, Hope, Charity, Integrity, Courage, Humility, and Kinship both in his academic pursuits and in his interactions outside of school. With an infectious smile and a positive attitude towards his studies, Desmond has become an exceptional role model for his peers.

Year 10 student Ehsan, 15, was recognised as an inspiration and an outstanding role model. His genuine gratitude for education and well-being at St Bonaventure's is evident in his gracious and forgiving nature. Ehsan's determination to learn, succeed, and positively influence society sets him apart as a pillar of the community. His



resilience is truly remarkable, inspiring admiration from everyone around him.

Year 12 student, Kaylan, 17, showcased remarkable selflessness and dedication to making a difference in the lives of others. For the last three years, Kaylan has actively participated in challenging physical activities to raise funds for various charitable causes, including **Cycling4Sewa**, where he completed sponsored cycling circuits, raising over £2000 to support underprivileged young children. As the team leader, Kaylan continues to push himself, preparing for a 100-mile hike across the Brecon Beacons to support the Mark Evison Foundation's efforts in promoting the personal

development of young people.

The entire St Bonaventure's School community rejoices in the outstanding achievements of Desmond, Ehsan, and Kaylan at the 2023 Brentwood Diocesan Citizenship Awards. Their commendable actions and unwavering commitment to good citizenship exemplify the core values that St Bonaventure's strives to instill in every student. The school remains committed to nurturing such exceptional individuals and providing an environment where students can flourish both academically and personally.

St Bonaventure's school extends its gratitude to the Brentwood Diocesan Citizenship Awards for

recognising these extraordinary students and their invaluable contributions to society. As far back as 2002, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Brentwood have been invited to nominate such pupils, the initiative having been inspired by Lord Alton, a former pupil of the Diocese.

This is supported strongly by the Brentwood Religious Education Service, to encourage schools to respond to Government requirements that Citizenship be included in the curriculum. Brentwood Diocese is committed, as is Lord Alton, to the idea that to be a good Catholic involves being a good citizen.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ requires all to "love our neighbour as ourselves" and that is at the heart of the Christian interpretation of citizenship.

Pupils receiving the awards are the high points and embodiment of what their schools teach and stand for and are examples of what all our Catholic schools are striving to achieve. The Catholic view of citizenship is a willingness to act for, speak for and serve the needs of those who, on their own, cannot do it for themselves. In a word, Catholic citizenship is service.

Five Oscott seminarians ordained deacons

On Sunday 2nd July 2023, five seminarians were Ordained to the Sacred Order of the Diaconate at St Mary's College, Oscott. Next year, God willing, they will be ordained as priests. Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley was the principal celebrant. He was joined by the resident priests and seminarians along with many visiting priests, family, and friends of the candidates.

Archbishop Bernard prayed for the new deacons in these words: "May God, who has called you to the service of others in His Church, give you great zeal for all, especially

the afflicted and the poor. May He, who has entrusted you with preaching the Gospel of Christ, help you, as you live according to His word, to be its sincere and fervent witnesses. May He, who has appointed you stewards of His mysteries, make you imitators of His Son, Jesus Christ, and ministers of unity and peace in the world."



The new deacons ordained were:

- Anthony Asomugha - Diocese of East Anglia
- Ambrose Chou - Diocese of Portsmouth
- Christian Nwakamma - Diocese of Hallam
- Peter Ross - Archdiocese of Liverpool
- Frank Westcott - Diocese of Brentwood

Fledgling architect wins design competition for homeless shelter

A 10-year-old boy from a Catholic school in South Shields is one of the winners of a design competition incorporating renewable energy into architecture.

Jack Moss designed a solar panel heated homeless shelter and his winning design was one of four picked out of 167 ideas to have a prototype made.

The Year 5 pupil of SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School was thrilled to win the Powering the Future: South Tyneside and Beyond! competition.

"It is a good feeling to have won the competition," Jack said. "I loved going to the architect's office, and I loved seeing my design."

South Tyneside Council and Dogger Bank Wind Farm, which is in the process of becoming the world's largest offshore wind farm capable of powering six million British homes, teamed up with Little Inventors to launch Powering the Future: South Tyneside and Beyond! The competition encouraged Year 4 and Year 5 pupils

to take on invention challenges created for their year group. The challenges focused on the role and uses of wind and various forms of renewable energy and encouraged children to expand their STEM skills and widen their knowledge of renewable energy.

The judging team at Little Inventors, which included a member of South Tyneside Council, Chief Inventor Dominic Wilcox and a previous winner of an energy challenge, was blown away by the entries.

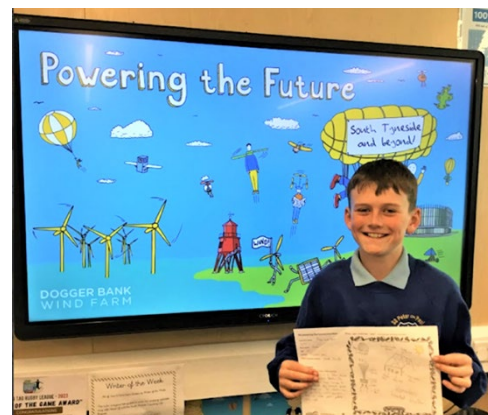
Jack said: "My invention, Sleep and H2O 2000, is a solar panel heated homeless shelter. The shelter uses sun energy to create heat for homeless people to sleep in. The shelter has a drinking water fountain that is made from filtered rainwater."

The schoolboy was thrilled to meet the architects via Zoom to see the prototype of his design for the first time.

"Our Year 5 children really enjoyed the Little Inventors challenge and we are thrilled that Jack's design was chosen to be made into a prototype," said Rachael Purvis, Year 5 Class Teacher.

"His design incorporated our learning from geography as well as design technology and I cannot wait to visit the exhibition to see his hard work come to life."

The work will be showcased at an exhibition at The Word, South Tyneside's state-of-the-art cultural venue, in July.



