

It's time to  
leave Titanic  
in peace - pg 8



# UNIVERSE CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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# World crises blamed as faith freedoms violated

Tense global conditions, including the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the fall-out of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and increases in the cost of living, have led to religious freedom violations in more countries around the world, according to a new report by Aid to the Church in Need.

Its *Religious Freedom in the World* report for 2023 said religious freedom was violated in countries where more than 4.9 billion people live.

"We count 61 countries where citizens faced severe violations of religious freedom," the report said.

Regina Lynch, executive president of ACN International, said that the shocking details revealed in the report will hopefully "motivate people to get involved and help those suffering from religious persecution through prayer, sharing information, speaking up for victims, engaging politicians and keeping informed about reality on the ground in different parts of the world".

She added: "The report seeks only to provide information and analysis about the abuse of this fundamental human right worldwide. It is a tool. The tool is only as good as those who take it up, share it with others, and work to effect change."

Marcela Szymanski, head of advocacy for Aid to the Church in Need International, said that in her years compiling the annual report, "we look for patterns," about how religious persecution comes about.

"If this follows these steps, then let's try to stop it before we get there," Szymanski said. "In our methodology of the report, we fol-

low a classification that is like signs of perdition."

That process starts with "legal intolerance," Szymanski said, in which authorities pass rules that only apply to that particular group, and then say something along the lines of "stop doing it and then you will not be bothered."

"But that's already a discriminatory measure," Szymanski said. "So it's first intolerance, then discrimination, then persecution and then genocide."

The report states that a global pattern of concern included the retention and consolidation of power in the hands of autocrats and fundamentalist leaders, who used that power to violate human rights, including religious freedom.

Another area of concern is an increase in governments targeting majority populations rather than minority ones, such as Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's persecution of the Catholic Church, including imprisoning its leaders and stealing its funds. This is all despite the country being predominantly Catholic.

This worrying sequence of events has seen Nicaragua "being coloured red in our report, the first time that we have done this to a country in the Americas," Szymanski said, referring to how the report ranks the countries of the most concern by colour, with red being the most concerning.

Ortega targeted the Catholic Church directly because it had opposed some of his regime's actions, she said.

**Continued on page 2**



## A maestro at work... in the master's house

Issei Watanabe, a Japanese cellist, plays a cello made from wood rescued from migrant boats abandoned near Lampedusa, Italy, before a meeting between Pope Francis and more than 200 artists in the Sistine Chapel. See page 14.

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Bishop Álvarez

## World crises blamed as faith freedoms are violated

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Other countries of particular concern named in the report include Afghanistan, China, North Korea, and Iran. Countries “under observation,” include Russia, but also Ukraine, where Russia’s invasion has adversely impacted conditions.

“The autocrats at different levels of government combine harsh repression with soft persecution,” the report said.

“Examples include controlling access to jobs, education and health services, installing mass surveillance, imposing financial and electoral obstacles, and failing to impose law and order when faith communities come under attack from local mobs or terrorists.”

Vulnerable groups globally include the Jewish community, as increased incidents of antisemitic hate crimes were reported in the West after the Covid-19 lockdowns.

The *Religious Freedom in the World* report has been published by ACN every two years since 1999 and is the only non-Governmental report on global religious freedom that covers all faiths.

**Pictured above: Bishop Rolando Álvarez is currently serving a 26-year prison sentence on what observers say are trumped up charges, after falling foul of the Nicaraguan Government.**

**Brazilian President to intervene after talks with pope - see pg 15**



Photo: OSV News/  
Toby Melville,  
Reuters

# One year on, UK pro-lifers see hope in Roe v Wade axe

UK Pro-life group SPUC has marked the anniversary of the repeal of the US *Roe v. Wade* ruling by saying that pro-abortion politicians and activists ‘are losing their grip on the abortion narrative.’

Pro-lifers gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC on the anniversary of the decision, 24th June, for a Celebrate Life Day Rally, marking the anniversary of the repeal of *Roe v. Wade* last year.

Lila Rose, a noted pro-life leader and founder of Live Action, was one of the speakers at the event. “We demand equal protection for preborn children”, she said. “I urge you to join me in demanding equal protection for all and in demanding a society that truly values all human life.”

SPUC’s Michael Robinson, executive director (public affairs and legal services), said: “We must not underestimate the importance of last year’s seismic ruling that changed the narrative on abortion forever.

“Until last year, the unrelenting destruction of millions of unborn lives was taken for granted. Many people, on either side of the abortion debate, could not envision a world where abortion was unthinkable. Not now.”

Mr Robinson pointed to the figure of 30,000 lives being saved as a sign that pro-lifers are being “empowered to make a real difference.”

“That pro-abortion politicians and activists have sought to intimidate and even lock up pro-lifers, even in the UK, is a sure sign that they are losing their grip on the abortion narrative.

“Pro-lifers around the world are increasingly empowered and believe they can make a real difference,” he said.

“What was once a dream of abolishing abortion is now becoming reality. We must not be complacent. One battle has been won in a broader struggle for the right to life of the unborn. But we can all take heart in the (at least) 30,000 lives saved already.”

## Extraordinary last-ditch fundraising saves Catholic boarder

Andy Drozdzia

Scotland’s sole Catholic boarding school has been rescued from closure after a last-ditch fundraising drive secured its future.

£1.2 million was raised in 48 hours in an “extraordinary call to action” by parents earlier this month.

Staff at Kilgraston boarding school in Perthshire, which dates back to 1930, were told earlier this month of the “heart-breaking” decision to close its doors for the last time at the end of term for reasons of financial viability.

However, parents launched a fundraising drive, contacting *alumni*, donors and the families of prospective students to raise funds.



Headteacher Tanya Davie responded thankfully to the “overwhelming” support.

“We thank all those parents and guardians who have placed their trust in the school,” she said.

“Your support and commitment together with that received from our staff, pupils and alumni has

been overwhelming.”

*The Times* revealed that, following fundraising of £1.2million, the Achieve Group matched the funding. A parent action group accepted Achieve Group’s proposal, meaning it will have ownership of the school in the near future.

Damian Hind, leader of the par-

ent action group, said: “The extraordinary call to action garnered by those parents who believe in Kilgraston’s future sparked support at home and abroad, and that has helped to bring us to today.”

In a statement shared with the *Universe*, Kilgraston said it was ‘delighted’ with the turn of events.

“The situation moved at pace over June, but we are now delighted to have confirmation of an investment deal with Achieve Education which secures the long-term future of Kilgraston School,” the school said.

In a statement Achieve Education said that it would seek to provide the “same ethos, values and traditions” that Kilgraston has always adopted.

## UNIVERSE CONTACTS

Universe Catholic Weekly,  
PO Box 585, Sale M33 0JH  
[www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk](http://www.universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

General enquiries:  
t: 0791 856 0608  
e: [Info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:Info@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Editorial enquiries:  
t: 0743 661 7604  
e: [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Managing Editorial Director: Michael Winterbottom  
e: [michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michael.winterbottom@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 07753 987124

News: Andy Drozdzia  
e: [andy.drozdzia@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andy.drozdzia@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 07527 237293

Advertising and Sales  
Director of Sales & Marketing: Andrea Black  
e: [andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0791 856 0608

Circulation Sales Manager: Michelle Jones  
e: [michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:michelle.jones@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [sales@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:sales@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 661 7650

Finance & Operations Director: Mary Concannon  
e: [mary.concannon@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:mary.concannon@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
e: [accounts@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:accounts@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)  
t: 0743 661 7605

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# The Windrush injustices must never be repeated says bishop for migrants

**Andy Drozdziak**

The Catholic Bishops' Conference "rejoiced" in the contribution of the Windrush generation to Catholic parishes and society – but hopes that their past mistreatment will not be repeated.

On the 75th anniversary of the Windrush migration to Britain, known as Windrush Day, Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, shared his hopes that future generations of migrants will be welcomed in the UK, and celebrated the Windrush generation's commitment

Bishop McAleenan said: "On this important anniversary, we celebrate the Windrush generation and rejoice in their contribution to our society, including in many Catholic parishes."

On 22nd June 1948, the *HMT Empire Windrush* arrived in Britain, carrying hundreds of passengers from the Caribbean who went on to help rebuild the UK after World War Two.

The Windrush scandal surfaced in 2017 after it emerged that hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many from the Windrush generation, had been wrongly detained,

deported and denied legal rights.

It saw many British citizens denied access to healthcare and benefits and threatened with deportation despite having the right to live in the UK.

Bishop McAleenan shared his hopes that this mistreatment would not be repeated in the future.

"We pray that lessons have been learned from the injustices that this generation experienced and that new arrivals will be welcomed and

**Bishop McAleenan:**  
"We celebrate the Windrush generation and rejoice in their contribution."



offered the opportunity, as Pope Francis says, 'to be agents of their own redemption,'" he said.

Earlier this year, the Department for International Affairs produced a document on migration, entitled *Love the Stranger*, presenting a Catholic response to refugees and migrants. It offers 24 guiding principles for how to respond to refugees and has been endorsed by the Holy See, COMECE, CAFOD,

CSAN and Caritas Social Action Network members.

Meanwhile, at a service to mark the 75th anniversary in St George's chapel, Windsor, King Charles sat in a congregation of 300 invited guests, including young people from schools across England, dignitaries and representatives from a number of charities and community projects. Charles has said it is "crucially important" to recognise the "immeasurable" difference the Windrush generation has made to Britain.

During the service, Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the Bishop of Dover, told the congregation at the service that they had gathered at a time of particular "poignancy" because it was a day of celebration and thanksgiving for the hardworking good citizens she refers to as the "Windrush pioneers".

"They are pioneers who paved the way for generations who came after them, not merely to survive but to thrive," Reverend Hudson-Wilkin said. "The significant contributions made by the Windrush pioneers in the UK to the NHS, transport network, arts, sports, religion and life is second to none."



The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, during the service.  
Photo: Andrew Matthews/PA Wire

## Government urged to roll out prison social work programme

All women's prisons should have social workers dedicated to supporting mothers in custody to stay in touch with their children, where it is in the child's best interests, Catholic prison charity Pact says.

The call coincides with the publication of an independent evaluation report that shows how social workers in two prisons have helped to keep mothers in touch with their children, and helped reduce incidents of self-harm, which are at record levels in women's prisons.

The Together a Chance pilot project, run by Pact (the Prison Advice and Care Trust) and funded by the Sylvia Adams Trust, employs two social workers to support mothers in HMPs Send and Eastwood Park. Their role is to bridge the gap between the prison and social services in the community, keeping mothers in touch with their children where it is in the child's best interests.

The pilot project in HMPs Send and Eastwood Park followed Lord Farmer's landmark review in 2019 about the importance of maintaining family ties in women's prisons. The report recommended that the

Ministry of Justice funds on-site social workers as part of a multi-disciplinary team in each prison.

A second report, published by Cardiff University, shows that the Pact social workers support more frequent and positive contact between mothers and children, where it's in the child's best interests.

They also promote mothers' rights and give them more of a say in key decisions, whilst instilling hope in women prisoners to remain positive and help manage self-harm and suicide risks.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said: "The report shows the vital role that prison-based social work-

ers play in bridging the gap between mothers in prison and social services on the outside.

"This is a win-win – keeping mothers in touch with their children where appropriate, supporting efforts to tackle the worryingly high levels of self-harm in women's prisons and reducing the likelihood that they'll reoffend."

Mr Keen-Downs called for Ministers to act. "It's been three years since a Government review recommended that every women's prison should have dedicated social workers. It works; now it's time for Ministers to invest in this simple, common-sense measure," he said.





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Mon 14<sup>th</sup> – Sun 20<sup>th</sup> Aug at Clare Priory, Suffolk

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FREEDOM THROUGH JESUS

**IN BRIEF****Avoidable deaths more likely in UK**

People in the UK are more likely to die from treatable conditions, such as breast cancer, than those in other rich nations, a study has found. The report by The King's Fund think-tank noted that below-average spending on the NHS led to fewer staff and equipment than healthcare systems elsewhere.

The researchers compared the UK's health service with the performance of 18 other health systems, including those in Europe, Japan and the US.

The Government said the NHS is one of the most efficiently run healthcare systems.

**Prince's campaign risks criticism**

Prince William has been accused by *The Telegraph* of "straying into politics" as he launches a major five-year campaign to end homelessness, said the BBC.

His charitable foundation is putting in £3m of start-up funding to try and make homelessness "rare, brief and unrepeatable", arguing that it should not exist in a "modern and progressive society".

Six locations across the UK will be used to test ideas to cut homelessness, a cause which has a "profound impact" on the Prince and was "championed by his late mother", the paper noted.

**Outburst sparks BBC bias claim**

The BBC has come under fire after the comedian Ben Elton accused Rishi Sunak of being a "mendacious narcissistic sociopath". Appearing on *Sunday with Laura Kuennsberg* to discuss her interview with the prime minister, Elton said that it was an "extraordinary Orwellian, meaningless, evasive word salad". He added that Sunak "owes us honesty but we got nothing but mendacity, evasion and vanity, just dripping with vanity".

Claire Bullivant, of the Conservative Democratic Organisation, told *The Independent* that the BBC "seems like a party political broadcast for the Labour Party".

**New suspect named in Lawrence murder**

A major suspect in the Stephen Lawrence racist murder has been named for the first time.

An investigation by the BBC found that the Met Police "seriously mishandled" key inquiries related to Matthew White, who died in 2021, aged 50. In response, the Met has taken the "almost unprecedented step" of naming White as a suspect.

# Catholic Union launches new campaign to 'scrap the cap'

The Catholic Union has launched a new campaign to lift the 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions to new free schools.

People are being asked to sign an open letter to the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan MP, to 'scrap the cap'.

The letter is available for people to sign on the Catholic Union's website and will be delivered to the Department for Education after the summer holidays.

The 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions applies to over-subscribed free schools with a religious character in England.

Introduced by the Coalition Government in 2010, the cap has made it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open as the policy is incompatible with Church law.

The Catholic Union, along with the Catholic Education Service and others, has been calling for the policy to be reversed since it was first introduced. The 2017 Conservative manifesto committed to lifting the

cap, but this has never been achieved.

As well as making Catholic education more widely available, the letter to the Education Secretary says that lifting the cap 'would help boost morale' in a sector that has struggled with pay and conditions, and the pressure of inspections. It adds that the move would make 'a real difference to pupils and parents.'

Rt Hon Sir Edward Leigh MP, President of the Catholic Union, said: "The 50 per cent cap is a source of huge frustration to the Catholic community in this country.

"There has never been any justification for the policy or any evidence to support keeping it in place.

"I have raised this matter with successive Ministers in the Department for Education, and we have come close to getting the cap lifted in the past. Now, with the help of Catholic headteachers, teachers and parents, we can hopefully make the Government see sense.



"Lifting the cap would be a huge vote of confidence in Catholic schools in this country and I know would be welcome by people from other faiths."

Professor John Lydon, chairman of the Catholic Union's Education Committee, adds: "This letter is a very important initiative from the

**Sir Edward Leigh: 'The 50 per cent cap is a source of huge frustration to the Catholic community... lifting it would be a huge vote of confidence in Catholic schools in this country'**

Catholic Union.

"There is a bright future for Catholic schools in this country, but we need to be honest about the challenges we face.

"One of those challenges is the cap on faith-based admissions. It has without doubt restricted access to Catholic education in England and prevented the Church from realising the benefits of the academisation programme currently underway.

"The letter to the Secretary of State is a timely intervention and I encourage everyone involved in Catholic education in this country to add their name in support."

The open letter can be found at [by clicking here](#).

## Dismay for Church as Fife Council silences Catholic voice on key education committee

Councillors at Fife Council have voted, by a margin of 36-32, to remove the voting rights of Church representatives on a crucial committee.

It means that Catholic representative Mary Caldwell will not have a vote in future decisions affecting Catholic schools.

A spokesperson for the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh said: "The Catholic community in Fife will be disappointed that Mary will no longer have a vote on decisions that impact our schools.

"It is estimated that around 2,000 people in Fife contacted councillors about this issue, asking them to support the Catholic community on this issue."

Margaret Barton, religious advisor for the Archdiocese of St An-

draws and Edinburgh, spoke to councillors at the meeting ahead of the vote, which took place on June 22nd. She said: "As it is with yourselves, the Church representative is accountable to the parents and families who choose Catholic schools. Like yourselves, Mary Caldwell's service to the community is at the core of her work," she said.

"The representative for the Catholic Church speaks and votes on behalf of a significant community who, for various reasons, do not always get their views represented."

Voting rights for religious representatives were agreed by current Fife Council councillors a year ago, in June 2022. When the Catholic Church transferred its schools to state control in 1918, it was with the

understanding that the state would work in partnership with the denomination in whose interest the schools were being run.

In 1929, the Churches were given statutory representation on education committees, and that has remained to this day. The Church representative has been a key part of that historical, and present, legally mandated arrangement, ensuring that the trust which the Catholic Church placed in the state many years ago is reciprocated at local government level.

With 15 Catholic schools in Fife, the Church is educating a high percentage of the children and young people in this authority area and, therefore, this loss of a voice impacts upon a significant percentage



of those resident in Fife.

Voting rights for religious representatives on Edinburgh City Council will be decided by councillors later in the year.

## Archbishop takes tour of new school

• Meanwhile, in better news for schools, Archbishop Leo Cushley was given a tour of the latest Church school to open, the Sinclair Academy in Winchburgh, West Lothian, by its headteacher Gerry Burns.

The Catholic school will open to pupils after the summer holidays. Mr Burns said: "The school is named after Venerable Margaret Sinclair, so our school values are very much about her – aspiration, integrity, mercy and service and it's really about our young people, where we develop a faith life in a school.

"The archbishop was here to visit the new school and it's so exciting at this point that he's involved just now.

"It's really important for us that the archdiocese is key to what we do as a Catholic school moving forward."

Archbishop Cushley is pictured left with Mr Burns. Inset, Venerable Margaret Sinclair, whose attributes the school hopes will be an inspiration to its pupils





# Former Lord Mayor of London honoured by papal knighthood

Cardinal Vincent presented former Lord Mayor of London Vincent Keaveny CBE with a papal knighthood of the Order of St Gregory the Great during Mass at the Church of the Holy Cross, Parson's Green.

The order is one of the five Orders of Knighthood of the Holy See and is bestowed on men and women in recognition of their personal service to the Catholic Church, through their 'unusual labours, their support and their excellent example set forth in their communities and their countries'.

During the Mass, Vincent Keaveny, who was Lord Mayor from 2021-2022, read the first reading which spoke of the prophet Jeremiah, who was persecuted for pro-

claiming the message of the Lord.

Mr Keaveny was Lord Mayor when Queen Elizabeth II died in September 2022. He helped Londoners mourn her passing, joining then Prime Minister Liz Truss at a memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral in which 2,000 members of the public paid their respects the day after her death.

Although he was only in the role for a year, Keaveny witnessed two monarchs and three prime ministers.

In his homily, Cardinal Nichols highlighted how, when Jeremiah was in trouble, his response was to commit himself to the Lord. "This invites us to ask: where do we put our trust?", he said. "We put our

trust where we're known and loved, and that, in the first place, can be in the presence of the Lord.

"Here we hear the words of Jesus, do not be afraid ... because everything that happens, even the very hairs on our head, happens in the sight of God, and is known and is cherished by the father."

"And so, we bring our burdens to him, here, into his presence, into his presence and most importantly, into every celebration of the Mass, where our troubles are taken up into Christ's offering of himself, and presented to the Father," the cardinal said. "The Father, in response, gives us that outpouring of mercy and compassion, which we are then to let flow from us to others."

# Porn chief demands free access to 'boring' content as politicians look to tighten rules

Governments around the world should stop cracking down on pornographic websites and instead make porn "normal and boring", according to the owners of one of the biggest pornographic streaming sites.

Solomon Friedman, founder of the Ethical Capital Partners, who bought Pornhub's parent Mind-Geek, said we should celebrate sexual expression and talk more openly about it.

He made his comments after French President Emmanuel Macron made a speech in which he said protecting children from online porn was a "priority" of his administration.

The American state of Utah has

recently introduced tough new age verification laws, requiring age checks to stop under 18s accessing adult content.

Pornhub retaliated by banning all residents in Utah from its sites, claiming the state-wide law was not the "most effective solution for protecting children".

The debate comes as UK politicians are still debating the Online Safety Bill, which contains age checks on online porn sites. Questions remain about when these age checks will be properly implemented, amid concerns of the damage access to pornography does to children in particular.

Commenting on the row, CARE's director of communications and en-

gagement, James Mildred, said: "Let's be really clear: there's nothing normal or boring about pornography, as the porn chief claims. It is utterly degrading and undermines human dignity. It takes something that is sacred and portrays it as a benign form of entertainment.

"Porn also hides a world of exploitation, where women especially and men are simply objectified.

"We fully support moves by governments around the world to introduce age verification, something which is long overdue.

"We urge the UK Government to implement the age verification elements of the Online Safety Bill in a timely fashion once the Bill receives Royal Assent."

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## COMMENT

## Prince has a chance to leave a real lasting legacy

On a visit to the mining villages of South Wales in 1936, the soon-to-abdicate King Edward VIII, said of the poverty he witnessed that “something must be done” to find people work.

He was lauded for his compassion, though there is scant proof that anything was ever done.

In his most high-profile into the world of politics and society thus far, Prince William of Wales is trying to make a similar impact as he tries to make a real difference to the lives of the most disadvantaged today, those living on the streets or otherwise without a home.

The Prince has launched a five-year programme, called simply Homewards, which aims to end homelessness in six selected locations across the country. He proposes to make it his life's work to ensure that “everyone has a safe and secure home”.