Jack Moss, 10, a Year 5 pupil of SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, South Shields, whose design for a solar-powered homeless shelter won a competition.

Catholic school community raises over £2,700 for unforgettable school trip



The whole school community at St Anne's Catholic Voluntary Academy in Buxton has rallied to raise over £2,700 to send children on an unforgettable trip.

After signing up for free tickets to visit Chester Zoo, St Anne's received enough to be able to take

the whole school, which is made up of over 220 pupils and staff.

However, the cost of transporting everyone to the zoo in December was over £2,500, so the school launched a fundraising drive in a bid to pay for the travel.

Now the school has more than

met its target, raising over £2,700 from a fundraising page, a 12-hour sponsored walk at school by staff and some pupils and a Summer Fair/Meet the Teacher event.

One of the biggest events was a car wash held all weekend by a family who have children at St Anne's. They were supported by local firefighters and together they raised a total of £575.

Headteacher Julia Wiggins said: "The community has really stepped up to support our children and we would like to thank everyone who helped out and contributed, especially in the current economic climate. The Meet the Teacher event was fantastic, parents were saying it was the best one over and that they really enjoyed it."

"The sponsored walk at school involving three of our staff was great and we were trying to keep them going. The money has just been trickling in and we are thrilled that we have exceeded our target."

The members of staff who took part in the fundraising walk at school were Assistant Headteacher Frankie Dodd, pastoral and pupil support lead Faye Minshull and Year 5 teacher Callum D'Souza, who is also the school's PE lead.

Frankie said: "The walk started on the playground at 7.30am and finished at 7.30pm. I did 45,000 steps which was about 23 miles. Callum ran some of it and did about 60,000 steps. We were all shattered at the end of it. It's been fantastic to see the whole community coming together; I wasn't sure that we would be able to reach this point. I thought we might raise so much and have to ask parents to pay for the rest, but everyone rallied around."

Parish Open Day attracts crowds in Shakespeare's home town

By **Con McHugh**

The parish of St Gregory the Great consists of St Gregory the Great church and Our Lady of Peace and is based in Stratford-upon-Avon. As one visitor said after Mass a couple of weeks ago: "I have now found something more important than Shakespeare!!"

Following on from the parish discussions around a synodal church, a small group suggested the idea of an open day to show what goes on in the parish and how others are helped. This was for the wider parish community.

The date chosen was Saturday 1st July 2023, 10am to 5pm, at St Gregory the Great church, both inside and outside the church. The events consisted of welcome and choir, music, Polish children in national costume, Angelus followed by the rosary, school children singing, icons, organ playing/cello, exposition and benediction.

The displays consisted of St Vincent de Paul, Parish Bereavement Team, Liturgy and Faith Development, the Catenians, Repository, CAFOD, Mary's Meals, CWL, Life Mission today,

St Gregory's Primary School, Prayer Trust, vocations display, Polish Group, Iyereku St Paul's Mission School, flower arranging, children's liturgy, eco information, how we support our parish community, who is involved in the Mass, inside the sacristy, who is involved in maintenance of church, and music in worship.

Within the church, there were several beautiful flower displays. The parish meeting room was used for refreshments.

Fr Alex Austin, parish priest, said: "A huge thank you to all those

who worked so hard in preparing for today's open day, it was a lovely occasion, a big success. A lot of hard work went into planning it – a big thank you to the many volunteers who were here most of the day.

"A special big thanks to Cecilia Donnelly and Simon Chappell, who

coordinated everything for the day, with support from Maureen Thompson, Terri Evans and the many groups within the parish. Thank you to the flower arrangers for such beautiful displays. Thank you to all who attended and supported the event."





AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Lancashire student bags Caritas award for service to the community



A student from a Lancashire primary school in the diocese of

Salford has received special recognition after going above and

beyond to live out Christ's call to love and serve one another.

Harvey, from St Charles RC Primary School in Rishton, has been presented with the Caritas Catholic Social Teaching Award in recognition of his efforts to put love into action.

During recent school holidays, Harvey attended Park View Resource Centre to offer support to individuals accessing a coffee morning at the food bank.

The centre, based in Clayton-le-Moors, supports adults with a broad range of learning difficulties and mental health issues, and was delighted to welcome Harvey as a volunteer in his spare time.

Impressed by Harvey's kindness and desire to help others, manager of Park View Resource Centre John Grogan emailed St Charles Primary to say: "On behalf of the staff team, we wanted to let you know what an absolutely charming young person Harvey is, and what a fantastic representation he is to your school. He has been polite, considerate, helpful and kind to some of the most vulnerable individuals within our local communities."

Patrick Kennedy, headteacher at St Charles RC Primary School, was delighted to hear of Harvey's efforts and the impact his kindness has

made on the local community. He praised Harvey's efforts, calling him 'an amazing young man.'

"It was heartwarming to receive an email of this nature about a pupil at our school," he said.

"Harvey is an amazing young man and deserved of this praise and the award. We try incredibly hard to instil our school values into all of our pupils and when we receive news like this, it can't help but put a smile on your face."

Harvey was presented with the Caritas Catholic Social Teaching Award in recognition of his outstanding achievement during a school assembly, which his parents also attended.

His mother, Julie, shared her happiness and joy at the news: "I'm beyond proud of Harvey. As a family, we are extremely proud of him and he fully deserves the recognition for what he has done," she said.

The Caritas Catholic Social Teaching Award is an award to recognise pupils, families, and groups who have made an outstanding contribution to upholding the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching and putting love into action. These seven principles are: Dignity; Solidarity; The common good; The

option for the poor; Peace; Creation and Environment, and The dignity of work and participation.

Harvey's certificate read: "You have demonstrated Catholic Social Teachings by helping those who are vulnerable, showing solidarity for the common good and demonstrating the dignity of work."

"You should be incredibly proud of your actions and the impact you have made."

The school Harvey attends, St Charles, is a Roman Catholic community, which strives to provide the best possible education for children by nurturing personal development and promoting academic achievement. Each individual will grow in the love and knowledge of God and Christ's teaching.

The award is linked with the mission of Caritas Salford, which seeks to help schools to 'put Caritas into action too by providing resources and opportunities for pupils/students (primary, high school or 6th Form) to engage in social action projects, campaigns and fundraising activities, which will help them to live their faith and develop leaders in social justice.'

East Anglia Bishops pay tribute to ex Financial Secretary John Pitt

Keith Morris

Two East Anglian bishops have paid tribute to former Financial Secretary for the Diocese of East Anglia, Lt Col John Pitt, who died on 1st July.

John, who lived in Hoxne in Suffolk with his wife Ellen, spent 12 years with the diocese, retiring in 2019, after a varied career as a banker, Army officer, military diplomat, military intelligence officer and Secretary of the Special Forces Club in London over a 58-year career.

John met Ellen, who was serving in Ottawa with HM Diplomatic Service, while he was negotiating with the Canadian Defence Department on behalf of the British Army for training facilities in Alberta. They were married for almost 50 years and had two sons and five grandchildren.

As financial secretary, John played a key role under two bishops and during the period of Sede Vacante after Bishop Michael's death. During his appointment John was instrumental in many diocesan initiatives, including Alive in Faith, which is still funding social outreach, seminarian training and securing the future of our retired priests.

Bishop Emeritus Alan Hopes paid tribute, saying: "I will always be grateful to John for the support and encouragement that he gave to me personally for nearly eight years, as the Diocesan Financial Secretary and for the many hours he happily invested in the life and mission of our Diocese."

"He had a deep Catholic faith and a great love for the Church and her mission. This infused his work and all that he did. I know that many of

the clergy and parish treasurers were appreciative of the help and encouragement that he readily gave them. He was always open to new initiatives for raising much urgent funding, such as Alive in Faith, and was instrumental in setting it up across the Diocese - no mean feat.

"Our prayers should be with Ellen and his two sons, together with their grandchildren at this time. May he rest in peace."

Bishop Peter Collins said: "The Diocese has much to be grateful for to John for his time as our Financial Secretary. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Ellen. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen."

John's wife Ellen said: "I think John himself was delighted and honoured to be appointed by the



John Pitt with Bishop Emeritus Alan Hopes.

Diocese but I can still see a little bewilderment as he wondered what it would entail.

"It is sad that John's health on retirement let him down, depriving him of the time he wanted to spend with the grandchildren; but he never gave up hope, and his faith was a boost to my own. I know he

will continue to be there for me-even if not physically present as our long life together was a real blessing and leaves that dreadful 'emptiness'."

John's funeral is planned for Tuesday 1st August, at the Church of St Henry Morse in Diss at 11am, subject to confirmation.

Author Danielle Jawando presents 'brilliant workshop' at St Paul's

Author, screenwriter and lecturer, Danielle Jawando, recently visited St Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester to talk to students about her books.

Danielle's debut novel, *And the Stars Were Burning Brightly*, won best senior novel in the Great Reads Award and was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, the Young Adult Book Prize, the Jhalak Children's and Young Adult Prize, the Branford Boase Award and was longlisted for the CILIP Carnegie Medal, the UKLA Book Awards and the Amazing Book Awards. Her other publications include *When Our Worlds Collided*, the non-fiction children's book *Maya Angelou (Little Guides to Great Lives)*, the short stories *Paradise 703* (long-listed for the Finishing Line Press Award) and *The Deerstalker* (selected as one of six finalists for the We Need Diverse Books short story competition).

The author has also had several short plays performed in Manchester and London, and has

worked on *Coronation Street* as a storyline writer. Danielle gave a fantastic interactive talk about her path to becoming an author, where she gets her inspiration and the themes within her wonderful books.

"Danielle connected well with the pupils and was a very engaging speaker," Librarian Irena Savova said. "She spoke to them about her journey as a writer, her writing, themes, books and the inspiration for her ideas. It was a brilliant workshop where she was able to engage with the pupils, and help them to improve their creative writing skills."

English teacher and Literacy Coordinator Jamie Sharrock said: "Danielle was able to inspire and encourage the students to read on a regular basis; they really enjoyed and appreciated their time with her." "Danielle's workshop was creative and engaging. She is an inspiring speaker and our students hugely benefitted from her visit to our school. I am now looking forward to seeing how they transfer



Some of those involved and, inset, Danielle Jawando

this learning into their creative writing."

Deputy Headteacher Mike Whiteside also highlighted Danielle's 'valuable' visit. "It was a pleasure to have Danielle Jawando visit the school and I was delighted by the interest shown by our pupils about Danielle's writing. The visit has inspired our pupils to want to read, write, and learn more about the process of writing," he said.

"The experience of having an author visit the school is one of the valuable gifts we can offer our pupils. It brings to life the magic of books and the joy of reading in a very special way."



All-singing-and-dancing Catholic schools at Whitley Bay

Whitley Bay Playhouse saw more than 200 young performers take to the stage for a musical celebration of the partnership of their Catholic schools.

Organised by St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Bedlington, the Partnership Celebration Performance brought together around 220 dancers, singers and musicians from the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust's member schools.

Other participating schools included St Aidan's, Ashington, Ss Peter and Paul's, Cramlington, St Robert's, Oldgate, St Bede's, Bedlington, and St Wilfrid's, Blyth.

Louise Maughan, Rachel Anderson, Nick Gibson and Rob Dunbar, members of the Performing Arts Team at St Benet Biscop, organised the event, which included a range of songs, dances

and musical performances.

"The Partnership Show is an opportunity for all partnership schools to showcase their talents and it allows the students to perform on a professional stage," Mrs Maughan explained.

"The show is not just a dance show, as it showcases pieces that the schools have put together, which could be song and dance or musical numbers – St Robert's was performing a ukulele piece, and some were doing pieces from musicals as their performances.

The annual event has been running for over a decade, and this year's production took place in front of a packed audience of friends and family members.