This is an ambitious project and one that will be hard to fulfil given the myriad reasons why people are homeless, ranging from alcohol and drug abuse to mental health problems. But the scale of the challenge makes the involvement of the Prince all the more important.

Charities already exist to try to relieve the plight of the homeless but the co-ordinating role offered by Homewards, backed by funding from the Prince's charitable trust, promises to be significant. The aim is to use the Royal Foundation's convening power to bring together charities, local authorities and social services to create “systemic change”.

This is not just about rough sleepers, the number of which are relatively few in number. Rather, the Prince is focusing on an estimated 300,000 people classified as homeless. While this is noble work, the trap he must avoid straying into is to bring politics into his work.

His mother was patron of the homeless charity Centrepoint, and it was one of her most important causes. Similarly the prince's father, King Charles III, made the Prince's Trust the focus of much of his work, and it has been hugely successful in helping disadvantaged young people chart a direction in life.

If Prince William can emulate their commitments and successes, he can leave a lasting legacy.

# A warning for Putin – possibly a chance missed for Ukraine

POLITICS

**Stefan Wolff & Tetyana Malyarenko**

Blink and you could have missed it. Within 36 hours, the challenge mounted against the Kremlin by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the mercenary private military company the Wagner Group, was over.

Last Friday, on 23rd June, it looked so different. Prigozhin ordered 25,000 of his troops on a “march for justice”, which duly set out to confront the Russian president in Moscow. By the following afternoon he called it off.

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

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

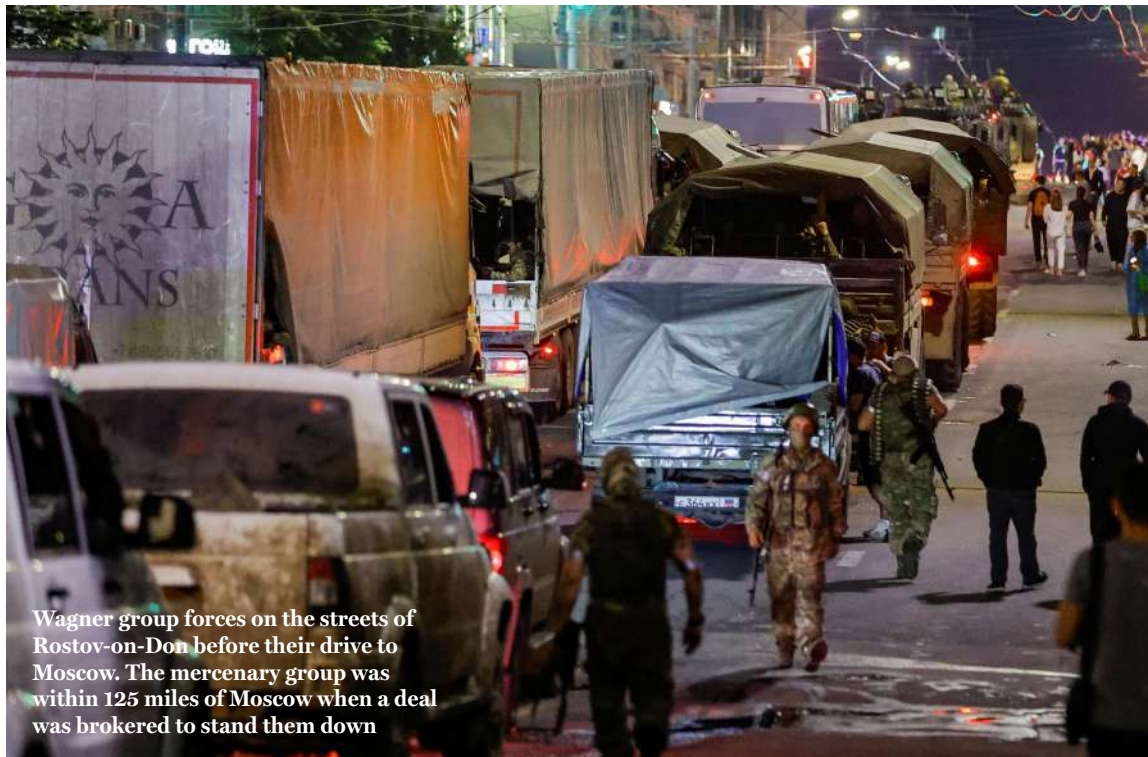
The conflict between Prigozhin and the top brass of the Russian military has been going on for some time. But it escalated as the battle over Bakhmut intensified, during which Prigozhin complained more than 20,000 of his men had died.

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

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

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

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



Wagner group forces on the streets of Rostov-on-Don before their drive to Moscow. The mercenary group was within 125 miles of Moscow when a deal was brokered to stand them down

well-prepared operation.

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

### Russia – a fragile regime exposed

More immediately, Putin has other problems to consider and take care of. His speech on Saturday morning was fiercely combative, vowing to crush what he called an “armed uprising”.

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

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

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

to respond to the crisis and deploy military and security resources beyond the war in Ukraine.

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

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

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

Turkey and China will have viewed the turmoil in their nuclear-armed neighbour with some concern. And both they, Kazakhstan, and other Russian neighbours in central Asia, will have deepening reservations about how reliable a partner Putin can be going forward.

### An opportunity missed for Ukraine

This will probably be noted by Ukraine and its western partners. Most of Kyiv's allies generally limited themselves to statements of concern and noted that they were monitoring events as they were

unfolding. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, meanwhile, highlighted the chaos in Russia and the humiliation that this meant for Putin.

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

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

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

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

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

**Stefan Wolff is Professor of International Security, University of Birmingham; Tetyana Malyarenko is Professor of International Relations, National University Odesa Law Academy**

# Westminster breakfast event asks for a more forgiving type of politics

**James Somerville-Meikle**

I must confess I am not an early bird, so when my alarm went off at 4.45am on Tuesday it was a bit of a shock. The crack-of-dawn start was needed as I was helping at the National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast in Westminster.

The annual event sees Parliament's Westminster Hall turned into a giant dining room with 70 round tables set up to accommodate MPs, peers, and guests. This year saw a record of 180 MPs register to attend the event, with each one able to invite up to four Church leaders from their constituency.

It was one of the many events that could not happen during Covid, which perhaps makes it even more special now. The sight and sound of 700 people in Westminster Hall in prayer and praise is quite something. It's a noise that can just about be contained by the building's ancient hammer-beam roof.

It was at this event last year that Sajid Javid said he decided to resign as Health Secretary, which ultimately led to Boris Johnson



being forced to resign as Prime Minister just two days later. With that in mind, it was perhaps rather brave of the current Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to attend. But he seemed at ease going from table to table shaking hands with pastors, priests, and bishops.

The theme for this year's event was rather apt: 'The Power of Forgiveness in Public Life'. The keynote speaker, Dr Amy Orr-

Ewing, from the University of Aberdeen School of Divinity, said that forgiveness "may just be the greatest gift that the Christian story can offer." Sadly, neither Sajid Javid or Boris Johnson were present to hear the message.

Forgiveness certainly feels like a gift that is needed in politics and wider society at present. Where one perceived false step or comment can see someone cancelled or

condemned, forgiveness offers a way out of this 'culture war' mentality.

The tables and chairs in Westminster Hall were packed away even faster than they appeared, and the early start already seems like a long time ago. But hopefully something of the joy and grace experienced at the event will remain with those who took part and help make our politics slightly more forgiving.

## MP's bill to give parents rights on sex education

Christian MP Miriam Cates has brought forward a Bill to ensure parents can view materials used by schools in sex education lessons.

The Sex Education Transparency Private Members' Bill comes after parent Clare Page lost a legal battle to obtain sex education materials used by the school her 15-year-old daughter attends.

Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, has previously told schools that "parents should be able to view all curriculum materials", including "where an external agency advises schools that their materials cannot be shared due to restrictions in commercial law, or a school's contract prohibits sharing materials beyond the classroom".

Despite this, Judge Sophie Buckley overruled Mrs Page's case on the grounds that the commercial interests of the third-party sex education provider outweighed the public interest in reviewing the lesson plan.

Ms Cates said: "I've been following Clare Page's case very closely and it was very disappointing.

"My Private Members' Bill would make it necessary for schools only to use materials that are published somewhere, so they can view content before lessons are given."

## Sunak may block public pay rises

Public sector workers could have pay rises of 6 per cent blocked amid claims that they would fuel inflation. Rishi Sunak said he may overrule the independent pay review bodies if pay rises risk setting off a "wage-price spiral". Government sources told *The Times* they are likely to overrule pay review bodies after they said teachers should receive a 6.5 per cent pay rise while police officers, prison officers and junior doctors should all get 6 per cent or more.

## Unemployed warned don't be 'job snobs'

A government minister has said that the unemployed cannot be "job snobs". Mims Davies, the social mobility minister, said that those who want to progress should adopt an ABC approach: "Any job, better job, career". She added: "Some of the best jobs I've ever had have been least glamorous ones."

Last month's unemployment rate "continued to creep up", said *The Times*, with the jobless rate rising by 0.2 percentage points to reach 3.9 per cent.

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## The joy of walking together

**Sir John Battle**



In one of his first published books after being elected Pope in March 2013, in *The Church of Mercy* (2014), Pope Francis launched a fundamentally defining theme of his vision of 'being the Church', namely 'Mercy'.

This theme has been amplified by an emphasis on 'encounter' and 'listening' and more recently by introducing the deep theological concept and practice of synodality. At its roots, synodality means 'the whole Church walking together'. The idea of walking is highlighted in his *Church of Mercy* where Pope Francis writes: 'What could be more beautiful than walking with our people? ...sometimes in front, sometimes behind and sometimes in the middle; in front in order to guide the community; in the middle in order to encourage and support; and at the back in order to keep it united and so that no one lags too, too far behind, to keep them united. It is important to walk in unity, without running ahead, without nostalgia for the past. And while you walk you talk, you get to know one another, you tell one another about yourself, you grow as a family.'

Our National Synthesis Document in June 2022 spelt out "An ever deepening synodality will be reflected in greater attentiveness to the peripheries of suffering and need, both locally and globally, such that parishes and schools become ever more outward facing, evangelising and mission orientated.

'A synodal Church in which the faithful assemble, listen and discern is more likely to recognise Christ in the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth and to respond in apostolic actions that make visible God's compassion for all His creatures.'

The recent well attended St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) National three-day conference this year focussed its reflections on the 'synodal process' and the practical responses of the SVP at local parish conference and national levels, building on nearly two centuries of experience and retaining an openness in the Holy Spirit to the challenging future.

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Find out more at: [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)

# After latest tragedy, perhaps it's time to leave the Titanic to rest

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Caroline Farrow**



This time last week the world was transfixed by the plight of the five individuals who, having paid an extortionate amount of money to view the wreck of the Titanic, were potentially trapped inside a submersible, 13,000 feet under the sea with depleting oxygen reserves.

Sadly, of course, we've since learned that all of those on board perished following a catastrophic implosion of the vessel's hull.

Unlike the passengers on the similarly ill-fated Titanic, the occupants of the submersible would have experienced a swift death with no time to experience fear or panic and their demise was mercifully swift. On the flipside this means that they would also not have been able to offer any prayers either for their rescue or salvation which is why it is important that we keep them and our families in ours.

Without wanting to attribute blame to the lost souls, this terrible accident appears to be yet another grim testament to the hubris of mankind. It appears that those behind the expedition to view the Titanic wreck were gripped by the same greed and desire to put profit before safety as the White Star line executives who took the catastrophic decision not to put enough lifeboats on board for everyone, as the ship was famously, and ironically as it turned out, deemed to be unsinkable.

The submersible was made out of an inferior and cheaper material, carbon fibre, compared with the ceramics used by previous explorers to the wreck. Stockton Rush, the CEO of OceanGate, the company behind the expedition who died in the tragedy, had previously boasted that he had broken some engineering design rules when building the submersible and it appears that the craft was designed and built on a tight six-week deadline.

A number of other potential passengers have spoken of their relief that they declined a place on the craft having become concerned about the seemingly lax manufacturing process, with many parts having been purchased off Amazon, rather than being specifically designed to withstand the pressures of being 12,500 feet under the sea. They were possibly also put off by the pilot boasting about how the submersible was



navigated by the same games console controller found in every teenager's bedroom!

A lot of commentary has focused on the almost obscene wealth of those who died, asking why they merited rolling global news coverage when refugees fleeing persecution die at sea every single day, with nary a single headline. It would be easy to attribute this to privilege, but the truth is simply that the tragedy of the Titanic has captured popular imagination and been the subject of a number of films and documentaries ever since its terrible maiden voyage, the most famous of which is, of course, the 1997 James Cameron movie, which really brought home the terror the sinking created, as well as providing us with a romantic love story.

Had those on board the Titan submersible managed to survive their ordeal, then no doubt they too would have been the subject of enormous media interest and no doubt feature films. Their incredible ordeal, trapped deep under the sea, with no communication, in a race against time before their oxygen supply failed, really was the stuff of Hollywood.

A few weeks earlier we learned that four children, including an infant, were the only survivors of a plane crash in the Amazon. They survived on their own by foraging in the undergrowth, surrounded by dangerous wildlife and poisonous vegetation for four weeks. I imagine that in years to come, their incredible survival story against the odds, will also hit the big screens.

Unlike the passengers on the submersible these children were not wealthy, far from it, they were from an indigenous Amazonian tribe. The public interest in that tale does not emanate from any privilege, but rather is a testament to the human spirit.

That said, while I do not in any way believe that those on board the Titan deserved their fate, I have to admit to being uncomfortable with the entire mission, which was not to do with genuine exploration but more a vanity project for those with a lot of money to burn. Each ticket had been discounted to a supposedly cut-price \$150,000 dollars, which could have been put to so much better use than going to gawp at what is essentially, a plundered mass grave site.

Ever since the wreck was first discovered in 1985, opinion has been divided over the numerous salvage operations that have taken place to remove the ship's artefacts from the seabed and put them on permanent display in museums. Dr Robert Ballard, the explorer responsible for finding the Titanic, is forced to repeatedly remind people that despite the lack of bodies, Titanic is still a mass grave, and just as we wouldn't go digging up battlefields like Gettysberg to take belt buckles from the deceased, we should apply the same logic to the wreck of the Titanic.

Ballard said that the most poignant image captured from Titanic's resting place was not the famous bow of the ship, immortalised by James Cameron's feature film, or the propellers, anchor funnel or any other features

of the ship, but rather a solitary pair of boots in the debris field, lying at right angles to each other on the ocean floor. The boots would have been attached to the body of a person, whose skeleton was long since dissolved and assumed into the deep.

As Ballard explains, roughly 30 minutes after the Titanic crashed to the ocean floor, she would have been joined by the hundreds of bodies of those who fell into the water, did not have lifejackets and died of hypothermia.

While there may be some merit to retrieving passengers' personal items, with some claiming that the artefacts are an important part of humanity's history and help to bring the tragic story to life, others, which included survivors when they were still alive, condemned the insensitivity and greed of those involved in the commercial salvage missions, especially as many of these operations have not properly collected and catalogued data.

Unlike the original expeditions to discover and explore the wreck of the Titanic, this was not an expedition to push the boundaries and expand mankind's knowledge for the good of humanity, and not a wise use of resources.

It was a tourist trip that went disastrously wrong, but we must remember that whatever our thoughts on the wisdom of the jaunt, those who died have the same human dignity and deserve the same amount of respect as the rest of us.

Perhaps though, the tragedy should remind us that it is now time to let the Titanic rest.



# Challenges of life in prison revealed at Pact's Mass

Pact's first supporters' Mass has taken place at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, which was chosen for its especially beautiful and spacious chapel. Bishop Paul McAleenan was the main celebrant, assisted by Fr Dominic Robinson and Fr Chima, the Catholic chaplain at the prison.

Pact's Theresa Alessandro said: "We were welcomed by Governor Amy Frost, who said how much she valued being able to invite people inside to play some part in the good work the prison staff strive to do.

"Our Mass was moving and prayerful. One of the prisoners read from St Paul's Letter to the Romans: 'Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ.'

"Bishop Paul had chosen a Gospel reading from St. Luke, where the new disciples 'left everything and followed him'. In our bidding prayers, we asked: 'God of mercy, may your love overcome struggle and heartache and bring new life.'

Jonathan Schranz, the director of music at Southwark Cathedral, played the chapel's grand piano fantastically well, to accompany our hymn singing."

Theresa Alessandro told the congregation about Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs' recent audience with Pope Francis and showed them the image of Mary Untier of Knots, which Pope Francis blessed on behalf of all those in prison.

She explained to the men that they were the first of many in prison with whom Pact hopes to share the image and Pope Francis' blessing. After Mass, the men had an opportunity to touch the image and each make their own quiet prayer.

Echoing Bishop Paul's homily, Theresa assured the men that Pope Francis cares about what happens to them because Jesus himself does.

"We knew that holding an event in the prison would be challenging, and so it was," Theresa added.



The stunning chapel at Wormwood Scrubs was a glorious venue for the first PACT supporters' Mass.

Below, Theresa Alessandro



"It took quite some time to get guests through security, but this gave us an opportunity to experience what visiting families go through – sometimes having had a long journey already.

"We were to be joined for Mass by 15 men but in fact only four arrived, due to 'short-notice issues' inside on the day – just as families intending to make a much-awaited visit can be disappointed at the last minute as it is cancelled for a variety of reasons."

Pact staff who work at Wormwood Scrubs escorted guests back to the Pact Visitor Centre just outside the prison gate. There, Pact's

director of communications and engagement, Nick Mann, thanked everyone for their support.

Thoughtful conversations followed over refreshments. There is often little understanding of what life is like for those in prison and for their children and families, and being involved in supporting people affected by the criminal justice system can be isolating at times.

However, there was a wealth of experience and wisdom among the group, from Pact parish reps, volunteers, donors, lay chaplains, members of Caritas Westminster, for us to share ideas and affirm to our work.

# Bible present at death of Charles II sells for a king's ransom

Andy Drozdziak

A rare prayer book owned by a Catholic priest who attended King Charles II's deathbed has sold for almost £7,000 at auction.

Father John Huddleston's personal missal was sold in an online auction for £6,900, decades after it was purchased for the modern equivalent of two-and-a-half pence in the 1950s.

Auctioneer John Crane said the "very rare" item was "hotly contested by 25 experienced and keen bidders watching online".

Fr Huddleston was a Benedictine priest who lived at Moseley Old Hall with the Catholic Whitgreave family, who had stayed loyal to the Royalist cause following the execution of Charles I.

Mr Crane said it could be "assumed quite comfortably" that the book was present at the death of King Charles II, after Fr Huddleston attended the monarch's deathbed to convert him to Catholicism.

Fr Huddleston also arranged for King Charles II to seek safety in France during the English Civil War.

The King is understood to have consulted books in Huddleston's library and it is likely that the missal – now complete with evocative drops of candle wax on some pages – would have been one of them.



Following nine years of exile and the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, Charles made Fr Huddleston chaplain to his Catholic mother, Queen Henrietta Maria, and later to his Catholic Portuguese wife, Catherine of Braganza.

Charles summoned Fr Huddleston to his bedside at Whitehall Palace in London in 1685, as he lay dying. Huddleston heard the king's confession, administered the Eucharist and received him into the Catholic Church.

The Duke of York is believed to have said that Huddleston saved the king's life twice: first his body, then his soul.

The missal joins a collection that includes portraits of Thomas Whitgreave, the owner of the hall at the time, and of Fr Huddleston, as well as a letter King Charles II sent to a young local woman, Jane Lane, thanking her for helping him escape to France.

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## IN BRIEF

**St Paul's triggers Nelson row**

St Paul's Cathedral has sparked anger after claiming that Admiral Lord Nelson had a "personal commitment" to slavery. A profile of the naval war hero on the cathedral's website states that "over time, aspects of his character and behaviour have been assessed more critically, particularly his personal commitment to the system of slavery".

However, historian and Nelson biographer Dr Roger Knight told *The Telegraph* he could "see no evidence" for the claim.

**Duchess has cancer operation**

Sarah Ferguson has had a "successful" operation after being diagnosed with breast cancer.

The Duchess of York, 63, was given the cancer news after a recent routine mammogram and was admitted to King Edward VII Hospital in Marylebone, London, on Tuesday.

Friends reported the operation was "successful" and one said that the ex-wife of Prince Andrew has been told that the "prognosis is good" thanks to the "early detection".

**Bumper City pay rises behind inflation**

Pay rises for City bosses and others from the top 10 per cent of UK earners have outstripped those for the rest of the workforce and powered recent inflation and soaring interest rates, according to analysis of official figures by the TUC.

Having studied data from the Office for National Statistics, the TUC found annual wage increases are only becoming more lavish among the top 10 per cent of earners, while the rest of the working population is suffering a decline in wage growth.

**Just Stop Oil 'discourage support'**

The entrepreneur who set up a group that funded Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil has criticised the two groups' tactics.

"It's become disruption for the sake of disruption," Trevor Neilson told *The Sunday Times*.

"Working people that are trying to get to their job, get their children dropped off at school", he said, and if "they have a pink-haired, tattooed and pierced protester standing in front of their car, so that their child is late for their test that day" that "does not encourage them to join the movement or support our cause".

# Economic trends suggest interest rate rises are locked in for now

THE ECONOMY

**Alan Shipman****Why Bank of England's interest rate hikes aren't slowing inflation enough and what that means for mortgages**

Consumer price inflation stuck at 8.7% in May, defying expectations of a slowdown and making a further rise in UK interest rates inevitable.

The May figures came out the day before the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) was due to meet to discuss changing the UK base rate. This sets the interest rates for borrowing by the Government, businesses and banks – who then feed any increases through to borrowers such as people with mortgages.