As well as individual performances across the evening, the 223 participants came together for a closing piece from *Matilda*.



GARDENING

Plant Division Made Easy



I have good news. Free plants are all around you, ready for the taking. All you need to do is divide them. To divide a plant means to dig it out of the ground and separate the parent plant into smaller sections. It's not only an economical way to acquire additional plants; it can also be necessary to control size, or to rejuvenate it.

Armed with the knowledge that many perennials should be divided every few years for health and aesthetics comes in handy when eyeing your neighbour's prized daylilies or coveting a fellow gardener's hard-to-find hostas. Convincing them of the advantages of division can often make or break your success in a triumphant hosta heist or other perennial bounty.

Division is necessary for many

perennials to grow and look their best. Otherwise, they can become over crowded as the plants grow out from the centre above and below ground. Soil nutrients become depleted and air circulation towards the centre is reduced.

Fall is the ideal time for division of most perennials but allow four to six weeks for plants to establish before the ground freezes. By now, active growth is waning, flowering is complete and the plants are settling into dormancy. Energy sources are diverted from foliage into roots and below ground reserves. Plants removed from the soil at this time don't have the same demands as other times of year and can adapt more easily to being divided and replanted elsewhere. In the spring, they should emerge as strong and

viable plants.

A good-sized clump can be sectioned into multiple pieces. However, it is important to preserve as much root tissue as possible for each division that you will transplant. This can be accomplished using several types of tools. A sharp knife, machete or a flat shovel or spade make quick work of slicing a perennial clump into multiple pieces. You can also combine two spading forks placed back to back into the clump to pull the roots apart for larger plants.

Place your new sections into other garden beds or containers as soon as possible. One of the biggest enemies to division demise is the failure to replant the separated pieces before they dry out and become unviable.

Armed with the knowledge that many perennials should be divided every few years for health and aesthetics comes in handy when eyeing your neighbour's prized daylilies or coveting a fellow gardener's hard-to-find hostas.

Place the new section into the soil at the same level it was growing in its original location. I prefer to enrich the soil with a small handful of bone meal and a larger portion of compost. Mix this around the root zone. Bone meal enriches the soil slowly. It contains phosphorus and is good for root stimulation without inducing new shoot or foliage growth. Compost is always good for improving soil and adding important nutrients.

To finish the project, backfill with the existing soil and water thoroughly to hydrate the roots and eliminate air pockets. An important finishing touch is to

add several inches of mulch over or around your new divisions. Mulch helps keep the soil moist, temperatures more consistent and reduces the chances of cold weather heaving.

It is great to know that dividing most perennials is actually good for them. Not only does it provide an inexpensive and easy way to increase your plant collection, but it also helps to keep the plants healthy and looking their best too.

HEALTH

How do we know health screening programmes work?



Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Biology, University of Bath

Christian Yates

The UK is set to roll out a national lung cancer screening programme for people aged 55 to 74 with a history of smoking. The idea is to catch lung cancer at an early stage when it is more treatable.

Quoting NHS England data, the health secretary, Steve Barclay, said that if lung cancer is caught at an early stage, “patients are nearly 20 times more likely to get at least another five years to spend with their families”.

Five-year survival rates are often quoted as key measures of cancer treatment success. Barclay’s figure is no doubt correct, but is it the right statistic to use to justify the screening programme?

Time-limited survival rates (typically given as five-, ten- and 20-year) can improve because cancers caught earlier are easier to treat, but also because patients identified at an earlier

stage of the disease would live longer, with or without treatment, than those identified later. The latter is known as “lead-time bias”, and can mean that statistics like five-year survival rates paint a misleading picture of how effective a screening programme really is. My new book, *How to Expect the Unexpected*, tackles issues exactly like this one, in which subtleties of statistics can give a misleading impression, causing us to make incorrect inferences and hence bad decisions. We need to be aware of such nuance so we can identify it when it confronts us, and so we can begin to reason our way beyond it.

To illustrate the effect of lead-time bias more concretely, consider a scenario in which we are interested in “diagnosing” people with grey hair. Without a screening programme, greyness may not be spotted until enough grey hairs have

sprouted to be visible without close inspection. With careful regular “screening”, greyness may be diagnosed within a few days of the first grey hairs appearing.

People who obsessively check for grey hairs (“screen” for them) will, on average, find them earlier in their life. This means, on average, they will live longer “post-diagnosis” than people who find their greyness later in life. They will also tend to have higher five-year survival rates.

But treatments for grey hair do nothing to extend life expectancy, so it clearly isn’t early treatment that is extending the post-diagnosis life of the screened patients. Rather, it’s simply the fact their condition was diagnosed earlier.

To give another, more serious example, Huntington’s disease is a genetic condition that doesn’t manifest itself symptomatically until around the age of 45. People with

Huntington’s might go on to live until they are 65, giving them a post-diagnosis life expectancy of about 20 years.

However, Huntington’s is diagnosable through a simple genetic test. If everyone was screened for genetic diseases at the age of 20, say, then those with Huntington’s might expect to live another 45 years. Despite their post-diagnosis life expectancy being longer, the early diagnosis has done nothing to alter their life expectancy.

Overdiagnosis

Screening can also lead to the phenomenon of over-diagnosis.

Although more cancers are detected through screening, many of these cancers are so small or slow-growing that they would never be a threat to a patient’s health – causing no problems if left undetected. Still, the C-word induces such mortal fear in most people that many will, often on medical advice, undergo painful treatment or invasive surgery unnecessarily.

The detection of these non-threatening cancers also serves to improve post-diagnosis survival rates when, in fact, not finding them would have made no difference to the patients’ lives.

So, what statistics should we be using to measure the effectiveness of a screening programme? How can we demonstrate that screening programmes combined with treatment are genuinely effective at prolonging lives?

The answer is to look at mortality rates (the proportion of people who die from the disease) in a randomised controlled trial. For example, the National Lung Screening Trial (NLST) found that in heavy smokers, screening with low-dose CT scans (and

subsequent treatment) reduced deaths from lung cancer by 15 per cent to 20 per cent, compared with those not screened.

So, while screening for some diseases is effective, the reductions in deaths are typically small because the chances of a person dying from any particular disease are small. Even the roughly 15 per cent reduction in the relative risk of dying from lung cancer seen in the heavy smoking patients in the NLST trial only accounts for a 0.3 percentage point reduction in the absolute risk (1.8 per cent in the screened group, down from 2.1 per cent in the control group).

For non-smokers, who are at lower risk of getting lung cancer, the drop in absolute risk may be even smaller, representing fewer lives saved. This explains why the UK lung cancer screening programme is targeting older people with a history of smoking – people who are at the highest risk of the disease – in order to achieve the greatest overall benefits. So, if you are or have ever been a smoker and are aged 55 to 74, please take advantage of the new screening programme – it could save your life.

But while there do seem to be some real advantages to lung cancer screening, describing the impact of screening using five-year survival rates, as the health secretary and his ministers have done, tends to exaggerate the benefits.

If we really want to understand the truth about what the future will hold for screened patients, then we need to be aware of potential sources of bias and remove them where we can.

LIFESTYLE

5 ways to help keep your kids healthier over the summer



While summertime is wonderful for kids - full of playtime and new experiences - it can be challenging for parents to maintain healthy routines for them. Helping kids stick to important habits for their well-being - like sleep and personal hygiene - can be tough. But with a few simple choices, parents and carers can reinforce positive routines, even during the summer.

1. Make sure they get their zzz's

Even when kids don't have school, frequent changes in waking and sleeping schedules can be disruptive for children, who need a good night's sleep to function well. No matter what's happening during the summer, try to keep the same sleeping and waking times - even on weekends - so everyone gets their essential restorative sleep. The CDC recommends kids aged 6-12 get

9-12 hours of sleep per night, and teens aged 13-18 need 8-10 hours. Create a simple bedtime routine appropriate for your kids' ages (brushing teeth, reading a story, taking a bath) and stick to it every night.

2. Snack smarter and stay hydrated

Making sure kids eat well can also be challenging during the summer. Fortunately, it's also the best time of year to boost servings of fruits and veggies. Visit pick-your-own orchards, farmers markets or even grow some produce so kids can learn more about healthy foods - and taste them when they're at their peak freshness and flavour.

It's also crucial to stay hydrated. Give your kids sturdy water bottles filled with fresh, cold water (and ice) to take along, wherever they're headed. When temps are hot and kids are active, encourage them to take frequent water breaks.

3. Encourage consistent oral hygiene

Oral hygiene is vital, and according to the Mayo Clinic is a window to a person's overall health. Kids should be flossing and brushing at least twice daily. For extra protection for children six and older, they should also use dentist-formulated TheraBreath for Kids, a new great-tasting anti-cavity oral rinse in three certified-organic flavours: Grapes Galore, Strawberry Splash and Wacky Watermelon. With no dyes or added colours, these vegan and gluten-free mouthwashes are powered by fluoride to strengthen children's teeth and enamel, help them fight cavities and prevent tooth decay.

"Combining the expertise of a dentist and the care of a parent, we're proud to introduce the new TheraBreath for Kids, a safe and effective oral care product for their children," said Dr. Harold Katz, dentist and TheraBreath brand founder.

4. Stay active

The CDC recommends children have 60 minutes of physical activity each day, so be sure to provide plenty of opportunities for outdoor play. Kids feeling bored? Set up lawn games like badminton or bean bag toss - or create an obstacle course or scavenger hunt. Hot outside? Run through the sprinkler, visit a pool or head to the beach. Make sure to keep sunscreen handy to minimize exposure to UV rays.

5. Keep their brains healthy, too

You can help prevent the "summer slide" in learning by keeping children engaged in reading throughout the summer. Participating in local library programmes, reading to and with your child, providing age-appropriate books and incentives for reading every day can help keep their minds active when they're out of school.

FOOD

PRAWN WELLINGTON

This is a very pleasant puff pastry stuffed with prawns and spinach in a white wine sauce. Pure decadence for any occasion.



INGREDIENTS

1 sheet puff pastry
125g crab meat, drained and flaked
4 jumbo prawns, peeled and deveined
1 tbsp chopped shallots
1 egg, beaten
4 tbsps white sauce
2 tbsps olive oil
1 tbsp chopped fresh tarragon
125g fresh spinach leaves
salt and pepper to taste.

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Grease a baking tray.
3. Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add spinach, cook and stir until wilted; about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Drain off any excess liquid, set aside.
4. Lay the sheet of puff pastry out on a clean surface and cut into 4 squares. Prick lightly with fork.
5. In a medium bowl mix crab meat, white sauce, shallots and tarragon.
6. Cut prawns lengthways and open them up to form a butterfly shape. Lay one prawn in the middle of each pastry square with the open side facing up. Stuff each prawn with an equal amount of spinach and top with a heaped tbsp of crab mixture.
7. Fold over the pastry to make a triangle and press the edges to seal. Place on the baking tray, and brush with beaten egg.
8. Bake until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Serve warm

FILMS

Religious Imagery and Spiritual Fiction-It's Diablo IV



An image from the video game "Diablo IV." (OSV New photo/Blizzard)

By Adele Chapline Smith

The latest title in a franchise that's been going strong since 1997, "Diablo IV" (Blizzard) sees an epic confrontation between a rogue angel and a fugitive demon, with the fate of humanity hanging in the balance. As even such a brief plot summary indicates, the game makes free use of religious imagery in a way that might confuse the

impressionable.

Add to this potential disorientation numerous sights not for the squeamish and it's clear that the game is suitable only for grown-ups and, perhaps, mature teens. The prevailing mood, moreover, is one reminiscent of gothic fiction. The moody narrative unfolds within a bleak environment haunted by the past.