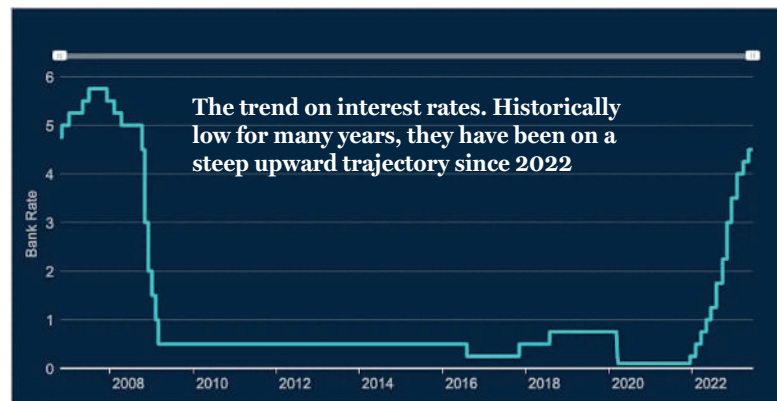
A 13th consecutive rise in June had been expected for some time, because the headline rate of inflation has been well above its medium-term 2% target since mid-2021. At the risk of being accused of derailing the UK's post-Covid economic recovery, MPC members' main decision at the most recent meeting was not whether or not to hike rates, but by how much.

The latest 0.5% increase (to 5%) represents a jump from previous 0.25% increments, showing their concern that inflation is becoming embedded in the economy.

By increasing rates, the central bank is engaging in "monetary tightening", which is designed to reduce the level of demand for goods and services in the economy. Households are encouraged to pay down debts and channel more of their incomes into saving. Those who cannot reduce their borrowing must pay more for it, leaving less to spend on other things.

The knock-on effect of rate hikes on people's mortgage costs could result in a 20% hit to the disposable incomes of 1.4 million mortgage holders before the next election, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. The Government also finds its own debt costs going up, curbing ministerial inclinations to spend more money.

And so, this policy has obvious social costs. As well as ruling out any Government help with this latest cost of living shock, it punishes those who have been forced to borrow due to poverty, as well as the better-off who chose to borrow to accumulate more assets.



It also has longer-term economic costs, deterring firms from borrowing for investment.

But the MPC believes it has no alternative. Although volatile items, especially food, can be blamed for some of the current overshoot, core inflation (which removes these fluctuating items) has risen to a 31-year high of 7.1%.

For monetary policymakers, the fear is that, if they don't act decisively now, inflation will become built into firms' expectations when setting prices, as well as those of employees bargaining over wages. Such self-fulfilling expectations are blamed by many for a 'wage-price spiral' that created a decade-long period of inflation and stagnation in the UK following the oil price shocks of 1973.

The number of rate increases since 2021 reflects an unexpected slowness for these hikes to take effect on inflation. Although a painfully blunt instrument in this respect, interest rates are the only one the MPC has.

**A convenient scapegoat**

The Government has pledged to halve inflation by year-end and is

now in danger of breaking this promise. It's convenient, then, to allow the blame for overshooting inflation to be placed on the independent central bank.

With hindsight, the Bank of England's policy since the 2008 global financial crisis is easy to criticise. It kept interest rates close to zero from February 2009 to March 2020, reducing them further during the pandemic, then lifting them rapidly since December 2021.

The long phase of ultra-low interest rates deterred households and firms from paying down the debts that underlay the 2008 crisis. So the unprecedented jump in interest rates since 2021 has caused a sudden shock to corporate and household cashflows. Even now, many mortgage borrowers are still waiting to feel the full force.

When this does happen, the rise in borrowing costs – on top of the surge in other living costs – could tip an already slow-growing economy back into full-blown recession. That would be compounded if, as in the early 1990s, falling house prices knock a further hole in the finances of UK

homeowners.

But it could also be argued that the post-2008 decade of low interest rates was unavoidable. Governments and business needed to borrow at low cost to haul the economy out of the deep 2009-2010 recession. During this time, inflation was close to zero and any lasting fall in consumer prices could have created a further slump.

The sharp interest-rate rise since 2021 has been equally unavoidable. As well as restraining inflation, it is needed to attract foreign investment to finance the UK's persistent current-account deficits.

These used to be comfortably financed by foreign direct investment (FDI), which offset the UK's excess of imports over exports. But FDI has tailed downwards since the 2016 Brexit vote.

So external financing now relies more heavily on foreign financial investors, who are looking for a higher return – as is evident from the rising yield the Government must pay on its own borrowing.

**Treatment-resistant inflation**

Although inevitable, the recent succession of interest rate rises has done little to tame the inflation we're all experiencing at the moment.

Since early 2022, most prices have been pushed up by rising costs, which is known as cost-push inflation. Raw material costs have been fuelled by the global rise in food and energy prices, and last autumn's steep depreciation of the pound against the US dollar. Rising wage costs are an inevitable result of widespread labour shortages, exacerbated in the UK by a post-Covid fall in workforce numbers and the loss of EU workers since Brexit.

With the Government's own borrowing costs climbing back towards the level that triggered fiscal meltdown after last September's Truss budget, it now risks a further stagflationary spiral – a combination of high inflation and an economy in recession. Rising interest rates are likely to divert more budget spending from growth-promoting projects into servicing public debt.

But if mortgage borrowers get any short-term relief from rising rates, it will only be in the unlikely event that the shock from the latest rate rise to 5% prompts emergency action to avert a pre-election recession.

**Alan Shipman is a senior lecturer in economics at The Open University**



# Charity reports highlights aid to Ukrainian seafarers

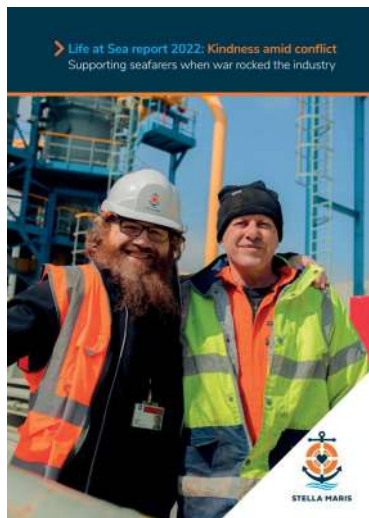
Catholic charity Stella Maris has launched the latest version of its *Life at Sea* report, which focuses on the work of its port chaplains in supporting seafarers and families impacted by the war in Ukraine.

The *Stella Maris Life at Sea Report 2022: Kindness amid conflict* contains stories of how its chaplains have made a vital difference to many seafarers and families facing hardship and desperation, by offering safe housing for Ukrainian refugees, delivering humanitarian relief, and reuniting families.

Working in partnership with the shipping industry, the charity has so far provided £150,000 in grants to 300 Ukrainian seafarers and their families over the last year.

Stella Maris CEO Tim Hill MBE said: "From the day war broke out, we've been on the ground supporting seafarers and their families facing an unprecedented crisis. Today, our team remains in the port city of Odesa, doing everything possible to stand with those who need help."

Tim Hill underlined the importance of its Centenary Emergency



service and donating to the work of our team in Odesa, industry partners can show their commitment to Ukrainian seafarers – and demonstrate kindness amid conflict."

Stella Maris said that, in the coming year, funds will be needed for various needs. A priority will be to provide financial support to out-of-work Ukrainian seafarers and their families facing economic hardship.

Money will also be needed to grow the mental health counselling service it established in 2022, to provide relief for the increasing numbers of men, women and children suffering trauma and poor mental health because of the war.

The Centenary Emergency Fund also needs support to provide crisis help to seafarers of all nationalities and backgrounds, around the world, in cases of abandonment, hospitalisation, death at sea and piracy.

**You can read the Stella Maris Life at Sea Report 2022 in full by clicking here:**

Fund. "As the conflict in Ukraine continues, there's an urgent need to keep supporting seafarers," Mr Hill said.

"We are calling on the shipping industry to step up its support for Ukrainian seafarers and their families by partnering with Stella Maris in the coming year. By contributing to our Centenary Emergency Fund, supporting a seafarers' counselling

# Irish star hails home town as FA finally acts on abuse

**Andy Drozdziak**

Irish Catholic football player James McClean has said he is "immensely proud" of the support of his home community in Creggan, Derry, after reaching 100 caps for the Republic of Ireland.

McClean, who plays for Wigan Athletic, has been the victim of anti-Catholic abuse throughout his career. In the latest incident, the FA charged Millwall with misconduct last weekend after their fans directed anti-Catholic chants at McClean last season.

In another incident, last season, fans of his former club Sunderland could be heard abusing him at multiple points throughout the game, chanting anti-Irish and anti-Catholic slogans against the pope.

McClean credited his "strong" home community with helping him cope with the abuse at a street party in Creggan in his honour.

"The majority of times, it's water off a duck's back. You're a product of your environment. Creggan is strong and has resilience - that's also how I am as person," McClean told BBC Radio Foyle - and hopes that the misconduct charge against Millwall will lead to improvements.

"I've been quite publicly critical of the FA in the past and rightly so. In the same sense, now with this, I'll give praise where it's due. I'm not going to hold my breath and say it'll change things going forward. I'm not naïve enough to think that it will. But look, it's a start," he said.

McClean paid credit to his home community on reaching the 100-cap milestone, as Ireland beat Gibraltar 3-0. "I'm immensely proud not just for myself but for my family and the community, as you can see here today, and just everybody that's played a part in helping me get there," he told UTV.

"I've been with Ireland now for about 11 years so it's 11 years of just hard work and dedication and then obviously now to join that club in which there's not many in on the 100 caps. It's something I'm very, very proud of."

**James McClean is immensely proud of the support of his home community in Creggan**



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## Faith is a light during dark times in police

A new leader for the Catholic Police Guild has given him “peace” when faced with the “darkest areas of society” in his policing career.

**DC Pete Wise** from Cambridgeshire Constabulary has been appointed as the new South Representative for the Catholic Police Guild. He told the force’s internal communications team about his faith and policing, saying that “naturally, police officers encounter the darkest areas of society and, as a result, many officers utilise support counselling services. I know that my inner strength and resolve is directly attributable to my faith,” he said.

“My faith as a Catholic, specifically a Catholic of the traditional observance, has helped me many times in my police career. For example, having recently viewed truly horrific videos as part of an investigation, I was able to turn to my faith to give me peace of mind and comfort.”

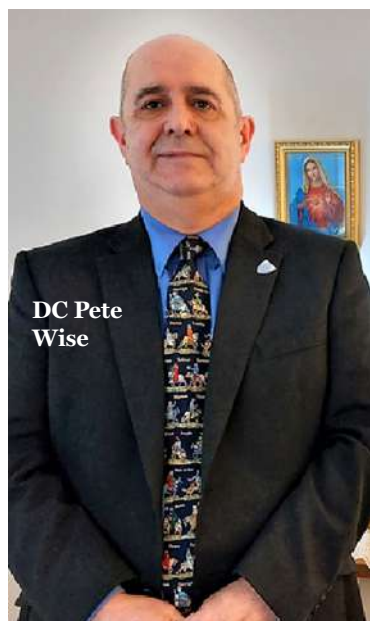
DC Pete Wise became a police officer at the age of 42 because he wanted to make a difference to his community and society. He had joined the military as a teenager and then spent 20 years in the private sector before joining Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Like most investigators, DC Wise, 61, has often experienced the darker side of human nature, but he attributes his resilience and inner strength to his Christian faith.

“My faith gives me the opportunity to mentally pray at any time of the day for any specific guidance I might need or reassurance.”

DC Wise believes that “more could be done to educate people about the Catholic faith, who we are and what offends us, not only within the police, but within society in general.”

“I am proud to be a member of the Catholic Police Guild – the oldest Guild in the police,” he said. **Find out more about the guild at [www.catholicpoliceguild.co.uk](http://www.catholicpoliceguild.co.uk)**



**DC Pete Wise**



Charities that received funding pictured at the awards celebration

# Trust grants target charities at sharp end of cost-of-living crisis

**Andy Drozdzia**

The Charles Plater Trust (CPT) has announced 15 new charity partnerships at its annual Grant Awards Celebration held at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral on 21st June.

The Trust, which was established in 2006, has awarded more than £3 million to UK charities to date, with its trust manager and board of trustees working collaboratively with grant recipients to promote the common good.

The trust’s manager, Philomena Cullen, said: “Charities and churches are at the frontline of the challenges facing our country, so we are delighted to welcome 15 new charity partners to the Plater Trust family.”

“The Trust is awarding £442,800

in grants this year, supporting a range of vital inspiring initiatives tackling urgent social need with projects including ex-offender rehabilitation, homelessness, food poverty, mental health, modern slavery, and domestic violence.”

Philomena added that charities are “struggling with rising operational costs, more demand for their services, growing societal inequality and apathy for structural changes needed.”

The successful bids included Birmingham-based The Jericho Foundation, which received £49,000 to support vulnerable women and girls affected by modern slavery.

Jericho senior manager Louise Gore said: “[CPT’s] award will

make a valuable contribution towards our employment-focused work supporting survivors of modern slavery to recover, reduce their risk of re-exploitation and begin to look forward to their future with hope”.

Tempus Novo have also been awarded a large grant from the Trust, receiving £50,000 to support offenders and ex-offenders living in the East Midlands into employment.

Steve Freer, its CEO described the award as “life changing”. “This funding will allow us to help so many more people, and in doing so, the partnership will have a positive impact on society in so many ways. Put simply, it’s life-changing.”

Bishop Richard Moth, Chair of The Charles Plater Trust, said: “Life is really tough for far too many of our brothers and sisters across the country. Millions of people are struggling with the ever-increasing cost of living, while the vast majority of families on Universal Credit cannot afford even basic items like food and clothing.

“This year, our funding is focused on making a positive difference to the lives and life chances of hundreds of very marginalised people.

“Everything we do at the CPT is powered by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and ultimately the dignity of each and every person in our society.”

<https://www.plater.org.uk>

## New RE resources amplify the ‘call to Holiness’

Free new RE resources have been published to help teach sixth form students about the call to holiness.

The optional Core RE Vocation module has been produced by the National Office for Vocation (NOV) from the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

The resources include: a staff handbook of seven structured lessons; prayers; student workbooks; Powerpoint presentations, and videos.

Lessons are based around the themes of vocation and discernment; the call to serve; marriage; the holy orders of deacon, priesthood and bishop; consecrated religious life; a guest speaker; and assessment.

Commenting on the new resources, the National Office for Vocations (NOV) team, explained their purpose. “We are delighted to launch our new Core RE Vocations Module for schools. The resource is designed



to be used with Year 12 students; however, it can be also taught with Year 13.

“The module is there to help young people understand the culture of vocation and the many ways God can call each of us; it is also there to help young people discern what God is calling them to,” NOV wrote.

“The resources can be used for

further discussion in class, with time for prayer and discernment for students.”

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP, NOV Chair, also spoke about the theological significance of the content. “The Call to Holiness’ is heard at different moments in a person’s life and its response takes different forms,” he said.

“For some, it may be a lifelong



commitment to religious life or priesthood, but for others it may be in the married or single life, in teaching, the caring professions or in the world of law and business, or a combination of these.

But the ‘Call to Holiness’ is universal and applies to everyone no matter what path in life they choose.”

**To read and download the Core RE Vocations Module, click here:**

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**IN BRIEF****Pope prays for missing girl's family**

Pope Francis has publicly expressed his closeness to the family of Emanuela Orlandi, the young girl who disappeared in the Vatican 40 years ago. He told visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square for the Angelus that: "I once again exress my closeness to her family, especially her mother, and assure them of my prayers," he said. "I extend a remembrance to all families who bear the sorrow of a dear one who has disappeared."

Police have questioned officials that oversaw various offices when the 15-year-old schoolgirl disappeared in 1983. Vatican chief prosecutor Alessandro Diddi said the Holy See had "gathered all the evidence from people responsible for some offices at the time of the events."

Many theories have emerged over the fate of Orlandi, the daughter of a Vatican employee, many of which were aired in a Netflix series in 2022.

The Vatican statement also said that in reviewing the evidence, the prosecutor's office confirmed "some investigative leads worthy of further study" had emerged, and that all the documentation had been forwarded to the Rome prosecutor's office.

**Don't fear ridicule for your faith**

Young people should have no fear in proclaiming their faith – after all, Jesus didn't, the pope said.

Jesus had no fear of ridicule, persecution or criticism for being faithful to the Gospel, Pope Francis said. But they must not waste their lives chasing after trivial things.

"There is a cost to remaining faithful to what counts. The cost is going against the tide, the cost is freeing oneself from being conditioned by popular opinion, the cost is being separated from those who 'follow the current,'" he said. "What matters is not to throw away the greatest good: life. This is the only thing that should frighten us," the pope said.

**Safeguarding needs global approach**

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors is inviting public comment on a proposed set of principles that Church bodies around the world must reflect in their safeguarding guidelines.

Distribution of the Universal Guidelines Framework was approved in May.

It calls on Church leaders to "take ownership of their moral, pastoral and governance responsibilities to work for the creation of a 'one Church approach' to safeguarding."

**Doctors gave me green light to join you, cheery pope tells WYD pilgrims**

With a green light from his doctor, Pope Francis has assured young people that he will be with them in Portugal for World Youth Day despite his recent surgery to rectify a hernia.

"Some think that because of the illness I won't go, but the doctor told me that I can go, so I will be with you," the pope said in a video message released for pilgrims traveling to Lisbon, Portugal, for World Youth Day (1st-6th August).

In the video, filmed by Auxiliary Bishop Amario Manuel Alves Aguiar of Lisbon, the pope held up a backpack with the World Youth Day logo, saying "I am ready to go. I have everything in hand because I am looking forward to going."

The pope noted that there are only 40 days until World Youth Day begins, "like a Lent before the meeting in Lisbon."

He then gave some advice to young people, telling them not to

listen "to those who reduce life to ideas."

"Poor people," the pope said, "they've lost the joy of life and the joy of encounter. Pray for them."

Pope Francis encouraged young people, on the other hand, to always move forward while speaking the "three languages of life" – the languages of the head, heart and hands, which allow people to think, feel and act harmoniously.

In a separate video, the pope spoke to the workers who are preparing the infrastructure that makes World Youth Day possible. While he acknowledged that workers "don't seem like the main characters of World Youth Day," he said they are the ones who hold the entire celebration in place.

Pope Francis thanked them for their work and for being a "seed."

"Because you are like a seed, you will bloom from below," he said. "It's not seen," but "the fruit will show."



Ready to go: Pope Francis with his WYD rucksack

**Fatima visionary and US sister declared venerable on first steps to beatification**

Recognising they lived the Christian virtues in a heroic way, Pope Francis has declared venerable Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, founder of the first Catholic order of African American nuns, and Sister Lucia dos Santos, who, with her cousins, reported seeing Mary when she was a child in Fatima, Portugal.

The pope signed the decrees recognising their heroic virtues on 22nd June. A miracle attributed to their intercession is still necessary before they can be beatified.

Meeting with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, Pope Francis also recognised the martyrdom of Fr Manuel Gonzalez-Serna Rodriguez and 19 other priests, laymen and laywomen killed during the Spanish Civil War. The recognition of martyrdom clears the way for beatification without a miracle.

Mother Lange, who was born in Cuba to Haitian parents, came to the United States around 1813, settling near Baltimore, and saw how the children of other immigrants needed education.

"She was determined to respond to that need in spite of being a black



woman in a slave state long before the Emancipation Proclamation," according to her sainthood cause. "She used her own money and home to educate children of colour."

With the support of a priest and Archbishop James Whitfield of Baltimore, she and three other women made promises of poverty, chastity and obedience in 1829, founding the Oblate Sisters of Providence, an order that continues today.

Mother Lange died in 1882.

The other notable decree of hero-

ic virtues involved a religious sister who died much more recently. Sister Lucia dos Santos died in Coimbra, Portugal, in 2005 at the age of 97. Pope Francis canonised her cousins, Francisco Marto and Jacinta Marto, in 2017.

Sister Lucia was 10 years old when she and her cousins first saw Mary at Fatima on 13th May, 1917.

But her sainthood cause examined her entire life and the huge volumes of correspondence she wrote as a cloistered Carmelite nun.

Much of that correspondence involved her attempts to clarify what became known as the "secrets" of Fatima, which Sister Lucia made known. In the 1930s, she shared the first two parts. They included a vision of hell shown to the children, along with prophecies concerning the outbreak of World War II, the rise of communism and the ultimate triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, especially in Russia if the country was consecrated to her Immaculate Heart.

Sister Lucia wrote down the third part of the message, sealed it in an envelope and gave it to her local bishop. The message was sent to the Vatican in 1957, where successive popes read it, but decided not to reveal its contents.

St. John Paul II ordered the so-called "third secret" of Fatima to be published in 2000; he believed the secret, actually a vision, referred to the 20th-century persecution of the Church under Nazism and communism and spoke of the 1981 attempt to assassinate him.

The pope was shot 13th May, 1981, the anniversary of the first of the Fatima apparitions.

**Synod guide sets out key questions for the Church's future**

The Holy See has released the *Instrumentum Laboris* to guide preparation for next year's Synod on Synodality.

The 60-page document includes a reflection on synodal preparation and the synod's three main "priority

issues": communion, participation and mission. It also includes 15 worksheets to help readers reflect on those themes, with five worksheets for each priority issue.

The working document also asks a host of questions for people to

consider, in an attempt to ensure the synod is as comprehensive as possible, authors said. "God's not afraid of questions," said Julia McStravog, co-coordinator for the Synod in the United States. The synod is "not about answering those

questions, it's about figuring out how to answer those questions together." The nearly 300 questions asked shows a willingness for the Church to "arrive at the insights that the Spirit is trying to lead us to today."