The mythos of the series has been spelled out across this installment's three predecessors. It ascribes the origin of humanity to the union of the two spiritual beings already mentioned, Inarius (voice of Gabe Kunda), an outcast from the so-called High Heavens, and Lilith (voice of Caroline Faber), an exile from the underworld known as the Burning Hells.

Together, they created the world of mortals, here referred to as Sanctuary. Their chaotic relationship failed to last, however, and Inarius eventually banished Lilith. Now changing circumstances seem to offer Lilith a chance not only to return but to gain permanent dominion over Sanctuary.

There's little to choose between the two former spouses, though. While Lilith is angling to seduce humans with the promise of power and a place by her side, Inarius is selfishly scheming to return to the High Heavens, no matter what the cost to his abandoned mortal worshippers whom he arrogantly holds in contempt.

The complexity of these protagonists, neither of whom is entirely good or wicked, adds subtlety to their story and proves engaging for gamers. As the player-controlled character, the Wanderer, becomes embroiled in the cosmic conflict between the exes, he works to thwart Lilith. He's aided on this quest by a handful of allies.

Behind the yin and yang of Lilith and Inarius lies a further layer of spiritual fiction. This deals with a God-like first being who long ago purged

himself of evil only to see the negative force he had expelled take on its own independent existence. The ensuing battle between these two entities-called here the Eternal Conflict-led to the creation of the universe.

Such a pastiche of varied metaphysical elements, including several drawn from Christianity, may intrigue some gamers; others may dismiss it as so much hyped-up nonsense. The latter will prefer to get on with the goal of seeing the Wanderer triumph, assessing their level of success along the way through real-time combat systems and character statistics.

The designers mostly treat the mayhem in which the Wanderer is caught up discreetly, using a bird's-eye perspective to create distance between the player and the grim consequences of the ongoing fray. That said, the main proceedings are far from circumspect while cutscenes are even more graphic.

This game is playable on PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series and Windows PC.

Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken



OSV News photo/
DreamWorks
Animations

By John Mulderig

In theory, the tale of a shy but enthusiastic teenager who is really a sea creature rather than a human might make for a pleasant diversion. But the major feminist and minor gay agendas that underlie the animated adventure "Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken" (Universal) spoil any potential fun the film might offer.

Krakens, so the opening narrative informs us, are a misunderstood lot. Far from being the monstrous threat to shipping and sailors they have long been reputed to be, they are, in fact, guardians of good order in the depths.

Why, then, has the titular character's caring mother, Agatha (voice of Toni Collette), decided that she (voice of Lana

Condor), her energetic little brother, Sam (voice of Blue Chapman), and amiable dad, Arthur (voiced by Colman Domingo), should all live on dry land and pose as people? It's not initially clear.

Not only has Ruby been raised on terra firma, she's also been taught to fear any contact with the ocean. But when Connor (voice of Jaboukie

Young-White), the skateboarding fellow student Ruby would like to make her boyfriend, almost drowns in an accident, she reluctantly takes the plunge to save him.

As a result, Ruby discovers the wondrous world beneath the waves and learns that her estranged grandmother, known regally as Grandmahmah (voice of Jane Fonda), is its monarch. She also breaks precedent by befriending Chelsea (voice of Annie Murphy), a mermaid and therefore a traditional enemy of Krakenkind.

Together, the girls ostensibly hope to bring about a reconciliation between their once-warring, still adversarial tribes. But all is not as it seems to naive Ruby.

As scripted by Pam Brady, Brian C. Brown and Elliott DiGuseppi, and helmed by Kirk DeMicco and co-director Faryn Pearl, the film sends mixed signals about whether children should trust their parents. Thus,

although her maternal caution is, in some respects, ultimately vindicated, Agatha is portrayed as overly fond of familial secrets.

Less ambiguous is the fact that female krakens are gigantic, gleaming and powerful while their male counterparts are puny and impotent. One of Ruby's closest pals, Margot (voice of Liza Koshy), moreover, is a lesbian who takes a girl to the prom and sports a rainbow-flag bow tie.

Grown-ups concerned that their children will be manipulated by such item ticking would be wise to be wary. Unsuitable for the youngsters at whom it's aimed, "Kraken"-while occasionally funny and visually vivid-will likely bore their elders.

The curious history of London's public drinking water fountain



Drinking fountain Regents Park London

HISTORY

Geoff Goodwin & Jon Winder

Drinking fountains are a common sight in London today, but they're a relatively recent addition to the city. Until the mid-19th century, Londoners quenched their thirst by supping beer in pubs rather than guzzling water on the streets. As temperatures heat up, it's a good time to review the history and politics that lie behind a cooling swig of drinking fountain water in the UK's capital city.

Our ongoing archival research, part of a project on London's water history and politics, explores the movement that inspired the construction of public drinking fountains at a remarkable rate in the late 19th century.

Some 40 years after the first fountain was opened in Holborn in 1859, over 500 had been installed across the city. They supplied free drinking water to the masses, and reinvented

London's public spaces.

The rapid expansion of water fountains was connected to the limits of London's privatised water network. Echoing criticism of water companies today, the private firms that supplied London's drinking water in the 19th century prioritised profits over investment in infrastructure. As a result, the quality and coverage of water services suffered.

From the 1850s, pioneering medical research linked cholera epidemics to polluted water and demonstrated the public health risks of London's water network.

The expansion of drinking water fountains was one response to these mounting concerns about London's unequal and, as the cholera research showed, sometimes dangerous water supply. The fountains made it easier to access clean drinking water in the city, especially for the working classes, who often lacked reliable and safe water at home.

The thousands of homeless men, women and children who lived in desperate conditions on London's streets also benefited.

Quenching London's thirst

The Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountains Association was established in 1859 to erect and manage London's new fountains. Samuel Gurney, a banker and politician, was the driving force behind the association and channelled significant sums of his own money into it. He was joined by a motley crew of politicians, doctors, lawyers and engineers, who helped run and promote the association in the late 19th century.