# Artists' ability to poke fun at false myths is straight out of the Bible, says pope

**Justin McLellan**

Under Michelangelo's frescoed ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, Pope Francis told more than 200 musicians, writers, poets and other artists to be like prophets, pursuing true beauty and using their art to improve the societies where they live.

Artists and prophets "can see things both in depth and from afar" while "peering into the horizon and discerning deeper realities," he said. "In doing so, you are called to reject the allure of that artificial, superficial beauty so popular today and often complicit with economic mechanisms that generate inequality."

The audience with an international group of artists marked 50 years since St. Paul VI inaugurated the modern and contemporary art collection in the Vatican Museums by celebrating Mass in the Sistine Chapel with global artists.

Pope Francis told the artists to distance themselves from depicting a "cosmetic" form of beauty "that conceals rather than reveals" and to instead create art that "strives to act as a conscience critical of society, unmasking truisms."

"Like the biblical prophets, you confront things that at times are uncomfortable; you criticise today's false myths and new idols, its empty



talk, the ploys of consumerism, the schemes of power," the pope said.

One way of doing that, he said, is through the "marvellous virtue" of irony.

"The Bible is rich in touches of irony, poking fun at presumptions of self-sufficiency, dishonesty, injustice and cruelty lurking under the guise of power and even at times the

sacred," the pope said.

American poet Patricia Lockwood said the papal audience that she was struck by how the pope encouraged artists "to use humour to also treat religiosity in a respectful way," affirming "that there are those of us that are called to that as well, to puncture false pieties."

Novelist Jhumpa Lahiri and di-

rectors Ken Loach and Abel Ferrara also participated in the audience along with a slew of Italian A-list stars.

Speaking to reporters after the audience, Cardinal Jose Tolentino de Mendonsa, prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, which organised the meeting, said that Pope Francis "has long shown

an interest in an alliance with the world of art, for him artists are allies in dreaming of a better world."

In fact, Pope Francis told the artists seated before him that they were allies in addressing issues close to his heart: "the defence of human life, social justice, concern for the poor, care for our universal home, universal human fraternity."

Something that art and faith have in common, the pope said, is their disruptive nature.

"Art and faith cannot leave things as they are. They change, transform, move and convert them," he said.

Yet Pope Francis recalled that true beauty revealed by artists "is always the reflection of harmony," which creates "a unity that is not uniformity but open to multiplicity."

Harmony, the pope said, is especially needed in today's "age of media-driven forms of ideological colonization and devastating conflicts."

"The Church, too, feels the effects of this," he said. "Conflict can act under a false pretense of unity, from which arise divisions, factions and forms of narcissism."

The Vatican hopes to involve itself in artistic events "on the more secular end of things, to let artists know that they are welcome here and they're friends."

## Charity work is sign of an authentic Christian

To live charitably and authentically, young people must develop a sense of compassion to align their hearts with their charitable acts, Pope Francis said.

"The pierced heart of God frees us from thinking of charity as a profession, a calculation of sheer philanthropy, a bureaucracy of goodness or, worse, a network of political interests," he told participants at a conference of Catholic charities working with the Vatican to assist the Eastern churches, and its youth conference.

Pope Francis's prepared statement was handed out to the group, but the Holy Father apologised for not addressing them at length. He was still experiencing difficulty breathing after his recent surgery, he said.

His address said: "The cross, the ultimate participation of God in the suffering of humanity, provides Christians, particularly young people, with the authenticity that they are searching for, the courage to bear witness, the strength to overcome individualism and indifference, which today are all the rage, and increases compassion."

Pope Francis thanked the charity

workers for their "proactive solidarity that helps heal wounds like a caress on the face of someone who is suffering. A caress that restores hope amidst the turmoil of conflict."

"There is a tremendous contrast" between the reality of war today "and the plan of God - a plan of peace, fraternity and concord for everyone," he said. God's plan "invites us to stop fighting each other and instead unite our efforts to fight famine and sickness."

Pope Francis also praised the conference's focus on young people in the Eastern Catholic churches, which he called a "wise" choice. "Young people want to be protagonists of the common good, which should be the 'compass' of social action," the pope said.

Directing his words to the young people present, the pope urged them to be "sentinels of peace for everyone, prophets who dream and proclaim a world that is different and no longer divided."

Pope Francis also thanked the participants for the relief they provided after the February earthquake in Turkey and Syria, and for their support to internally displaced persons and refugees in Ukraine.

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

**IN BRIEF****Church demands jail reform after deaths**

Catholics in Honduras have prayed for the victims of a horrific massacre in a women's prison that left 46 people dead, saying that their deaths underscore the power criminal gangs have over the prison system.

Many Catholic clergy expressed outrage, demanding an overhaul of the country's prison system. "Tragedy repeats itself," tweeted Bishop Ángel Garachana of San Pedro Sula. "Who doesn't shudder with pain for the victims and their families?" Jesuit Father Ismael Moreno, director of a human rights centre in Progreso, said "a new prison system is required" after the tragedy, at the women's prison in Támara, about 19 miles from the capital Tegucigalpa.

Authorities have attributed the violence to an attack by the Barrio 18 gang, who rushed a rival gang's part of the prison, spraying their victims with bullets and hacking them with machetes. They locked survivors in cells where they were doused with a flammable liquid and incinerated. At least 46 women were killed in the atrocity.

President Xiomara Castro called the attack "monstrous" and "planned by maras (gangsters) in full view of security officials." She promised she "will take drastic actions."

**Netanyahu warning over land grabs**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned Jewish settlers not to "grab land illegally" in the occupied West Bank, after humanitarian bodies raised the alarm over deadly attacks on Palestinian villagers.

The Israeli prime minister said that "calls to grab land illegally are unacceptable," adding that "they undermine law and order" and "must stop immediately".

The comments come after Israeli settlers attacked the Palestinian village of Turmus Ayya in the occupied West Bank.

**Electoral 'landslide' expected in Greece**

Greeks have given Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis the big majority he was looking for in hastily called elections despite criticism of his handling of the migrant crisis.

The conservative beat his centre-left rival in May to clinch power but called a snap election in a bid to strengthen his control over parliament.

Mitsotakis has now gained a working majority for his New Democracy party, and vowed to push through his reformist agenda in the face of critics.

# Cardinal heads back to Ukraine as summer brings new threats

While desperation mounts in Ukraine after more than 480 days of war – and in the aftermath of the destruction of a dam that caused the flooding of dozens of towns in the south of the country – Cardinal Konrad Krajewski travelled to the country June 22 for the sixth time "to assist those in need."

"My trip in the name of the pope places the Holy Father in the heart of the Gospel, because this is what Jesus has done from dawn to sunset: He assisted those in need," Cardinal Krajewski said.

The cardinal travelled to the Kherson area where "following the destruction of the dam, the innocent population is in great distress and many people have lost their lives," the Vatican press office said.

Cardinal Krajewski, who is prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Service of Charity, said he wanted to show the Holy Father's closeness to Ukrainians since their invasion by Russia.

But there also is another reason: to remind those in the West that "in the summer we think of ice cream, not about the people that die in Ukraine. And we have to keep reminding the world that the tragedy is not over."

The almoner of Pope Francis departed for Ukraine in a van loaded with the most urgently needed medicines as well as dried food such as pasta. A second truck, loaded most-



Local residents queue for water and food aid in the town of Hola Prystan in the Kherson region

ly with dried soups donated by a Korean producer, will head to the flooded Kherson area this weekend.

Pope Francis asked Cardinal Krajewski to take another batch of donated goods to Ukraine when he was in the hospital for surgery. "It's a drop in the ocean of needs, and it won't save them, but it will comfort them, and it matters," the cardinal said.

From Rome, Cardinal Krajewski was to go to Lviv in western Ukraine

first, then to Odessa and Kherson by the Dnipro River; Kherson is the city most affected by the damage of the dam.

The destruction of the vast Kakhovka hydroelectric dam has caused \$1.3 billion of damage, Ukraine's environment minister said, warning that mines unearthed by flooding could wash onto other European countries' shores.

"The Holy Father repeats every single day: 'Let's pray for tormented

Ukraine,'" Cardinal Krajewski said, stressing that not only because of war but because of the dam being blown up, the situation of the people is desperate.

"Today in Rome it's 40 deg. C. Imagine what such temperatures mean in a flooded area," he said. "Walking is dangerous because the water carries landmines. Additionally, the water is contaminated so disease risk is high. Mud is everywhere; people cannot clean it."

"It's not like here, in Italy," Cardinal Krajewski said. "When we had the floods in the north, the whole country mobilised and went there to clean up. But in Ukraine, the men are mobilised to the army, and villages are lacking basic resources."

Father Piotr Rosochacki, director of Caritas-Spes in Odessa, told OSV News June 18 that

Donations from the Vatican will reach both Ukrainian-Catholic and Latin-rite Catholic parishes.

"I know that priests and bishops have their luggage ready, just in case something terrible happens," Cardinal Krajewski said. "But so far they are staying. They don't want to leave unless everyone else leaves. That's the spirit. They don't hesitate. They persevere and stay with their people."

Cardinal Krajewski has travelled five times to war-torn Ukraine, reporting back each time to the pope on the situation he finds.

## East African Church urges the privileged to help stave off impending famine for millions

Catholic bishops have called for more aid to be directed to East Africa to help countries overcome the effects of drought, the worst in 40 years, after five consecutive failed rainy seasons.

The World Health Organization warned that the region is experiencing one of the worst hunger crises of the last 70 years. It is estimated that more than 37 million people in East Africa are facing hunger, with seven million children under age 5 acutely malnourished.

The East African countries facing the greatest hunger include Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Burundi.

In Kenya food insecurity now affects around 10 per cent of the population of 57 million. The Church's Archdiocese of Nyeri has launched a 'Hope 4 You' initiative to raise funds for relief items to help those in drought-hit regions, with Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Nyeri saying that it had helped over 40,000 families. However, while welcomed, he acknowledged that these efforts



A malnourished child is held by his mother at a camp for people displaced by drought in Gode, Ethiopia

"were not enough," and urged people "who have been blessed with 'something' to think about others, and help those less privileged.

"I want to urge everyone to continue donating food and money to help families suffering from hunger. Any little contribution will help save a life," Archbishop Muheria said.

In South Sudan, more than 7.8 million people out of 10.75 million are projected to fall short of their minimum food needs in 2023 as the

country enters its fifth year of severe food insecurity, the International Rescue Committee said.

Church leaders said the decade of civil war uprooted hundreds of thousands of families and forced them into refugee camps as homes and crops were destroyed, causing hunger and suffering.

Bishop Alex Eyobo of Yei, South Sudan, said the people staying in refugee camps and those currently fleeing their homes because of the

civil war desperately needed food. Even if the capital, Juba, is free from fighting, attacks are still happening across the country.

Bishop Eyobo said the Catholic Church, partnering with other non-governmental organisations, has been distributing maize, beans, salt, cooking oil, water, flour and other relief items to vulnerable communities, especially those living in various camps in the country.

"We are reaching out to those facing hunger and helping them with food and water to stay alive," he said, appealing for more help for South Sudan.

"The war in the country has forced people to run away from their homes with nothing to eat, as sometimes militant rebels destroy food storage facilities," he said.

Additionally, thousands of people are crossing the border of South Sudan from neighboring Sudan in the north, where civil war broke out on April 15. This puts South Sudan, the youngest African country, at even more food insecurity risk.



# Da Silva to ask Ortega to release jailed bishop after meeting pope

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has said he will speak with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega about releasing jailed Bishop Rolando Álvarez, who is currently serving a 26-year prison sentence on what observers say are trumped up charges.

He made his comments after meeting Pope Francis in Rome.

The Brazilian president said there is “no reason for the bishop to be impeded from carrying out his functions in the Church,” and that he intends “to speak to Ortega about liberating the bishop.”

Bishop Rolando Álvarez was convicted of treason and undermining national security after criticising Ortega’s government.

“The Church has problems in Nicaragua because there are fathers, bishops that are jailed,” Lula said. “The only thing the Church wants is for Nicaragua to free them.”

Although the president’s comments came the day after his meeting with the pope, it was not clear if his initiative to intervene in freeing Bishop Álvarez was co-ordinated with the Vatican.

“I want to try to help, if I can help,” the president said. “These things are not always easy.”

Lula said he and Pope Francis discussed war, both in Ukraine and more generally, and he said he agreed with the pope’s insistence on “laying out all means of negotiations.”

The pope, he said, has a vision of

**President da Silva says he will ask for Bishop Álvarez’s release**



“creating consensus” among “a group of people that can build peace.”

“In that aspect the pope is someone extremely important,” the president said. “Pope Francis is, today, the most important political authority that exists on planet Earth, not only because of what he represents but because of his posture and what he says.”

In a video published by the Brazilian government following the audience, Pope Francis is heard say-

ing, “We are in times of war, and peace is very fragile.” The pope then gifted Lula a bronze sculpture of a flower with the inscription “Peace is a weak flower.”

The Vatican said Lula asked the pope for a rosary to give to his 80-year-old sister, which the pope gave him right away.

During his 50-minute meeting with the pope, Lula invited him to attend an October festival in Brazil’s Amazon region to celebrate Our Lady of Nazareth, patroness of the Amazon.

While he said the invitation to the Amazon solicited a smile from the Pope Francis, Lula recalled the pope’s busy agenda and said he has many other countries to visit.

Pope Francis visited Brazil in his first international trip as pope in 2013 and has constantly demonstrated his concern for the Amazon region.

He called a special Synod of Bishops for the Amazon in 2019, and in 2022 he created the first cardinal from Brazil’s Amazon region: Cardinal Leonardo Ulrich Steiner.



## Two million expected to join this year’s Hajj pilgrimage

Muslim pilgrims have flocked to Mecca for the annual Hajj pilgrimage, with over two million expected to attend the event, which is at full capacity for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic.

A spokesman for the Saudi Hajj Ministry, Ayedh al-Ghweinim, said the tented village at Mina is now close to capacity and was one of the biggest tent camps in the world.

The pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam, and all Muslims are required to make the five-day Hajj at least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able to.

For pilgrims, it is a moving spiritual experience that absolves sins, brings them closer to God and unites the world’s more than 1.8 billion Muslims. Some spend years saving up money and waiting for a

permit to embark on the journey.

The rituals during the Hajj largely commemorate the Koran’s accounts of Ibrahim, his son Ismail and Ismail’s mother Hajar.

Rituals include the circuit around the Kaaba before moving on Mount Arafat, a desert hill where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have delivered his final sermon. Afterwards, pilgrims collect pebbles from a site known as Muzdalifa to be used in the symbolic stoning of pillars representing the devil back in Mina.

The final three days of the Hajj coincide with the Eid al-Adha holiday, when Muslims slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to the poor.

In 2019, more than 2.4 million pilgrims participated in the Hajj but subsequent pilgrimages were affected by the pandemic.

## Biden uses federal law to guarantee abortion access

US President Joe Biden has said he “will continue to protect access to abortion and restore the protections of *Roe v. Wade* in federal law” after signing an executive order that strengthens access to “affordable, high-quality contraception and family planning services” – including access to abortion.

The order was ratified on 22nd June, the date which marked the 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court judgement that made abortion legal in the United States. The same court reversed the ruling last year.

The Supreme Court “took away a constitutional right from the American people,” said Biden, a Catholic who supports legal abortion.

However, this view was challenged by the Supreme Court, with Justice Sam Alitopointing out that “the Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right to it exists.”

Biden’s executive order strengthens access to affordable, high-quality contraception and family planning services. Among other actions, the order directs the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services departments to consider new guidance to ensure that women with

private health insurance have access to affordable contraceptives; promotes access to over-the-counter contraception; supports Medicaid coverage of family planning services; and supports access to affordable contraception for college students.

At a rally the same day, three major groups that support legal abortion – Planned Parenthood Action Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice America and EMILY’s List – endorsed the reelection bid of Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

All three organisations have committed funding for the Democrat politicians’ campaigns to run for the White House.

Biden has previously issued executive orders outlining a comprehensive slate of actions to protect access to reproductive health care services, including abortion, and provide for the “the safety and security of patients, providers and clinics.”

Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori called it “deeply disturbing and tragic” that Biden – “as a devout Catholic” – chose to use his power as the nation’s chief executive “to promote and facilitate abortion in our country” rather than support resources for pregnant women in need.



Why do we take Holy Communion?

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- Why do we bless ourselves?
- Why do we say Amen?
- What’s God’s Grace?
- Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
- What’s Communion about?

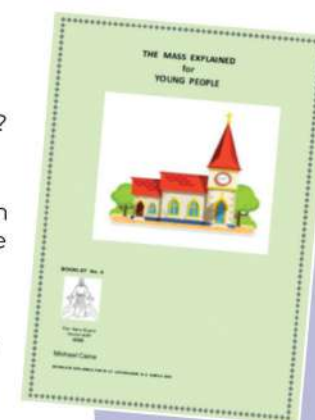
and many, many more...

Could you answer them in an easy, effective way that a child can understand? Our website provides the information for you to be able to do this with confidence. Find out more at

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Once there you can print off a copy of this **FREE** booklet (right), *The Mass Explained for Young People*. It has clear, concise answers to all the questions above - and many more

**Try it; it costs you nothing except a bit of your time.**



# USA's water crisis shows *Laudato Si's* lessons are needed more than ever

**Kimberley Heatherington reports from the USA on a growing water crisis in the south-west as action is finally agreed to stop the vital Colorado River from drying up, amid calls from the Church for even more decisive action to be taken**

When renowned science fiction author Robert Heinlein wrote in his apocalyptic 1952 short story *The Year of the Jackpot* that, 'the Colorado River was at a record low and the towers in Lake Mead stood high out of the water. But the Angelenos committed communal suicide by watering lawns as usual,' such a scenario was still the stuff of fantasy.

But imagination sometimes has an uncomfortable ability to become reality. The American southwest is in the grip of a mega-drought that jeopardises the Colorado River, and with it, water supplies for major US population centres and farms.

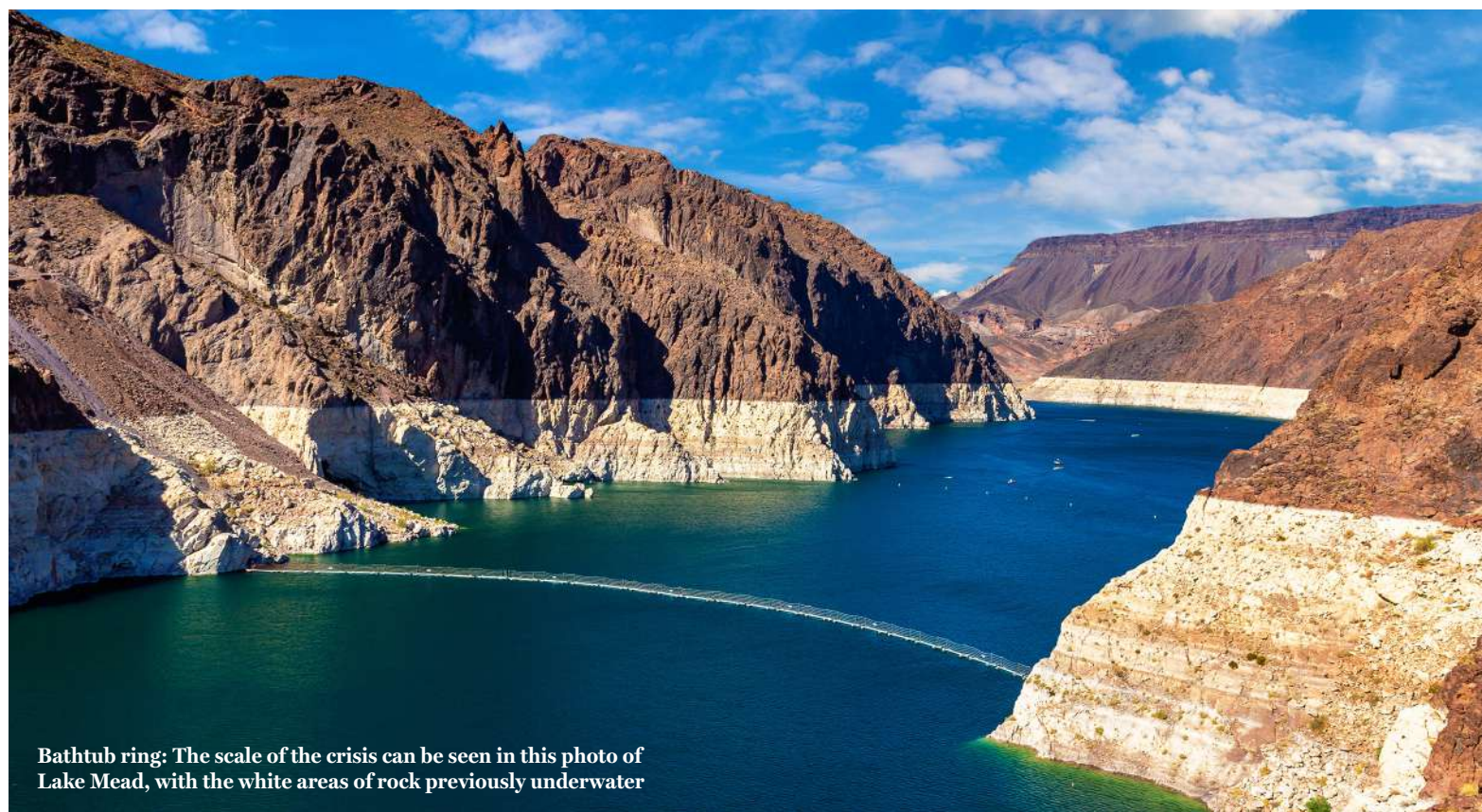
Representatives from Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming reached consensus at the end of May to use three million fewer 'acre-feet' of water by the end of 2026. An 'acre foot' of water is equivalent to 326,000 gallons.

To help with the maths, that's an eye-watering 978 billion gallons.

Arizona, California and Nevada in particular agreed to the federal government's proposal to try to save the 1,450-mile-long Colorado River from going dry by reducing their water intake 13 per cent.

This scale of water conservation is thought to be unprecedented – but shows the scale of the ecological disaster the region faces without tough rules coming into force now. But even with this drought staring them in the face, it still required a motivational nudge by the federal government to bring it to fruition, with the states more or less told to sort out their differences over who got what water – or Washington would do it for them.

For Catholics in the affected



**Bathtub ring:** The scale of the crisis can be seen in this photo of Lake Mead, with the white areas of rock previously underwater

states, the decision to act has echoes of Pope Francis' landmark 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

"We recognise water conservation as critical, especially here in California, where a long history of drought has had a significant impact on the poor and vulnerable," said Christina Bagaglio Slentz, associate director of Creation Care in the San Diego Diocese's Office for Life, Peace and Justice.

"Not only is there a cost in terms of increasing financial expense, but there is also a major threat to livelihood, human well-being and biodiversity," Slentz said. "In

particular, San Diego includes the Imperial Valley, where farming draws more water from the Colorado River than Arizona and Nevada combined."

This combination of climatic circumstances and water-dependent industry has resulted in a focused approach to water conservation and equity efforts for the diocese, Slentz said. The diocese's *Laudato Si'* Action Plan for the coming year is to work to build community resilience while ensuring environmental justice.

"We are also currently engaged in promoting water equity throughout

our region, to include the Imperial Irrigation District," Slentz said. "We are working with a team from San Diego State University to create a Prevention Research Center at SDSU-Imperial Valley, focused on mitigating the effects of extreme heat."

The diocese of San Diego's Creation Care Action Plan was led by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and signed off in 2021. It has no fewer than 115 mentions of water. It is connected to the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform launched in 2021 by the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to

help families, communities, organisations and dioceses "journey towards integral ecology."

The San Diego diocese's water-aware actions have included a parish bulletin insert, articles in parish communications, social media posts and a *Laudato Si'* study guide that includes a Checklist of Things to Do to promote wider water conservation among the faithful.

But the drive isn't being fully endorsed across the Church: questions put to more than 20

**Continued on next page**

## The Colorado River Compact: why it matters to the region

Lake Mead is the USA's largest reservoir, and so when its water level drops, it is a serious issue.

In 2022 it dropped an astonishing 20 feet, revealing first the lake's previously hidden huge intake valves before more sinister things – including human remains, some linked, urban legend suggested, to Nevada Mob feuds.

They really do get people to talk to the fishes here.

At risk is the drinking water for 40 million people, as well as the water needed for electricity and crop irrigation.

Lake Mead fell to its lowest level to date in July 2022, when the elevation sat at 1,040 feet. If

the reservoir had fallen another 145 feet, it would have become a 'dead pool,' sitting below its outtake valves and unable to provide water or hydroelectric power to millions of customers.

In total the lake's level has dropped 160 feet since July 2000 and sits at around 27 per cent capacity. "People were really looking at the real possibility of dead pool," Sarah Porter, director of the Kyl Center for Water Policy at Arizona State University, said. "That is incredible to think about – no water coming off either of the two reservoirs," she said, referring to Lake Mead's sister reservoir, Lake Powell.

The good news is Mead's

elevation is rising, inch by inch. Heavy snow in the Colorado mountains this winter saw meltwater replenish some of what has been lost in recent years, and hydrologists hope the reservoir will reach a high point of 1,070 feet in February 2024. If the Colorado River deal delivers the benefits expected, this could rise even further.

But in truth, the extra water will be a drop in the bucket for a reservoir that has dramatically declined in the past two decades.

The drought deficit is so large, experts say the region would need four or five years of snowmelt like this year's to really fill up Powell and Mead. This year's exceptional

show is simply 'buying time' for states to come up with a way to live with far less water in a warmer and drier future.

"While we had an exceptionally wet winter this year, our long-term drought concerns persist," the Bureau of Reclamation, which manages interstate river reservoir systems like Lakes Mead and Powell, said. "We will work with all stakeholders to ensure future system conservation measures are durable, sustainable, and contribute to long-term water savings in the Colorado River."

Good winters followed by good spring runoff have been hard to come by in recent years. Even when above-average snow falls,

the run-off hasn't produced as much water because the parched ground sucks up water before it can make it to the reservoirs.

"You have one good year and it's historically followed by three bad years," James Heffner, a senior hydrogeologist at the Arizona Department of Water Resources said.

Kristen Johnson, manager ADWR's Colorado River, said the great water year "could not have come at a better time," but that it had "provided some breathing room, otherwise, we'd be in a very uncomfortable position."

And so would the 40 million people who would have little or no access to water.



A boat lies marooned after Lake Mead water levels receded

Catholic dioceses and organisations in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming – the states that are part of the Colorado River Compact – found that only a few reported water conservation efforts directly related to *Laudato Si'*.

Yet perhaps people should have listened to the pope's words in 2015, when he wrote in the encyclical: 'Sources of fresh water are necessary for healthcare, agriculture and industry. Water supplies used to be relatively constant, but now in many places demand exceeds the sustainable supply, with dramatic consequences in the short and long term,' Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si'*.

'Large cities dependent on significant supplies of water have experienced periods of shortage, and at critical moments these have not always been administered with sufficient oversight and impartiality,' the pope added.

For several years these issues have concerned the Franciscan Renewal Center, a retreat and worship community in Scottsdale, Arizona.

An upcoming 'Keep the Water Flowing' workshop in September, featuring experts in public and civil sectors, as well as affected communities, will build upon earlier efforts to contribute to water saving.

'The goal is to share nonpartisan information in a way for the average person to understand so they can become informed, engaged members of their community and active participants,' said Patti Sills-Trausch, who manages FRC's Special Projects for Mission Integration, with a focus on *Laudato Si'* action goals.

'Through our Franciscan charism, respect for 'Sister Water' and *Laudato Si'* kinship with all creation, we care about this issue not just for human consumption, but for all of God's creatures,' Sills-Trausch explained, with 'Sister Water' a nod to St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*, a poem honouring God's work in creation.

Maria Trevino, North America programmes co-ordinator for the *Laudato Si'* Movement, said that the organisation 'celebrates the deal signed by the seven states because it is evidence that, as Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si'*, 'things can change.'

Pope Francis' encyclical 'teaches

us a very clear evangelical reality, but also the serious problem that creation is going through,' Trevino said. It is necessary to dialogue and commit ourselves to the care of our common home. The scarcity of the vital liquid is only one of the severe consequences of global warming that is affecting everyone.'

Water has worth beyond its obvious uses, Trevino added. 'It is important to recognise that water is a value for peace that leads to the creation of bridges, collaboration and dialogue,' she said. 'And the Colorado River situation is a good example of this.'

Meredith McCarthy, co-founder of the Green Team at St. Monica Catholic Community in Santa Monica, California, said her parish is approaching water conservation by linking it to food.

'You cannot separate it,' McCarthy said. 'Agriculture uses 80 per cent of the Colorado River's water. Once you start looking at food and the food's impact on climate – from the choices of food that you're making, to how you're getting rid of your food waste at the end of the meal – every step of the way is and can be a huge problem.'

Since California requires residents to separate food waste from their other rubbish, St. Monica's Green Team took a practical approach. They passed out over 300 kitchen composting buckets to parishioners.

'We throw away an unbelievable amount of food,' said McCarthy. 'As a result of that, we end up with all of the food rotting in our landfills, and it creates methane, an incredibly potent greenhouse gas.'

The St. Monica Green Team also marked *Laudato Si'* Week in May by launching the first phase of a parish action plan designed 'to support Pope Francis' goal to engage all of us in Caring for our Common Home.'

McCarthy is hopeful for raised awareness – both of *Laudato Si'* and individual ecological responsibility.

'The environment is, by a lot of Catholics I think, like the cherry on top – a 'nice to have,' but not a 'must have,' McCarthy said. 'The more we tie these stories together about where the climate refugees are going to be, and where climate change is impacting people the most ... it really is on all of us to slow this down.'

## Sister's incorrupt body proves that 'death has lost its sting'

**Maria Wiering**

Mother Abbess Cecilia Snell puts the number of pilgrims who in the past six weeks have flocked to her Benedictine abbey in rural Missouri between 10,000 and 15,000.

It's a conservative estimate, she said, of the droves of people who, at times, have waited hours in line to see the body of the community's foundress, Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster. The Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles disinterred her remains on 28th April, four years after her death at age 95, and discovered a surprising lack of decay, leading to claims of her incorruptibility and potential for canonisation.

Now encased in glass, with a thin layer of wax protecting her hands, Sister Wilhelmina's body continues to draw both the faithful and the curious to their monastery outside of Gower, Missouri.

Most visitors are locals, or from Kansas City or St. Louis. Some, however, have travelled from as far as Washington state, Maine, California and Florida, but also from as far as Canada, Colombia and India to see and venerate Sister Wilhelmina's body.

Mother Cecilia said: 'Catholics have dominated, but nevertheless we have had a great many of the curious and unbelievers as well,' she said. 'I don't believe anyone leaves the same way they came. So many times we have heard the phrase, 'This is not possible.' It is true. It is not possible, naturally speaking. But with God all things are possible. Everyone comes away with this sense.'

With the help of about 100 volunteers, the monastery's 44 sisters have been 'able to carry on our daily monastic schedule without interruption' in the midst of thousands of visitors, Mother Cecilia said.

'The experience has changed our life in the sense that there is more exposure, but we are well equipped to deal with it spiritually, knowing that our anchor is in the silent observance of life within the cloister. It is a beautiful thing we think to be able to carry on in peace, while allowing so many people to share in our prayer.'

The sisters have heard accounts of miraculous healings from some pilgrims, including three children reportedly healed of severe food allergies, an autoimmune disorder and persistent irregular blood pressure.

'There is also a priest who has been suffering congestive heart failure who experienced complete relief of his symptoms while here. He is awaiting medical test results as proof. Lastly, there was a missionary with chronic neck pain who was instantly cured upon approaching Sister Wilhelmina,'

**Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster: the discovery of her incorrupt body has caused a stir in Kansas**



Mother Cecilia said.

But, while some pilgrims are seeking physical miracles, 'there have been many more miracles of spiritual healing, of souls being reconciled to Christ,' she said. 'Most just want a sign of hope, a confirmation of their belief in Christ as the resurrection and the life.'

Sister Wilhelmina is drawing thousands to the Abbey of Our Lady of Ephesus at a time when more in the West than ever have disaffiliated from organised religion.

'It is very easy to turn away from God, to give up the effort in moving toward him on the path of virtue, but it is certainly not the right thing to do,' Mother Cecilia said of the contrast between the faith drawing pilgrims to her abbey and its decline in broader culture. 'The culture of death likes to pull us into

*'While some pilgrims are seeking physical miracles, "there have been many more miracles of spiritual healing, of souls being reconciled to Christ..."*

the eddy of its whirlpool. It takes a sign like this, a little Black nun in her duel with death, to show the world that yes, there is life after death, it is a happy ending for those who love him, because even death loses its power and its sting.

'It shows us Christ is alive and well, still willing and able to grant miracles in our day,' she continued. 'It is a matter of standing with him in faith, and to not be afraid, as we owe him our trust as our maker and victor over life and death.'

The sisters and visitors have marveled over not only the condition of Sister Wilhelmina's body – which, Mother Cecilia said, has shown 'no major change' since it was exhumed – but also that of her habit, which the mother abbess described as 'absolutely perfect.'

'This was what made experts scratch their heads,' she said. 'There was no explanation for the preservation of the fabric

whatsoever, especially as the lining of her coffin was gone. It seems that the habit, as a sign of her being a bride of Christ, is what speaks through the world almost even more than her body. It was her relationship with Christ on the path (to) holiness that led her to greatness before him. She sends a message of the value of vocation, of charity and forgiveness.'

The sisters initially disinterred their foundress' body to move it inside their abbey church, not because her grave was damaged by flooding, as a circulating rumor suggested, Mother Cecilia said. Because the church has traditionally considered incorruptibility a sign of the deceased's holiness, the sisters are now praying about whether to open a cause into canonisation for Sister Wilhelmina.

'We were not (initially) thinking about sainthood, but as there is another year left before we can legally do so, we will be praying about whether or not to move forward on this,' Mother Cecilia said. 'There is at present a five-year minimum time lapse between the death and the opening of a cause (for that person), and it has only been four years. We will see if the interest in Sister Wilhelmina's life shrinks or grows.'

Mother Cecilia encouraged Catholics interested in the nun's sainthood cause 'to be very patient, as the Church moves very slowly in the recognition of holiness.'

'While we all knew and loved Sr Wilhelmina, and acknowledged her deep sanctity, it is another matter to have an official recognition by the Church,' she said. 'So I would invite everyone to continue to pray that we do God's will in all things. I am sure she is praying for us all.'

Asked what she thought Sister Wilhelmina would have thought about the attention, Mother Cecilia said her community's foundress 'absolutely loved people' and 'was a missionary at heart even to the end.'

'She would always encourage devotion to the rosary, and this is what she said she wanted to pass on to the community: 'devotion to our Blessed Mother, true devotion to our Blessed Mother,' Mother Cecilia said.

ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY

MATT JAMES



# AI: Imagining tomorrow, today

**With the current debate focused on artificial intelligence (AI) and its usage in people's every day lives, Matt James from St Mary's University considers the faith aspect of this new and growing technology**

"I can't imagine a future like that!" The look of incredulity was plain to see on the face of the lady standing in front of me.

Having been introduced by a friend as someone working in the field of bioethics and emerging technologies, the lady had asked me what I saw as the pressing issues of the day. I mentioned artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. I quoted the exchange a colleague had shared with me of a tech entrepreneur in the USA who had been asked whether he foresaw a time when we gave robots the right to vote. He instantly fired back: "Wrong question! It's whether robots will give us the right to vote!"

It was this soundbite that had prompted my new acquaintance to exclaim that she couldn't imagine that kind of scenario.

## AI's development

To some extent, AI has always been with us in some form (for example, an autopilot on an aeroplane) but it seems to have come of age. Modern computers are around one trillion times as powerful as the most powerful computers in the world were in 1960. As computers get smarter, they become just a little more like us. While we are a long way off seeing them do everything that humans can do, they can already do some of what we do better than us.

AI is all about creating a computer 'mind' that thinks like a human. A robot is an automatic machine that does the work of a human. Combining developments in the field of AI with robotics leads to attempts to build intelligent machines.

However, there is no consensus on the level of intelligence a robot could ever attain.

In 2014 Professor Stephen Hawking said that the development of full AI could in fact spell the end of the human race. Similarly, Elon Musk, the entrepreneur behind Space-X, warned of the risk of "something seriously dangerous happening" as a result of machines with AI, in as few as five years. Within the last 12-months the so-called 'Godfather' of AI, Geoffrey Hinton, has stepped down from Google so he could speak more independently about the dangers of the technology which he has played an instrumental part in shaping.

The idea that AI could become smarter than humans seemed many years from being realised, if not impossible. To Hinton, this now seems to be a much closer reality, with the potential to transform society in profound ways, both for good and for ill.

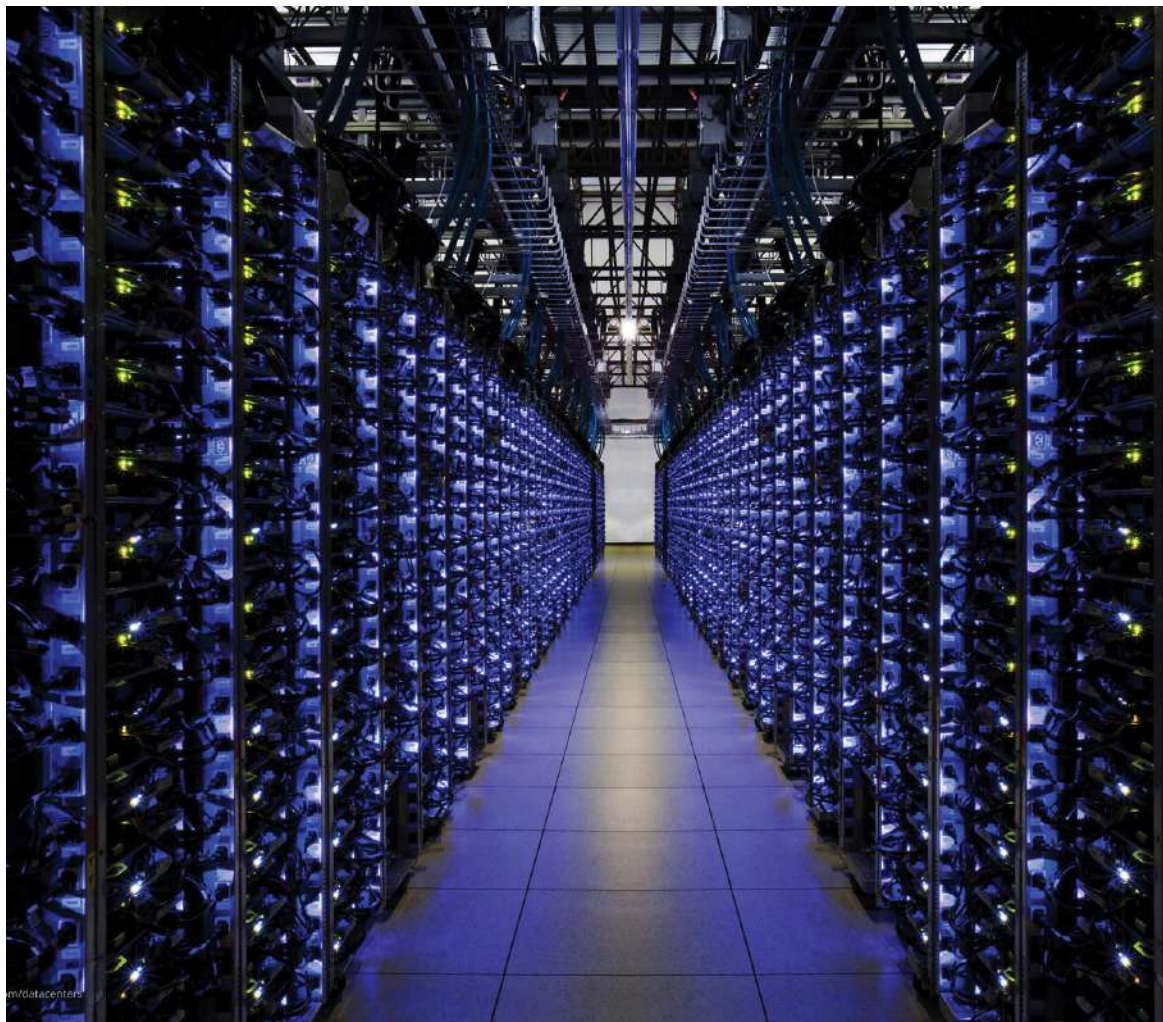
Many learned societies, committees and intergovernmental organisations are drafting principles to guide the development of AI, but principles – not least ethical principles – need to come together with practice. There are critical questions with which we need to engage. What effect could AI and robotics have on employment and social interaction, for example? How can societies prepare for the machine age's likely impact on education, training, health and social care and welfare?

These questions are being addressed at St. Mary's University's Research Centre for Bio-ethics and Emerging Technologies.

There is great value to be found through inter-disciplinary exchange on the crucial questions involved and this should involve theological reflection. In 2020, technology giants Microsoft and IBM were signatories to a declaration drafted by the Pontifical Academy for Life calling for the ethical and responsible use of AI. In March 2023, Pope Francis addressed the 'Minerva Dialogues,' a high-level annual gathering of scientists and experts, organised by the Vatican's Dicastery for Education and Culture. In his address he commented that "I am convinced that dialogue between believers and nonbelievers on fundamental questions of ethics, science and art, and on the search for the meaning of life, is a path to peace and to integral human development."

“

*How humans were created is distinctly different from any robot or AI device. We were made in the image of God, embodied human beings with a soul. It is as embodied creatures that we are claimed, redeemed, and renewed by God. To despise the constraints and fragility of embodiment is to also despise the work of Creator God.*



One of Google's giant datacentres. Could the next generation of 'human' intelligence be born in one of these?

## Christianity and AI

But what does Christianity have to say about AI and robots?

First, as our focus is increasingly drawn to consider the interaction between what is human and artificial, we begin to cut straight to a core question which underpins the Christian faith: what does it mean to be human? We need to remember that we are not only *Homo sapiens* or 'wise man', but also *Homo faber* - 'working man'. The whole idea of technology, from the most primitive tool to the latest silicon chip, is the story of us making things that enable us to do more than we could do without them. With that in mind it is perhaps no surprise to find us in a place where robots and AI-powered machines are being made to copy

what we do it and do it more efficiently.

As theologian Prof Brent Waters has commented, "technology is the way we live and move and have our being in today's age". It is through technology that we increasingly express who we are and what we aspire to become.

But in fulfilling our creation mandate to take dominion and work the land, we need to be wise that we do not end up becoming slaves to the very technology that is supposed to be serving us! It was this recognition that drove C.S. Lewis, in his prophetic essay of 1943, *The Abolition of Man*, to argue that while technology is said to extend the power of the human race, 'what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.'