Funding for individual fountains came from various sources, including wealthy benefactors, local governments and multiple contributions from local residents.

Designs varied but one common, if not universal, feature was the name of the person who provided the bulk of the funding and some form of Biblical messaging. Building fountains thus became a popular way for philanthropists to gain social prestige while also showing religious piety.

The inclusion of religious scriptures and symbols indicates the moralising and evangelising mission of many members of the

drinking fountain movement. If pubs were a corrupting force, drinking fountains were a way of purifying the souls of the working class.

The association also catered for animals by including dog troughs in fountains and building standalone structures for horses and cattle. In 1867, the association changed its name to the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association to reflect its wider remit.

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A Plea for Free Drinking Fountains in the Metropolis

While drinking fountains expanded rapidly in the late 19th century, London was slow off the mark and lagged behind several other UK cities, including Aberdeen, Derby and Chester.

Edward Thomas Wakefield, a barrister and founding member of

the association, singled out Liverpool for special attention. In his 1859 essay "A Plea for Free Drinking Fountains in the Metropolis", he noted that on one "fine hot day" in June 1855, a single fountain was used more than 3,000 times in Liverpool.

Once installed, London's fountains proved to be even more popular, especially on hot summer days. Take one example: on July 4 and 5 1865, the association recorded 5,603 drinkers using the Royal Exchange fountain. There were more than 500 per hour during the early afternoon, and a steady flow throughout the day and night.

Drinking fountains clearly provided ample opportunities for Londoners to engage in one of their favourite pastimes – queuing.

Nevertheless, drinking fountains were not universally welcomed, perhaps because of their moralising tendencies. The association noted in its 1874 annual report that the structures were "peculiarly exposed to thoughtless or malicious injury", and security staff were at times employed to prevent theft and vandalism.

Public water, private interests

If the public drinking fountain movement shows what is possible when people mobilise around water, it also points to the limits of philanthropic organisations; limits that became more pronounced at end of the 19th century.

The association lost much of its radical zeal, became more conservative in orientation, and struggled financially as donations dried up. The construction of new fountains slowed and the maintenance of existing fountains deteriorated.

It was not until private water companies were brought under public control in the early 20th century that London's water crisis began to ease, indicating the need for decisive public interventions alongside more piecemeal social initiatives.

Victorian drinking fountains continue to adorn London's streets and several have been restored to their former glory. Alongside them, a new generation of drinking fountains have emerged, many of which have been designed to reduce the use of plastic bottles.

Rather than including the names of wealthy benefactors and religious inscriptions, these fountains are often emblazoned with the name and logo of the private water company that helped fund them. Once again, we see how providing public water can also serve private interests.

Geoff Goodwin

Lecturer in Global Political Economy, University of Leeds

Jon Winder

Researcher in History, University of Leeds



Picture: Venus Williams was recently injured at Wimbledon. (BBC screengrab)

Resilience and Realism

FAITH IN SPORT

Fr Vlad Felzmann

Fr Vlad Felzmann explores the links between resilience and realism in the lives of sporting legends like Andy Murray and Venus Williams and underlines the importance of doing one's best and 'leaving the rest to God.'

As Bob 'The General' Knight, who won a record 902 NCAA Division I men's college basketball games, said: "Your biggest opponent isn't the other guy. It's human nature." Recently, some of our greatest tennis players have discovered how true this saying really is.

A key virtue that sport can teach is resilience. Another is realism - as captured in 'The Serenity Prayer' attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) though probably much older: 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.' Though spirits can stay young for ever, bodies can't.

There are always some things we can control and others that we cannot. An athlete can influence his performance by concentrating on technique, fitness knowledge of the sport on the pitch, court, pool or road. Yet no matter how prepared he strives to be, there is always one thing that cannot be controlled, and that is the opposition. - and age.

Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose; sometimes you will be happy, sometimes you will be sad. That's sport and, indeed, that's life. You can train all the hours of the

day and all the days in the week, but if you do so in a desire or a belief in sporting invincibility then you are on the road to depression and despair. Failure, setbacks and disappointment are part of life. We can only truly appreciate victory, promotions and happiness if we have experienced 'the other side of the coin' and so 'All I can do is to do all I can; do my best and leave the rest to God.'

Andy Murray, born 15th May 1987, has won 46 singles titles, including three Grand Slams (US Open and Wimbledon twice), 14 Masters 1000 series, two Olympic Gold Medals, and a title at the ATP Finals. However, on 7th July 2023, at the start of the 10th anniversary of Murray's iconic first title at the All England Club, when he ended Britain's 77-year wait for a men's singles champion, there was hope.

The hope was that he could complete a memorable win over Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and earn his most notable victory at a Grand Slam since having career-saving hip surgery in 2019. By the end of the day, having lost in five sets, the former world number one questioned whether all the effort, pain and sacrifice of trying to go deep at Wimbledon is worth repeating. Asked if he was confident of returning next year, Murray said: "I don't know. Motivation is obviously a big thing. Continuing having early losses in tournaments like this doesn't necessarily help with that." Murray cut a forlorn figure as he spoke to journalists, looking incredibly downbeat as he dissected his defeat by 24-year-old Tsitsipas.

To date, Rafael Nadal has won 92 ATP singles titles, including

22 Grand Slam men's singles titles and 36 ATP Tour Masters 1000 titles. He is one of two men to achieve the Career Golden Slam in men's singles, with titles at all four majors and the Olympic singles gold. He is the first man in history to win Grand Slam singles titles on three different surfaces in a calendar year (Surface Slam) and is the youngest (24) in the Open Era to achieve the Career Grand Slam. Following his triumph at the 2022 Australian Open, he became the fourth man in history to complete the double Career Grand Slam in singles, after Roy Emerson, Rod Laver, and Novak Djokovic. He is the first man to win multiple majors and rank world No. 1 in three different decades.

However, Rafael Nadal is expected to need five months to recover from arthroscopic surgery for a left hip flexor injury that kept him out of the French Open, effectively ruling him out for the rest of 2023 ATP tournament season.