We need to question and engage with the debate as to whether AI and robotics can help us work more efficiently and productively, giving us more time to do what only humans can do. The idea of a 'work free' world might at first sound appealing but work can be a means by which we learn, develop skills and overcome challenges. Robots and AI could support this, but can they and should they be allowed to supplant it?

Our human dignity comes from the one whose image we bear. Through Jesus Christ, God became a human being. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Through this act, human limitations are affirmed as opposed to being removed.

How humans were created is distinctly different from any robot or AI device. We were made in the image of God, embodied human beings with a soul. It is as embodied creatures that we are claimed, redeemed, and renewed by God. To despise the constraints and fragility of embodiment is to also despise the work of Creator God.

As we look to engage with the future constructively, we would do well to consider not just how robots and AIs are attempting to be humanised, but how people might be dehumanised in the process. A pro-human future should not represent a new form of luddism but champion all that is great and unique about humanity by seeking to maximize the common good.

**Matt James is Associate Professor in Bioethics and Medical Law and Director of the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies at St Mary's University, Twickenham.**

# 10 saints to bring us close to the Eucharist

One would guess that most saints would have a devotion to the Eucharist, but here are 10 saints – some new, some ancient, all very different – to learn more about and ask to intercede for us as we strive to get closer to the Eucharist.

## Blessed Carlo Acutis

Born in 1991, Blessed Carlo Acutis was a young Italian boy who had a great love for Jesus in the Eucharist. This millennial is most known for his devotion to it, for he documented all known Eucharistic miracles and even created a website containing information on each miracle. Though he died when he was 15, his devotion inspired those around him and enabled him to leave behind a beautiful testimony of his love for the Eucharist: his Eucharistic miracle website. Today all people throughout the world have access to his website to deepen their knowledge and love for the Blessed Sacrament.

• **Feast day: 12th October**

## Blessed Juliana of Mount Cornillon

After her parents died, Juliana was brought up in an Augustinian monastery at Mount Cornillon, Belgium. She joined the community, which ran a hospital for leprosy patients. Elected prioress about 1225, she made known visions in which Jesus told her he desired a special feast for the Blessed Sacrament. This became her mission, despite opposition; even some of her nuns doubted her and accused her of misusing funds. She was forced to leave her monastery in 1246 and died a hermit. Her work led to the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, also known as Corpus Christi.

• **Feast day: 5th April**

## St. Hesychius of Jerusalem

St. Hesychius was a priest who wrote about the Bible in the liturgy. He viewed scripture as 'perfect wisdom, the point of departure and the point of arrival to which the whole of our existence should be conformed.' Hesychius preached on Easter at the place of the crucifixion, exalting the cross and Christ's victory. Like St. Cyril of Jerusalem, he taught a realistic doctrine of the Eucharist, which he regarded as a sacrifice identical with that of the cross. Hesychius taught that Christ was present to transform us through our inner absorption of his whole being. 'Keep yourselves free from sin so that every day you may share in the mystic meal; by doing so our bodies become the body of Christ.'

• **Feast day: 28th March**

## St. Ignatius of Antioch

This Syrian-born martyr gave himself the nickname 'God-bearer' because of his certainty of God's presence within him. He may have



been a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, and became bishop of Antioch about 69. Eventually he was arrested and sent to Rome, where his strong desire for martyrdom was fulfilled when he was thrown to the lions in the Colosseum. In seven letters written to Christians in Asia Minor and Rome, he stressed the need to heal Church conflicts, the authority of local bishops and the Eucharist as a source of unity.

• **Feast day: 17th October**

## St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

This French saint, who increased devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, spent her life in Burgundy. A pious child, Margaret was bedridden from 9-15 with a rheumatic illness. She gradually understood a call to religious life, and already had a mature prayer life when she entered a Visitation convent near Lyon in 1671. Between 1673 and 1675, she received four visions of Christ's heart in flames, burning with love for humanity, with instructions to promote a special feast and First Friday devotions. Margaret, aided by a Jesuit priest, overcame disbelief and jealousy and saw the feast celebrated there and in other French Visitation convents in her lifetime. She was canonised in 1920.

• **Feast day: 16th October**

## St. Paschal Baylon

Born to a Spanish shepherd family, Paschal was said to have taught himself to read while tending sheep. At age 21 he joined an austere group of Franciscans,

devoting himself to prayer and charity. He was sent on a dangerous mission to French Franciscans, and a shoulder wound he received caused him pain for the rest of his life. Long hours of prayer on his knees before the Eucharist earned this lay brother the honour of being patron of Catholic eucharistic congresses.

• **Feast day: 17th May**

## St. Peter Julian Eymard

The patron saint of eucharistic devotion, Peter Julian began adult life, like his father, as a cutler. But he became a priest of the French Alpine Diocese of Grenoble in 1834. In 1839, he left diocesan service to become a Marist priest and eventually became provincial of his congregation at Lyon. But, after making a pilgrimage in 1851, he understood that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament had no specific religious institute. Subsequently, he founded the Congregation of the Priests of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, an order of sisters, both devoted to perpetual adoration. He was canonised in 1962.

• **Feast day: 2nd August**

## St. Pius X

Known as the 'Pope of the Eucharist,' Pius X was born Joseph Melchior Sarto in northern Italy. After being ordained for the Treviso Diocese in 1858, he served in small parishes before being named diocesan chancellor and spiritual director of the seminary. Pope Leo XIII named him Bishop of Mantua

A collage showing Saint Pius X, Blessed Carlo Acutis and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, all of whom had particular devotion to the Eucharist.

in 1884 and a cardinal and patriarch of Venice in 1893. He was elected pope in 1903. During his pontificate, he lowered the age for receiving first Communion, encouraged daily Communion and daily Bible reading and promoted biblical study.

• **Feast day: 21st August**

## St. Tarsicius

Tarsicius lived during the time of Emperor Valerian's persecution. He was martyred while taking the Eucharist to Christian prisoners – beaten to death by a mob of pagans on the Appian Way when he would not surrender the Communion he was carrying. One tradition claims he was buried in the cemetery of St. Callistus. Pope St. Damasus I suggested an early

cult by describing his martyrdom in a fourth-century poem. His legend was further embellished in the 19th-century novel *Fabiola*. Tarsicius is the patron saint of first communicants, altar servers and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Feast day: 26th August**

## St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas so shocked his noble Italian family when he entered the Dominicans about 1244 that his brothers imprisoned him for a year. But he would not yield and studied under St. Albert the Great, becoming a master of theology in 1256. For the rest of his brief life taught, preached and wrote, producing the monumental *Summa Theologica*, highlighting the theology of the Eucharist. His thinking became enormously influential in later centuries, and he was named a Doctor of the Church in 1567.

**Feast day: 28th January**

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“*St. Hesychius viewed scripture as 'perfect wisdom, the point of departure and the point of arrival to which our existence should be conformed.'*”

## HEART OF THE MATTER

CINDY WOODEN



# Accountability is key to safeguarding as meeting addresses a 'culture of silence'

The Catholic Church has made great strides in drafting norms to protect children and other people at risk of abuse, but “we don’t have a culture of accountability when it comes to the implementation of those norms,” said Jesuit Father Hans Zollner, a leading expert in the field.

Some norms exist even to hold accountable bishops who failed to properly handle abuse allegations, but at the end of the review process some bishops are asked to resign while others are not, said Father Zollner, director of the Institute of Anthropology: Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University.

“How seriously does the legislator take his own law?” Fr Zollner asked, referring to Pope Francis who has promulgated the norms and determines which bishops are allowed to remain in office.

The Jesuit spoke to reporters on 22nd June at the conclusion of the 2023 International Safeguarding Conference at the Gregorian University. The conference brought together more than 200 bishops, safeguarding officers and specialists from some 50 nations to discuss “sustaining organisational accountability.”

Beatrice Mumbi, safeguarding coordinator for the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, told reporters that ensuring the men she works with and for embrace accountability and follow her directions “is quite difficult” because “patriarchy is real in my context,” so “it really takes the goodwill of the bishop or the priest that I have to deal with to move a situation forward or resolve a situation.”

But in many African cultures, she said, there also persists a “culture of silence” when it comes to sexual



Participants at the 2023 International Safeguarding Conference. From left are: Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching, Malaysia; Jesuit Father Hans Zollner; Beatrice Mumbi, safeguarding co-ordinator for the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar; Jörg M. Fegert, trauma researcher of the Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Ulm in Germany; and Archbishop Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Quebec. Photo: Lola Gomez

abuse. “We don’t talk about those things because we do not want to shame people in leadership, we do not want to harm their standing in society.”

However, she said, “it’s changing. But very, very slowly.”

Archbishop Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, Quebec, and Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching, Malaysia, addressed the conference about “the challenges faced by church authorities” when it came to accountability.

Archbishop Poh told reporters the next day that in most of Asia safeguarding programmes are in their infancy, but a growing number of bishops are committed to implementing steps to screen candidates for the priesthood and parish volunteers.

“Maybe seven, eight years ago, the thinking was that this is a Western problem. That was the mentality,” the archbishop said. But now people

realise “it is not a Western problem; it is a human problem.”

Archbishop Durocher said that in Canada there has been a “sea change” over the past 30 years with the bishops moving from an emphasis on setting up structures to accept and investigate allegations to focusing on the victim and learning “how to listen to a victim speak about their allegation in a way that will be compassionate, understanding and that will respond to their needs.”

In his presentation to the conference, the archbishop said he found it helpful to make an “examination of conscience” about his own accountability using traits described in the book, *The Oz Principle: Getting Results through Individual and Organizational Accountability*.

“Accountability,” he said, is “an attitude, a virtue even,” that goes beyond responsibility. “It implies

“*Accountability is an attitude, a virtue even, that goes beyond responsibility. It implies taking true ownership for a situation and personally engaging with it in order to move forward*”

taking true ownership for a situation and personally engaging with it in order to move it forward.”

It also requires continual monitoring, measuring and adjustment, he said.

For a bishop, true accountability requires “communicating openly and candidly,” the archbishop said, although “this is not a habit in our Church.”

A bishop must ask for and accept feedback. “I must ask myself: ‘What more can I do? What are the best practices and how can I integrate them in my ministry and in my diocese?’” Archbishop Durocher said. “I’m afraid too many bishops – and too many of our faithful -- think that this crisis is behind us.”

“I believe this crisis will always be with us, because, just like the poor, abusers will always be with us,” he said. “We cannot let down our vigilance, we must constantly be seeking to improve.”

“The sexual abuse crisis has deeply hurt that bond of trust between bishops and priests, between laity and clergy, between believers and non-believers,” the archbishop said. “It will take a long time to rebuild that trust, probably a few generations. And it will only happen if we continually to make it a priority – if I, as a bishop, make it my priority.”

## Troubled priests need honesty, conversion, purification, pope says

Cindy Wooden

The mostly “silent and hidden” work of the Servants of the Paraclete, a religious order that ministers to priests and religious banned from ministry because of abuse allegations or who are experiencing other difficulties, must focus on honesty, conversion and purification, Pope Francis said.

“I invite you to deepen the spirituality of reparation, starting from the need for purification, in the service of the holiness of the pastors of the people of God,” the pope told members of the order’s general

chapter during an audience at the Vatican.

“Duplicity,” the pope said, “is not to be tolerated but brought to light, to the light of the Spirit. He alone heals us from infidelities. He alone, not other methods. The one who heals us from infidelities is the Holy Spirit.”

The Servants of the Paraclete is a religious order founded in the United States in 1947 to minister “to fellow priests and religious by offering spiritual, holistic programmes for vocational renewal through spiritual direction, individual and

group therapy, supervised living, ongoing education and formation, prayer and contemplation,” according to the order’s own description.

The order’s vocation, the pope said, is to serve the Church by being “at the service of Christ in his priests.”

“At the present time,” he said, “this also means sharing in the particular journey of purification that the Church is going through because of the tragedies of abuse.”

Pope Francis quoted from remarks he made to priests of the Diocese of Rome in

2019: “Sin disfigures, and we have a painful, humiliating experience of it when we ourselves or one of our brother priests or bishops falls into the bottomless pit of vice, of corruption, or even worse, of crimes that ruin the lives of others.”

“In a situation like this,” the pope said, “being ‘servants of the Paraclete’ requires you to dedicate your life to accompanying some brother priests and consecrated men by offering each one a path of asceticism, conversion and spiritual and vocational renewal.”

## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



# Understanding the seven sacraments: the ones you do once, and those you do often

The seven Sacraments are:

1. **Baptism**
2. **Confirmation**
3. **Holy Eucharist**
4. **Reconciliation**
5. **Anointing The Sick**
6. **Holy Orders**
7. **Matrimony**

Sacraments are special sacred rituals of the Catholic Church.

Their purpose is to make those who receive them eager to worship God, become holy, nourish, and strengthen their faith.

Sacraments use a physical action such as the pouring of water, anointing with Holy Oils, laying on of hands, saying special prayers that are associated with the sacrament in question.

**All are instituted, or approved, of by Our Lord Jesus Christ.**

These actions provide us with God's grace. The Church defines it as: "An outward sign of inward grace instituted by Christ to give grace".

Christ entrusted these rites to be administered by His Church to people who are members of the Catholic church. It all infers that:

- The Outward Sign of a sacrament has two parts. One is the thing itself that is used such as water in Baptism or oils in Confirmation, and the other is the words and gestures giving meaning to what is being done.

- Christ instituted five of the sacraments and approved of two.

- When anyone takes part in a sacrament, they are given Sanctifying Grace, which can only reside in the soul. It is this that



makes the soul acceptable to God for all eternity when we die. It's the 'Inward grace part of the Church's definition.

- The sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation are the only ones that restore Sanctifying grace in the soul when it's been lost due to a soul being stained with mortal sin. The other five sacraments increase the Sanctifying grace in our souls and also help us resist temptation.

## Sacramental Grace

This is a special grace relating to the sacrament in question to help and guide the people to achieve the aims of the sacrament

As an example, when we are confirmed, we're told that one of the blessings we receive is that we become 'soldiers of Christ'. It's the special sacramental grace that gives us the ability and the will to do this.

The following are very simple definitions of each sacrament. Some have more than one physical part,

but we will only mention one to give the reader an impression of what's intended.

## BAPTISM (received once)

This sacrament was approved by Jesus Christ. It is so important that if we do not receive it we cannot receive other Sacraments. It forgives all our sins, especially 'Original Sin' and welcomes us as a new member of the Catholic Church

A physical part of this sacrament is the pouring of water on the head of the person being baptised.

The Spiritual part is the forgiveness of any sin staining the person's soul. This sacrament leaves a soul in favour with God, that is free from mortal sins, and therefore acceptable to God. This means that should a person die in this state, that person's soul will enjoy life for all eternity with God in heaven.

## CONFIRMATION (Received once)

This sacrament was instituted by

Jesus Christ. A physical part of this sacrament is the Oil of Chrism the bishop uses to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person being confirmed. Its aim is to make us strong in our beliefs of Christ, what God wants from us and the Catholic Church.

The Spiritual part is the receiving of the Holy Spirit who fortifies the person in many ways to refrain from sinning, keeping our souls in favour with God.

## HOLY EUCHARIST (Received many times)

This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ. A physical part of this sacrament is the use of bread and wine which become the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The spiritual part is having the living body of Christ within us, bringing us spiritual and emotional nourishment. It helps us enormously to refrain from sinning and keeping our soul in favour with God.

## FORGIVENESS (Received many times)

This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ. The physical part is the Absolution given by the priest to people who want their sins forgiven. The spiritual part is having all our sins forgiven by God, thus putting our soul in favour with God.

## ANNOINTING THE SICK (Usually administered when were sick or dying)

This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ. The physical part is

the priest making the sign of the cross on the recipient's forehead with Holy Oils.

The Spiritual part is the calling down of the Holy Spirit to help a person recover if it's God's will, and for that person's soul to be in favour with God if the sacrament of Forgiveness has also been administered at the same time.

## HOLY ORDERS (Usually administered once)

This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ. The physical part is the bishop ordaining men into deacons, or priests or bishops by the placing on of hands.

The spiritual part is the receiving of the Holy Spirit who gives the new priests and bishops the powers to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and to be able to absolve people from their sins.

## MATRIMONY (Usually administered once)

This sacrament was approved by Jesus Christ. The physical part is the exchange of vows between the man and woman being married promising to live together for as long as they live. The spiritual part is the grace of God given to the couple to grow into a union of heart and soul.

*Note: These simple explanations of the seven sacraments should be seen as an introduction to them. As sacred rituals they provide so much and the ceremonies involved are always very special.*

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

## Different places, different states of mind

CHRIS MCDONNELL



From the crowded city streets to the busy town hall square, from the local village community to the crofter's moorland cottage, we find human beings going about their business. Some have travelled the short distance from home to shop to collect the family groceries, others are making a full day of it visiting big stores rarely seen. All in some way are on the move.

It is no wonder, then, that we often hear the phrase 'I would just like some time to myself'. Let's explore some of the words that we might use. We talk of 'being alone', of 'enjoying our own company', of 'experiencing solitude'. We speak of 'peace and quiet', of 'time with a good book', of having 'an early night

to catch up with sleep', of 'time to doze in a comfortable fireside chair' and many other such phrases, all of describing a state we find relaxing and enjoyable.

But not all of them are equivalent.

Time 'to myself' can lead to loneliness unless it is directed, has some purpose, leads us somewhere. We seek to disconnect in a positive way. Being alone can offer real opportunity to make ourselves available to others, it can create a space that others can occupy without feeling obtrusive, a time to listen, a time to be.

In such times, God is with us. Too often in our noisy and cluttered world we do not listen because we cannot hear. Lost in a cacophony of



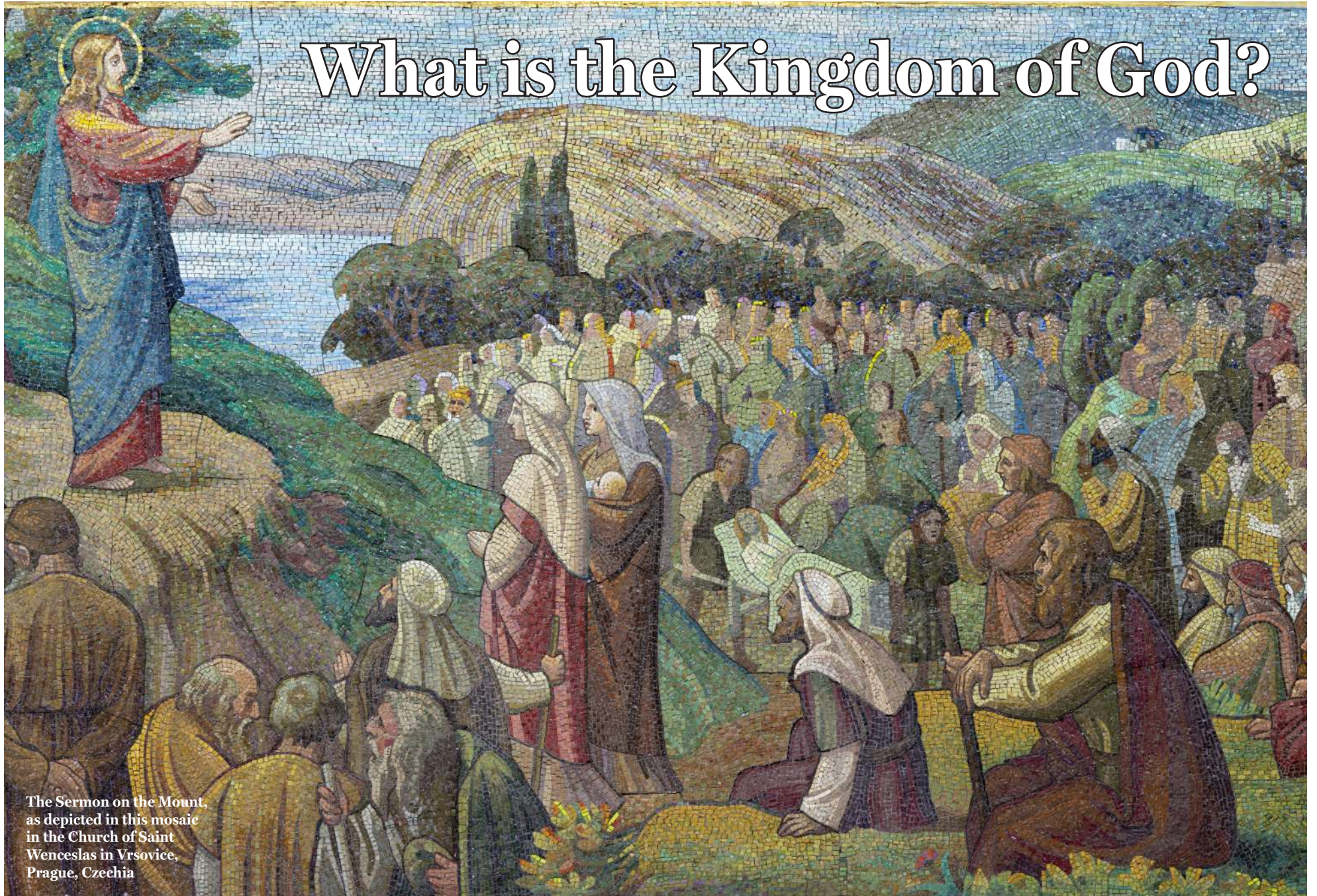
sound we drift from one task to another, unable to focus with any purpose and end up achieving very

little. For some are disturbed by silence, without a background buzz, they feel uncomfortable, ill at ease.