Nadal, who ruled himself out of the French Open a few weeks ago, gave an update on his health after undergoing surgery. "I will start progressive functional rehabilitation immediately and the normal recovery process they tell me is 5 months, if all goes well," he said in a series of tweets. The Spaniard has not competed anywhere since he lost to Mackenzie McDonald in the second round of the Australian Open in January, when his movement clearly was restricted for much of that match.

Nadal has retired (ended play) mid-match nine times, Djokovic thirteen. Venus Ebony Starr Williams (born June 17, 1980), an American professional tennis player,

is a former world No. 1 in both singles and doubles. Williams has won seven Grand Slam singles titles, five at Wimbledon and two at the US Open. She is widely regarded as one of the all-time greats of the sport.

Along with her younger sister, Serena, Venus Williams was coached by her parents Oracene Price and Richard Williams. Turning professional in 1994, she reached her first major final at the 1997 US Open. In 2000 and 2001, Williams claimed the Wimbledon and US Open titles, as well as Olympic singles gold at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. She first reached the singles world No. 1 ranking on 25th February 2002, becoming the first African American woman to do so in the Open era, and the second of all-time after Althea Gibson.

“

I will start progressive functional rehabilitation immediately and the normal recovery process they tell me is 5 months, if all goes well

She reached four consecutive major finals between 2002 and 2003, but lost each time to Serena. She then suffered from injuries, winning just one major title between 2003 and 2006. Williams returned to form starting in 2007,

when she won Wimbledon (a feat she repeated the following year). In 2010, she returned to the world No. 2 position in singles, but then suffered again from injuries. Starting in 2014, she again gradually returned to form, culminating in two major final appearances at the Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2017.

Along with her seven singles major titles, Williams has also won 14 women's doubles major titles, all partnering Serena. The pair also won three Olympic gold medals in women's doubles, in 2000, 2008, and 2012, adding to Venus' singles gold in 2000 and her mixed doubles silver in 2016. Williams has also won two mixed doubles major titles, both in 1998.

On Monday 1st July 2023, in the first round of Wimbledon, the 43-year-old Venus Williams, with her knee strapped up, screamed in agony after a nasty fall in the third game but recovered to keep fighting until she eventually lost to Elina Svitolina on the Centre Court 6-4,6-3. Novak Djokovic, born 22 May 1987, keeps on, keeping on - as I write - rather successfully.

Parents should protect their children beating themselves up when they fail. Adults need to accept the fact that eventually their body will be unable to perform at the highest level. 'Stuff happens.' Failure teaches humility and compassion for others. What is not important is falling down. What is important is getting up. Hence the sacrament of reconciliation.

Who you are - who you have become - is far more important than what you have done. Quality of personality - the shape of your character - is more important than the trophies over your fireplace or customised shelf.

So, resilience and realism are two vital ingredients in sport and in life. Know who you are. Set goals, work hard, be ambitious and realistic, and at the same time, when you experience the set back of a loss of a match, an exam grade you missed, a job interview that saw another candidate succeed, remember that you are not defined by what you have got, but by who you are. As Rudyard Kipling put it: "Treat triumph and disaster as the imposters they really are."

To thank God for all the gifts God has given me, my own motto is: "I will keep on keeping on - as fast and as long, at whatever level of performance is possible - as I can."

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



One of an adult pair of Eurasian beavers after being released on the National Trust Holnicote Estate on Exmoor in Somerset.



Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth leaves Portsmouth Harbour for sea trials in UK waters ahead of its carrier strike deployment later in the year.



Gaia by the artist Luke Jerram has landed in Durham Cathedral. Gaia is a replica of the globe that measures seven metres in diameter.



Tracy Seven with a Beef Shorthorn as she prepares her cattle ahead of the Great Yorkshire Show at the Showground in Harrogate, which opened to the public this week.



A Danish giant battles with Guy of Warwick during a rehearsal at Warwick Castle ahead of the opening night of the Dragon Slayer summer performances, which begins a limited run on 11th August.



People watch the burning of the loyalist Corcrair bonfire in Portadown, Co Armagh, to usher in the Eleventh night ahead of the Twelfth commemorations.



◀ The Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall meets members of the kitchen team during a visit to the Duchy of Cornwall nursery, near Lostwithiel, Cornwall, to open its new restaurant The Orangery which has been built as part of a nine-month extension project to create sustainable visitor spaces at the nursery.

Composer Orlando Gough with 'Mother Sheep (Aina)', a 4.5m tall sculpture, which is part of HERD, a soundscape project devised by Gough and produced by arts production company Artichoke as it is unveiled as part of Kirklees Year of Music 2023.



LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, July 16:

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa. 55:10-11; Ps. 65:10-14 r.Lk. 8:8; Rom.8:18-23; Mt. 13:1-23

Monday, July 17:

Weekday of Ordinary Time

Ex.1:8-14,22; Ps. 124; Mt.10:34-11:1

Tuesday, July 18:

Weekday of Ordinary Time

Ex.2:1-15; Ps. 69:3,14,30-31,33-34; Mt.11:20-24

Wednesday, July 19:

Weekday of Ordinary Time

Ex.3:1-6,9-12; Ps.103:1-4,6-7; Mt.11:25-27

Thursday, July 20:

Weekday of Ordinary Time or St Apollinaris, Bishop, Martyr

Ex.3:13-20; Ps.105:1,5,8-9,24-27; Mt.11:28-30

Friday, July 21:

Weekday of Ordinary Time or St Lawrence of Brindisi, Priest, Doctor of the Church

Ex.11:10-12:14; Ps. 116:12-13,15-18; Mt.12:1-8

Saturday, July 22:

St Mary Magdalene

Song of Songs 3:1-4; Ps. 63: 2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9, r.2; Jn. 20:1-2, 11-18

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Sculpture of St Bonaventure (Giovanni Fidanza) on the facade of St. Nicholas' Cathedral in Ljubljana. His feast day is 15th July.