There is the evident need for rest and relaxation, taking time to care for oneself. Who cares for the carers? Nobody can give all the time without being replenished. Times of prayer are such times, when we seek renewal in the gift of God, be it in uttering of familiar phrases, the repetition of a few words or the silent attention of our stillness.

Mark, at the beginning of his Gospel, tells us that early in the morning Jesus went out alone to seek a time for prayer. There is a stillness in the hours of sunrise, a stillness that encourages our body to be at rest, to be focused, a time of recollection before the work of the day. Value the gift of time to listen and to be.

# What is the Kingdom of God?



The Sermon on the Mount, as depicted in this mosaic in the Church of Saint Wenceslas in Vrsovice, Prague, Czechia

**“Jesus taught at length about the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). This Kingdom is to be distinguished from the Kingdom of this world which is marred by sin and greed.”**

Jesus came among us to establish the kingdom of God on Earth. He insisted that we seek first “the kingdom of God and His approval” (Matthew 6:33) because all good things flow from this.

In the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6) we cry out: ‘Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.’ Thus, the Kingdom of God and doing God’s will, are one in the same.

Jesus taught at length about the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7). This kingdom is to be distinguished from the kingdom of this world which is marred by sin and greed. The Lord’s kingdom is no earthly kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom within you. There are two important components to the kingdom of God: an internal and

an external one. These two are interconnected because you can’t have one without the other.

Let us deal with the internal component first.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5), Jesus outlines the internal qualities necessary to enter into his kingdom. They are called the Beatitudes. These beautiful ways of behaving backtrack to the condition of the human heart.

They are called Beatitudes because they are blessings, and are at the heart of Jesus’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and they ensure that the right means be adopted in following Christ. It’s possible for someone to do the right thing but in the wrong way. A prime example of this is Jesus’s story of the pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to pray. The pharisee kept all the Commandments in the wrong way because he was self-righteous and judgmental and looked down on the publican, who he despised. The publican, on the other hand, knew he was a sinner,

saying, “Lord have Mercy on me a sinner.” He left the temple more justified than the pharisee because of his humble attitude, which we find in the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The Beatitudes challenge us to change our internal dispositions, to move away from self-righteousness and harsh judgments to cultivate a heart of purity, humility, peace, compassion, courage, mercy, and love.

They invite us to let go of our pre-conceived notions and to see the world the way Christ sees it, to be filled with joy and peace, even in the face of persecution and to be peacemakers, spreading God’s love and hope to all those around us. If you want to appreciate a life based on the Beatitudes, look to the example of Jesus himself who embodied them all.

Let us now deal with the external aspects of the kingdom of God.

God’s kingdom, though it resides within you, is not a kingdom divorced from everyday reality. We are called to be a light to the world

by the performance of “good deeds” and by following the Golden Rule laid down in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do unto others what you wish them to do unto you” (Matthew 7:12).

The parable of The Last Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) emphasises the importance of doing good deeds for those in need. The love that Jesus talks about is no pie in the sky feeling or sentimental mood or self-congratulatory lip service. It is the real thing and consists in helping others: the sick, the lonely, the hungry, the stranger, the homeless, the jobless, and the needy in whatever form that takes. People will forget what you said, but they will never forget what you did for them when they were hurting or in need.

By doing these good deeds of love, the Lord assures us, we will enter into His kingdom.

Love is at the core of God’s kingdom on earth. It comes in all shapes and sizes, and goes by many names: Kindness, decency, forgiveness, gentleness,

graciousness, compassion, hospitality, and sharing. It consists in treating others with respect and dignity, and recognising the inherent worth of every individual. It is about putting the needs of others ahead of your own, and extending yourself to meet those needs in whatever way you can. It manifests itself in small gestures and in grand gestures. What matters most is the attitude or disposition behind those gestures, whether great or small.

Ultimately, your decision to put the Kingdom of God first in your life is a personal one that requires courage and the willingness to take risks.

The reward of sharing the blessings of the Beatitudes and doing Good Deeds for others in need far outweigh any potential discomfort.

By embracing the blessing of the Beatitudes within, and by reaching out to others through Good Deeds will bring joy to your life and create a more compassionate, understanding and connected world.



## WORSHIP

## GOSPEL REFLECTIONS



# Jesus' curing of the leper offers a guide as to why we must keep the faith

## Gospel: Matthew 8:1-4: A leper is touched and cured by Jesus

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

## Compassion and the law

Some laws are fundamental while others may be disregarded, in certain circumstance. When Jesus cured the man of a contagious skin disease, he reminded him, "See to it that you tell no one. Go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses prescribed."

We may ask, couldn't the priests get along without the gift from a poor man who had very little to spare? But the required gift was very small, and it served to show that the former outcast was welcome back to join the community. The leper would be allowed back into the temple and synagogue, after years of enforced absence. He would have his self-respect and dignity restored.

Laws are sometimes also disregarded, for good reason. Tradition forbade a devout Jew to touch anyone legally unclean; and lepers were among the most unclean of all. On hearing the leper's passionate plea, "Sir, if you want to, you can cure me!" Jesus chose to ignore that prohibition, and with deep compassion touched the man, and cured him. That gesture made Jesus ceremonially unclean and would keep him from entering the house of God until he made amends. This was not a disdainful breaking of the law; Jesus went around or above it, giving priority to the supreme law of compassion. One must keep laws in the spirit of their originator, which is the merciful God.

This same merciful God finally gave Abraham and Sarah what they had longed for. Where hope continues to spring up, "Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing" (Ps 126:5). The elderly couple will give birth to new life. Such are the ways of a compassionate God.

## No untouchables

Lepers in antiquity were the great untouchables. Through touch,



their disease could pass to other members of the community. The law demanded that lepers live apart, with only other lepers for company. But Jesus did not hesitate to touch the leper. He did not fear to be contaminated by that outreach, rather, his touch would heal the leper. The man had approached Jesus with the very tentative request, "If you want to, you can cure me." But there was nothing tentative about Jesus' response, "Of course I want to. Be made clean!"

The story shows how Jesus does not hesitate to touch us, even the damaged parts of our lives. The Lord has no fear of being contaminated by us. He enters fully into the darker places of our experience, with his healing, life-giving presence. His concern for our well-being knows no barriers. The Lord wants to touch us just as we are, not as we should be or could be. But we need to approach him with trust, as the leper did, "Lord, if you want to, you can cure me."

## Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19

*Peter proclaims Jesus as the Son of the living God. For this he is given the keys of the Kingdom*

When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people

say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven."

## Singled out for service

What singled Peter out from the other disciples was his God-given insight into the identity of Jesus. It was because of his unique insight that Jesus gives Peter a unique role among his followers. He is to be the rock, the firm foundation, on which Jesus will build his Church. It is an extraordinarily significant role for Jesus to give to any of his disciples.

Peter's role is further spelt out by Jesus giving him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The image of the keys suggests authority. The nature of that authority is

expressed in terms of binding and loosing.

This is probably a reference to a teaching authority. Peter is being entrusted with the task of authoritatively interpreting the teaching of Jesus for other members of the Church. Yet, this same Peter would try to deflect Jesus from taking the way of the cross, and when Jesus did take that way, Peter would deny any



*Keeping the faith does not always come easy to any of us. Paul's letters show that keeping the faith was not due to his own efforts; it was the Lord who enabled him to keep the faith.*

association with him. Jesus is portrayed by Matthew's gospel as giving a significant role to someone who remains very flawed.

If the Gospel associates teaching with Peter, the second reading associates preaching with Paul. In that reading Paul refers to the Lord who "gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be preached for all the pagans to hear."

Paul was the great preacher of the gospel to the pagans throughout the Roman Empire. He preached it for the last time further west, in the city of Rome, where, like Peter, he was martyred for his faith in Christ. The extract from his second letter to Timothy that is our second reading today may well have been written from his Roman imprisonment. It is a very stirring text: 'I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith.'

The image of the fight and the race suggest that 'keeping the faith' was a struggle for Paul; it did not come easy to him, just as keeping the faith did not come easy to Peter either.

Keeping the faith does not always come easy to any of us. Paul's letters show that he was very aware that keeping the faith was not due primarily to his own efforts; it was the Lord who enabled him to keep the faith.

As he says in today's second Reading, "the Lord stood by me and gave me power." It is the Lord who empowers all of us to keep the faith; his faithfulness to us enables us to be faithful to him; his faithful love encourages us to keep returning to him even after failure.

The faithful witness of Peter and Paul speak to us ultimately of the Lord's faithfulness to us all.

■ QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

# Confusion over the Sabbath – and are Alpha courses okay for Catholics?

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

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

Christians, though, celebrate Sunday instead, because that is the day on which Jesus rose from the dead and the day on which the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles.

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

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

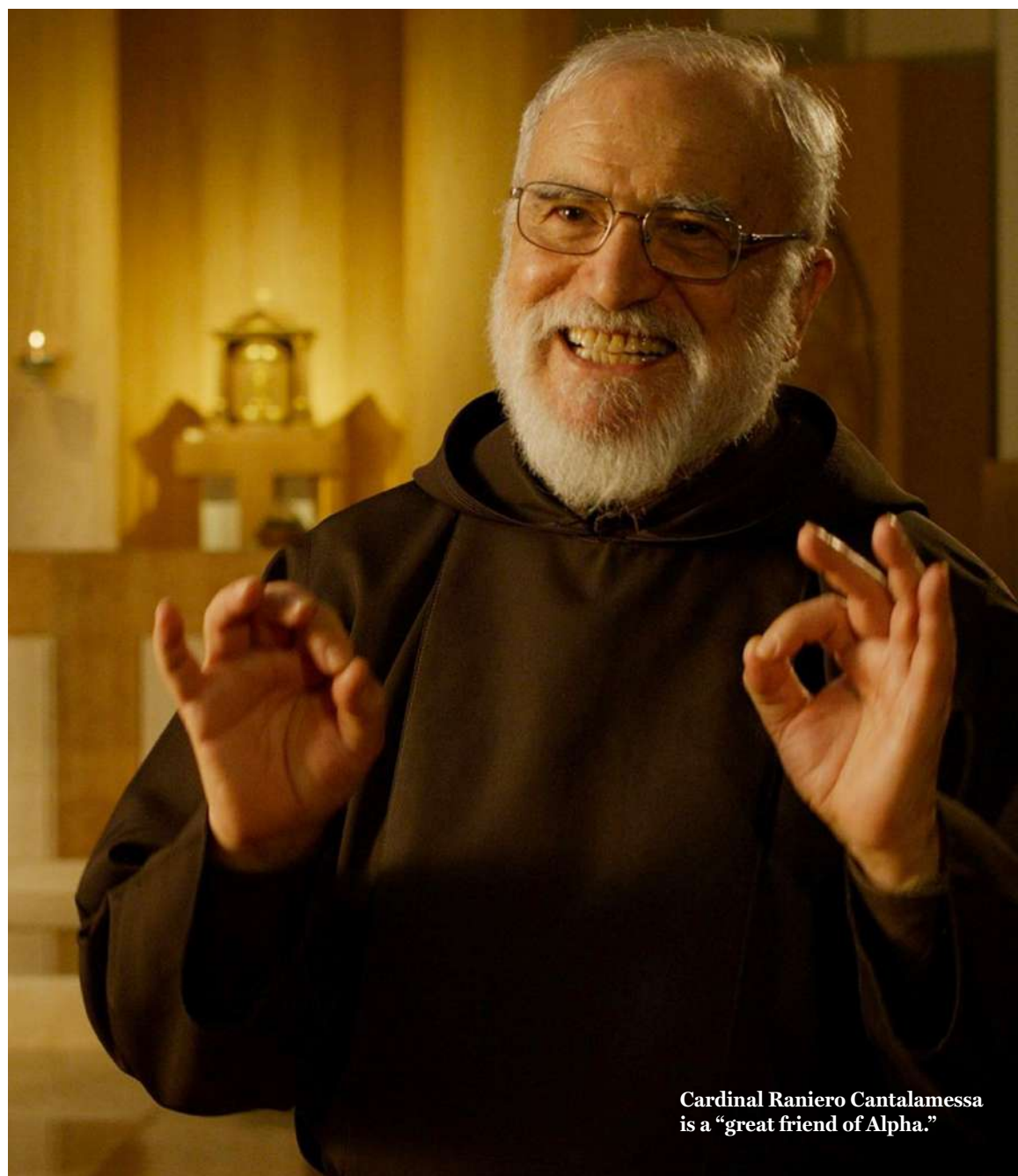
So for Christians, Sunday is the preeminent holy day of the week, the day on which we refrain from servile work, devote ourselves to the Eucharist, to prayer and family gatherings.

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

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

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

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



**Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa is a "great friend of Alpha."**

experience a period of severe tribulation.

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

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

**Q. My husband has dementia. We**

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

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

When he sees your husband, if the priest agrees with your assessment, then the priest can give him absolution simply by asking if he is sorry for any sins. After that,

of course, your husband is free to take the Eucharist. I'm assuming that he recognises that this is "special food" that somehow connects him with God – and I would be very generous in making that determination.

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

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

**Q. A number of Catholic parishes have hosted programmes on the**

“

*“Alpha is for meeting Jesus. ... For me, the Christian life has something to do with simplicity, friendship, closeness and joy. That's what I feel about Alpha, and I think that's a sign that it works and that it's given from the Lord.”*

**Alpha movement in Christianity. I have found conflicting guidance as to the legitimacy/orthodoxy of this movement. Can you advise me as to whether it is approved for Catholic membership?**

A. Alpha is a programme of Christian evangelisation first developed some 30 years ago at an Anglican charismatic parish in London by Rev. Nicky Gumbel.

It consists of about a dozen interactive sessions in which participants discuss basic questions of faith – for example, "Who is Jesus?" and "Why and how do I pray?". The programme's goal is to bring participants into a closer personal relationship with Christ.

Alpha is compatible with Catholic teaching, although it does not deal specifically with issues like the theology of the sacraments.

There is, however, available a version called Alpha for Catholics, which supplements the basic programme with teachings specific to Catholicism. Since its inception, Alpha has been used in thousands of Catholic parishes in more than 70 countries.

Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the papal household, is known as a "great friend of Alpha," and Cardinal Christoph Schonborn of Vienna has said: "Alpha is for meeting Jesus. ... For me, the Christian life has something to do with simplicity, friendship, closeness and joy. That's what I feel about Alpha, and I think that's a sign that it works and that it's given from the Lord."

**Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers**

**SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY**

DAVID TORKINGTON



# Deus Caritas – God is Love

When Charles Dickens wrote, ‘God is love’ on the workhouse wall, he was of course being sarcastic. He knew there was no love in that workhouse, as *Oliver Twist* was to find when he begged for more gruel.

Yet, Dickens was right; unlike any other religion, Christianity is founded on love, not on our love of God, but as St John insisted, on His love of us.

The word Gospel means ‘good news’ because it is the best news that any human being can receive. It is the news that God’s love has been embodied in the flesh and blood of the most perfect man who has ever walked on this earth, so that he could transmit it to us too.

All those who came to love him, not only wanted to be close to him and to be with him always, but to enter into him, to experience the love that had inspired them, and which animated him.

After his Resurrection this became possible like never before. The enduring love of the first Christians became for them like a mystical ladder, enabling their love to rise to him and his love to descend into them. This love would gradually draw them up into him and into what was later called his Mystical Body.

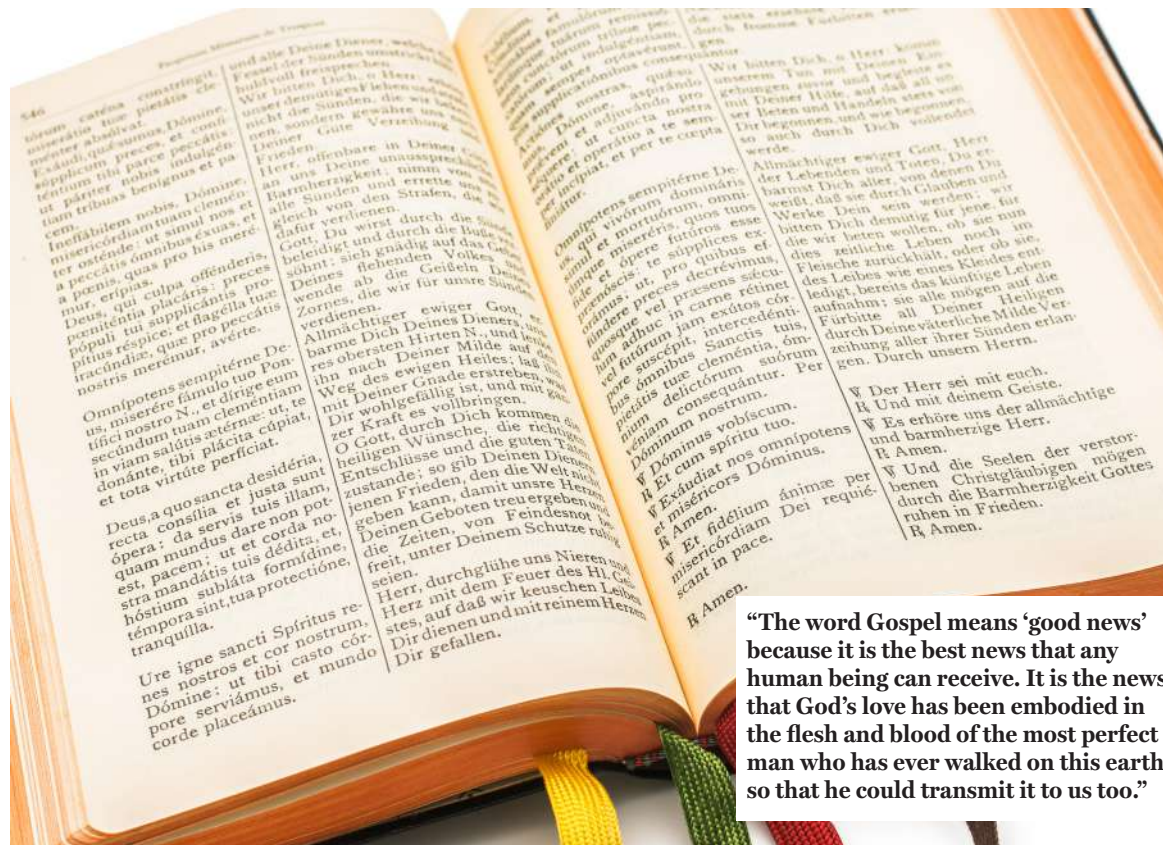
**Christian meditation**

At the very beginning many Christians had known and come to love Jesus while he was on earth, but as time went by this ‘happy few’ grew smaller and smaller. Nevertheless, the memories were handed down so that new generations could also come to know and love the most adorable man who ever lived. In order to help those who never knew him personally to come to know and love him, a new form of mental prayer was born that had never been known before.

It came to be called Christian meditation. Even in the pagan world there had been mental prayer, called ‘meditation’. It involved using all sorts of different man-made methods and techniques to try to gain experiences of the divine. After the Resurrection, however, the word meditation was given a new Christian meaning. Using the memories of those who knew and loved Jesus in the past, and reading what was written about him in the scriptures, the early Christians were introduced to this new form of mental prayer.

In his *Confessions* St Augustine put it this way: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

Although it is quite possible to love someone who once lived in the past, it is quite impossible to be



**“The word Gospel means ‘good news’ because it is the best news that any human being can receive. It is the news that God’s love has been embodied in the flesh and blood of the most perfect man who has ever walked on this earth, so that he could transmit it to us too.”**

united with them; after all, they are dead. However, the same Jesus who once lived on this earth is, thanks to his Resurrection, alive now in the present, where the union for which they desired can be consummated. I say can, because there is such a moral disparity between him and us that before that union can take place, a deep spiritual purification has to prepare us.

It is at this point that the meditation that had become pleasant and rewarding suddenly comes to an end. The reason is simply this - the pure desire for union reaches outward and upward, as it were, to enter into Christ as he is now in his risen glory, but the rest of us remains behind where we will remain until we are sufficiently purified to follow our hearts’ desire.

In the operetta *Iolanthe*, the hero, Strephon, is half fairy and half human, half spiritual and half physical. So he complains that although his spiritual half can pass under a door, through a crack in the window or through a keyhole, his physical half cannot. It is the same with us, although our spiritual yearning reaches up to God, our physical self cannot follow it, at least until it become purified or ‘spiritualised’ by the Holy Spirit.

**Dark Night of the Soul**

This new stage, or transition, as it is sometimes called, happens very suddenly. One day the meditation that was so pleasant comes to a sudden end. Although the desire for God is still there the rest of us is

enveloped with distractions and temptations, the greatest of which is to pack up prayer altogether, as many do. The tragedy is that this happens all too often just at the time when we are about to be purified by the Holy Spirit who is at work trying to unite us with the Risen Christ.

St John of the Cross calls this strange new world the ‘Dark Night of the Soul’. However, as purification enables us to go forward we go forward into it what is called pure contemplation when the darkness gives way to ever-more penetrating and all-enveloping light.

You may of course be thinking, how very interesting, but that’s not for me. Sorry, whether you like it or not, the mystic way is for you and it must take place. If it is not completed in this life in what St John of the Cross calls the ‘Dark Night’ then it must be completed in the next life in what the Church has traditionally called purgatory. How else can imperfect love be united to Perfect Love?

While he was on earth Jesus himself did not need to meditate to generate God’s love within him, as we do. God’s love that conceived him in the first place, possessed him at all times throughout his life. The reason for this is simply because there was no sin or moral impurity in him to prevent his continuous and uninterrupted contemplation of his Father. Jesus was therefore the first perfect contemplative, the first great Christian mystic.

For us, however, it is different because firstly we have to learn how

to love through Christian meditation. For us this means the slow and prayerful reading of the scriptures or other forms of meditation like the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, and devotion to the Sacred Heart, to mention but a few. The acid test of all of them is - do they help generate love? Second, the love generated there has to be purified in the ‘Dark Night’ so that through contemplation we may be fitted ever more fully into

the Risen Christ. Not just into his being, but into his acting, into his contemplation of God, Our Father.

**The Communion of Saints**

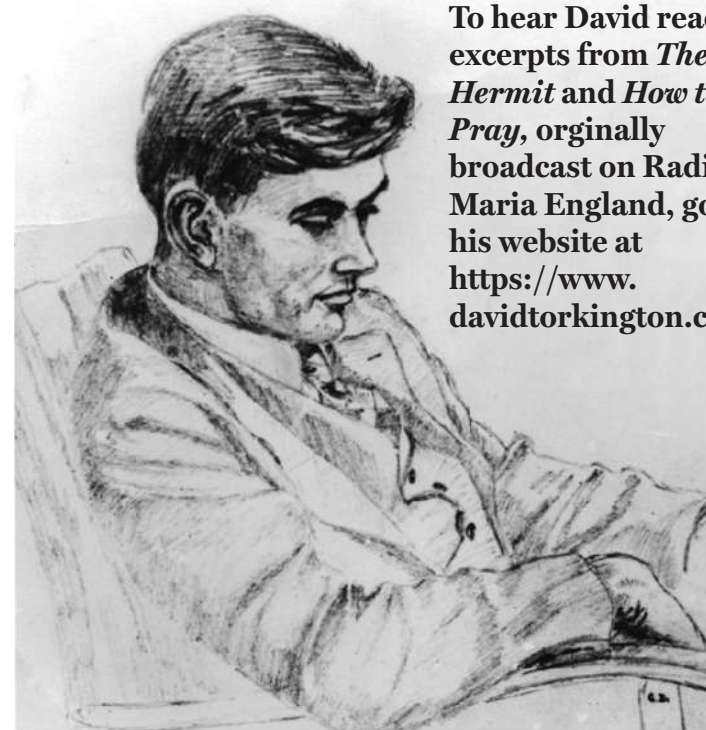
Here we are joined together with the whole communion of saints, and that includes our own loved ones with whom we are re-united too. This is not where our spiritual journey ends. It is here that it begins like never before, as together with the whole communion of saints we set off into an ever-more joyful and ecstatic journey into the Fullness of Love, and to all eternity. In short, Meditation generates love; Contemplation purifies and brings it to perfection.

Then we are finally able to journey on, in, with and through Christ into what St Gregory of Nyssa calls *Epecestasy*. This is the never-ending ecstatic bliss of contemplating and entering further and further into eternal love to all eternity, together with all we have ever loved and held dear. If therefore anyone tries to sell you mindfulness or pleasurable mental states as Christian meditation, beware, they are selling you the counterfeit.

These techniques will never ignite the sparks that generate divine love. They will not take you on a mystical journey, but just round and round in circles getting nowhere.

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

**David Torkington reads from *The Hermit***



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



# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



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Cardinal Nichols is pictured  
addressing the children during  
Mass, handing out Communion,  
cutting the cake and blessing a  
figurine of St Thomas

## Cardinal Nichols' Mass helps St Thomas of Canterbury mark its 150th anniversary

Cardinal Vincent Nichols joined in with celebrations to mark the 150th Anniversary of St Thomas of Canterbury Primary School, Puckeridge, by celebrating Mass with the whole school as well as many invited and distinguished guests.

Also present were former pupils and staff, with the earliest having

attended almost 60 years ago.

In his homily, the cardinal drew the students' attention to the halo depicted around the head of St Thomas of Canterbury on their school's banner. He explained that this light is the same light that radiated from the face of Moses in their first reading, which is the light of God's presence. A halo is also

present on their mural of St Francis of Assisi, patron of their Academy Trust, and all depictions of saints. This halo was a sign which they all had to aspire to so as to bring its light to others.

During Mass, Cardinal Vincent blessed the badges which were given to all who attended to mark the anniversary, as well as an icon of

St Thomas of Canterbury and the school's earliest register from 1903.

Afterwards, there was a celebration in the school hall, where a display with artefacts from the past 150 years had been made marking the school's journey.

The cardinal was invited to cut the cake and everyone sang to celebrate the school's birthday.



# Parishioners on hand to mark priest's silver jubilee

**Con McHugh and John McCarthy**

The parishes of Christ the King, Kingstanding, and Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale, celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for the Silver Jubilee of Fr Joseph Thé-Quang Nguyen (known to everyone in both parishes as Fr Thé). The Mass, at Christ the King, was held on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 11th June.

Fr Thé celebrated Mass, with many of his priestly friends concelebrating with him. In the congregation were his family, friends, parishioners, and parishioners from his former parishes. All those present had come to say 'thank you' and to pray for Fr Thé's continued Ministry.

Fr Thé was appointed the parish priest of Christ the King in November 2019, some four months before the first Covid lockdown. Fr Thé is also parish priest of Our Lady of the Assumption (Maryvale).

The first reader was David McLoughlin, a former tutor from Oscott, with the second by Paul Kelly, a fellow student at Oscott. Following communion, parishioner John McCarthy gave an enlightening overview of what Fr Thé has achieved during his priestly life to date: "He's been here for three and a half years," he said.



There was great turn-out from the two parishes for Fr Thé's celebration Mass, at which he received a papal blessing from Pope Francis from Kathleen McCarty (right)



"We hardly saw him for nearly two and a half years, so how could we learn anything about him?"

"Three and a half years on, he knows us for better or worse, and we know him. I would suggest for the better. And the proof of the pudding is the church is full today to give both parishes the chance to

“

*Fr Thé makes everyone feel special ... that's why he is so loved...*

express our gratitude for the amount of work he has done to build a better community and bring us back together."

John praised the volunteers who supported Fr Thé in the running of the parish. He especially thanked Margaret Rochford who had helped in organising this celebration.

John thanked David McLoughlin for his insight on Fr Thé, who said: "He was one of the brightest students of his generation."

John continued with what he has personally seen at Christ the King:

"We have a children's liturgy group. Each child who comes up feels he is presenting something to him as a special experience. And recently when we had the Mass on the actual date of his anniversary, one of the children at Mass, when he brought it up, he said to him, 'I did this for you'.

"Children appreciate that. Parents appreciate that and the parishioners appreciate that. So that's just one example of the small things you don't always notice – the compassion that he shows."

The first presentation, a

collection of £1,250, was made by Michael Collins, a parishioner at Our Lady of the Assumption, Maryvale.

John then introduced Kathleen McCarty, a 90-something-year-old lady who is still one of the sacristans at Christ the King, and has seen every parish priest since the parish was formed.

Kathleen presented Fr Thé with a papal blessing from Pope Francis.

John concluded by saying: "What more can be said except all our prayers and best wishes go out to you."

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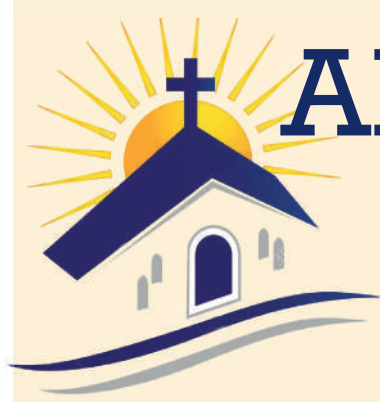
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# AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



## Let's all get to know Christ: he really wants to know you

**Bishop Philip Egan**  
Last Thursday Portsmouth Cathedral celebrated the annual Schools Day Mass, with many of the 70 Catholic schools from across the diocese of Portsmouth joining us. Afterwards, in glorious sunshine, we enjoyed a packed lunches in Victoria Park.

During the Mass I preached the homily, saying

"I'm really happy this Schools Mass is today, the eve of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I'm sure you all know what a heart is a symbol of? Yes, it stands for love. Jesus loves us; he wants us to be his friend; he wants us to know him, to love him and to serve him, in our lives, and one day to be with him forever in the happiness of Heaven. He wants to fill us with his love so that we can share his love with others.

"That's the theme of the Mass today: Making Peace with those around us.

"In the Gospel, Jesus says: Don't just keep the letter of the commandments – keep the spirit of them! If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead, we should be full of love. We should have a heart like the Heart of Jesus. We should do our best to love others, to spread love to others, to spread the Love of Jesus at home, at school, wherever we are.

"Thank you for coming to this Mass today. When you leave, remember this: Jesus loves you from the Heart. He wants you to be his friend. He wants you to get to know him. He wants to help you in sickness, suffering and sadness, and one day to join him forever in heaven. So let's get to know him. Read the Gospels every day, and find time every day for prayer."



## Thanks to Colin as he hangs up his chef's pinny after 25 years

**Jane Crone**  
St George's Norwich is celebrating 25 years of holding CAFOD lunches, while supporting farmers in their fight to keep their rights to their own seeds.

CAFOD depends on a network of volunteers in parishes and schools who pray, act and give, enabling us to reach out to people living in poverty with practical help.

For 25 years, the CAFOD Team at St George's Parish in Norwich has organised fundraising lunches to support CAFOD. Twice a year, Colin Irons, a professional chef, has created delicious meals using vegetables, fruit, and eggs from his allotment, while the parish Explorer Scouts help set out tables, serve food and wash up.

The event even carried on

through the pandemic, with a 'click and collect' takeaway lunch organised.

However, after a quarter of a century, Colin has decided that it's time to hang up his pinny after a final lunch on 18th June. He was presented with gifts of wine and chocolate and Christine Allen, CAFOD's director, sent a special message of thanks for his efforts.

"I want to add my own thanks for this remarkable achievement. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to raising awareness of CAFOD through your lunches.

"CAFOD has achieved much in 25 years, and it is thanks to volunteers like you that have enabled us, alongside our partners, to continue to reach the most vulnerable.

"With thanks and best wishes,

from Christine and all at CAFOD," she wrote.

Part of CAFOD's mission is to challenge the structures that cause poverty and injustice in the first place. After lunch, I shared information on CAFOD's current campaign, which is focused on seed sovereignty. For generations, small-scale farmers have freely shared a wide variety of seeds which produce the food that feeds a significant proportion of the world's population. As a result of laws which limit what they can do with their own seed varieties, small-scale farmers are facing increasing pressure to buy seeds from the limited selection produced by big corporations. This is not good for people or the planet.

This summer, CAFOD is inviting

parishes across the country to stand in solidarity with small-scale farmers to ensure that they have free access to their own varieties of seeds.

Salina, a seed saver from Bangladesh, has written a letter to the World Bank – an institution with a lot of influence in food policies – calling for the protection of the rights of small-scale farmers like herself to use their own varieties of seeds.

"...The companies do not give good seeds. They put descriptions on their seed packets that are not true. It is very impractical information. And the main thing is, the seeds sold by the companies do not belong to the farmers. Farmers can grow the crops, but they cannot keep the seeds in their own hands.

## Three-pointer for St Bede's

A South Shields Catholic school basketball team has won a South Tyneside competition for the third year running.

Pupils at St Bede's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, were crowned South Tyneside Basketball Champions 2023 at the Vertu Motors Arena in Newcastle.

The St. Bede's Y5 team won seven games in a row initially to qualify for the finals night in Newcastle, where the four best teams met in South Tyneside.

Team coach and Y3 teacher Brian McVittie said: "We beat an excellent Cleadon side in a tense semi-final. Our

team showed its defensive qualities but still had the quality to create and convert the only basket of the game."

The district final was played in front of a huge crowd at half-time in the Newcastle Eagles game against London Lions.

St. Bede's got off to a flying start in the final, as they scored two baskets in the opening minute. The St. Bede's players continued to play superbly and added a third basket to claim the title with an impressive 6-0 win.

Captain Alice Queenan, 9, said, "It was amazing playing at the Eagles home ground in Newcastle and a proud moment to lift the cup with my family watching."



The St Bede's team with the pros from the Newcastle Eagles

# Grow-your-own plan helps parish to clinch its LiveSimply award

**Jo Lewry reports on her recent visit to English Martyrs parish in Reading for the presentation of their LiveSimply award.**

I had a wonderful day on Sunday, 21st May presenting the LiveSimply award to English Martyrs parish in Reading at the 11:30am Mass.

It was fantastic to meet the Caring for Creation Group, which has worked so hard over the past year to organise a variety of activities in the parish which

enabled parishioners to live more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor.

It was great to celebrate their achievements with them after the Mass and share the beautiful cake that Jack Noronha had made for the occasion.

Achieving the award is only the beginning for the parish as its members continue with many different projects. As well as celebrating achieving the LiveSimply award, the parish also held a plant and seed swap to encourage parishioners to grow their own diverse ranges of flowers and vegetables. This has led to an amazing variety of plants and bushes for people to choose from,

with expert advice on hand to help them grow well.

In September, they are planning to hold a Harvest Supper as they did last year, when parishioners can bring vegetables which they have grown at home and create a meal to share with each other to thank God for the gifts of creation.

What a fantastic way to celebrate the season of creation.

Huge congratulations to English Martyrs for achieving the LiveSimply award, and many thanks to Fr Gaston and Fr Andrew for all their support.

It is great to know that their journey to live more simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor continues.



Parishioners celebrated the award with Mass and a special cake



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# COMPANION

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



pg 34

## GARDENING

# Take your time with hydrangeas and don't be scared of pruning

In last week's *Universe* we looked at the challenges of growing hydrangeas, and how making sure you planted them in a hole in your garden that's twice the size you'd expect it to be, and ensure it is well watered, were the crucial first steps to successful cultivation.

But now what?

Simply, sit back and watch your plant grow. Don't be impatient for blooms in the first two years on small plants. Smaller plants are usually putting all their energy into growth in their first two seasons, and are rarely in a position to give you flowers. Also, avoid high nitrogen fertilisers (those with a high first number) that will only cause rapid green growth, not bloom. High phosphorus fertilisers (a larger second number) – sometimes called bloom boosters – are also not helpful for hydrangea bloom production.

### Pruning

If there is one issue that confuses even experienced gardeners, it's when or if to prune French hydrangeas. Think of hydrangeas the way you would an azalea – prune after blooming. This usually means in July – certainly before the start of August. The plant will not be hurt by removing up to a third of the growth – the new growth that will appear

"If an older plant has been allowed to outgrow its location or has become leggy and bare on the bottom, it may need a good 'renewal pruning' – pruning the plant back severely in either early spring or after bloom."



after pruning contains the bloom buds for the next season.

Avoid any autumn pruning – you'll only be removing your blooms. It may be true that the leafless branches of a hydrangea are not the most attractive part of a winter garden, however, if they have been planted correctly with a good background of evergreen foliage, they are not nearly as distracting.

If an older plant has been allowed to outgrow its location or has become leggy and bare on the bottom, it may need a good 'renewal pruning.' Renewal pruning means pruning the plant back severely (down to 18" or below) in either early spring or after bloom. Don't be alarmed if after doing this, you end up with just a "stump" with few if any leaves, but the large, mature root system will quickly renew the plant.

You will sacrifice bloom for that growing season, but gain a better-proportioned plant. Just don't try this in the autumn as you can kill your plant.

One final pruning chore is spring clean up done as the hydrangea buds begin to emerge.

Examine each plant for older or dead branches and remove them as far back as the ground (you may need a pair of loppers for this). Removing old canes regularly



encourages new growth. You can test a branch for living tissue by scratching it lightly with a thumbnail or pocketknife – if there is a green layer just beneath the surface, it's a living branch. This is also a good time

to nip off any remaining dead blossoms.

### Spring Start-up

An established hydrangea needs little care other than the following spring routine:

- Rake out old mulch and leaves
- Remove old, dead canes
- Apply 1/2 cup of timed-release fertilizer within the dripline all around plant
- Apply a 1 1/2 to 2 inch layer of compost or composted cow manure as a topdressing over the fertilizer
- Pluck or snip off any frost-damaged leaves – undamaged leaves will quickly fill in and your plants will look much better.

Other hydrangeas to consider for your garden:

Hydrangeas are the hot new shrub in the nursery trade. The recently introduced 'Endless Summer' class called the macrophylla has sold very well, but there are many other varieties of hydrangea that are more than worth growing.

In fact, becoming a hydrangea collector is quite rewarding. In addition to French hydrangeas, consider adding varieties of these to your landscape:

- Annabelle hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle')
- Oakleaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
- PeeGee hydrangeas (*Hydrangea paniculata grandiflora*) and other paniculata varieties
- Climbing hydrangeas (*Hydrangea anomala petiolaris*)

"An established hydrangea needs little care other than a simple spring routine.... rake out the old mulch and leaves, remove the dead canes and apply some fertiliser, before snipping off any frost-damaged leaves..."



**HEALTH**

# Why am I so tired? Science races to understand aftermath of Covid-19

**Long Covid: effects on fatigue and quality of life can be comparable to some cancers, says new research**

## Henry Goodfellow

As of March 2023, the Office for National Statistics estimated that 1.7 million people in the UK were living with self-reported long Covid-19.

This refers to symptoms, including fatigue and brain fog among many others, that continue for more than 12 weeks after the initial Covid-19 infection.

Long Covid-19 is causing significant concern across the UK and around the world due to the large number of people affected.

Research and anecdotal reports continue to show that the condition is causing severe symptoms. But we still need to learn more about how long Covid-19 can affect a patient's ability to carry out normal, everyday activities.

In a new study, my colleagues and I found that long Covid-19 can cause fatigue and affect a person's daily functioning more so than some cancers.

Fatigue appears to be the dominant symptom driving the effect on long Covid-19 patients' capacity to function day-to-day, and is therefore an important focus for clinical care and the design of rehabilitation services.

Back in August 2020, we began to create a digital health intervention to help clinics remotely support long Covid-19 patients. Our large, multi-disciplinary team was created and led by the late Professor Elizabeth Murray. Over the two-year project, more than 8,000 patients from across 35 different NHS long Covid-19 clinics in the UK used the Living With Covid-19 Recovery mobile phone app.

All of our patients were



encouraged to complete questionnaires on the app about how long Covid-19 was affecting them, covering day-to-day activities, levels of fatigue, depression, anxiety, breathlessness and brain fog. This helped the patients track their symptoms over time and allowed clinicians to remotely monitor and support their patients.

The questionnaires also generated standardised scores for each symptom. This allowed the clinicians to compare the long Covid-19 scores to those from patients suffering from a variety of

other diseases gathered from previous research.

## Analysing the data

William Henley and Sarah Walker at the University of Exeter analysed the data from the questionnaires completed by the first 3,754 patients to use the app, and the findings from these patients are reported in our study.

We found that many of the long Covid-19 patients were seriously unwell, and often their symptoms were keeping them from doing day-to-day activities such as simple household chores or caring

"We found that many of the long Covid-19 patients were seriously unwell, unable to do simple household chores ... the extent to which long Covid-19 patients were affected was comparable to patients who had had a stroke or were suffering from Parkinson's disease..."

for other people.

The extent to which long Covid-19 patients were affected in this regard was comparable to patients who had had a stroke or were suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Of all the symptoms studied, fatigue was associated with the biggest effect on long Covid-19 patients' daily lives, with average fatigue scores similar to or worse than people with cancer-related anaemia or severe kidney disease. The long Covid-19 patients on average reported health-related quality of life scores which were lower than people with advanced metastatic cancers, such as stage 4 lung cancer.

The average long Covid-19 patients we looked at were also suffering from anxiety, depression, breathlessness and brain fog, but these symptoms were not closely associated with an inability to carry out everyday activities in the same way as fatigue was.

## Beyond the individual

It's likely that long Covid-19 is also having a significant economic and social effect. Of the 3,754 long Covid-19 patients in the study, 94 per cent were of working age, and 51 per cent said that they had missed at least one day of work in the previous month due to their symptoms. Further, 20 per cent said they couldn't work at all during the previous month.

Notably, 71 per cent of the patients reporting symptoms were women. Women tend to have more responsibilities at home and are more likely to work in caring professions, so long Covid-19 will

also have a large social impact.

There were two main limitations in our study. First, our sample only comprises patients who were seen in a long Covid-19 clinic, and this may not be representative of all patients with long Covid-19. Many long Covid-19 sufferers may not have been referred to a clinic. The majority of patients in our study tended to be white, well-off and well-educated despite long Covid-19 being more common in more deprived areas. People with the characteristics found in our study are more likely to seek out healthcare than their counterparts (namely those who are non-white, less well-off or less educated).

The second limitation is that the primary reason this data was collected was for clinicians to assess and treat patients, rather than for research. This led to substantial missing data as data was not collected in a systematic way. We didn't ask participants for data that wasn't deemed clinically essential, such as the severity of their initial Covid-19 infection or Covid-19 vaccination status as we didn't want to over-burden long Covid-19 patients with too many questions.

Nonetheless, we hope that this work will inform clinicians and the general public about how unwell many patients with long Covid-19 actually are. In particular, post-Covid-19 assessment services should consider focusing on assessing and treating fatigue to maximise recovery and return to work for sufferers of long Covid-19.

**Henry Goodfellow is an NIHR Clinical Lecturer in eHealth, UCL**



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## LIFESTYLE

# Demystifying the menopause: The things everyone needs to know

Menopause is a biological process that marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. While it's a natural and normal stage of life, it's also one that's surrounded by numerous misconceptions.

"Menopause is often shrouded in myths and unnecessary anxiety for women who are approaching this life transition," said Dr. Kira Halak, a board-certified naturopathic doctor. "It's important to get the facts straight about this life stage for women, and through awareness, preparation and helpful solutions, we can feel more empowered to thrive during menopause."

Halak shares some of the most common menopause misconceptions and provides accurate information to help dispel these myths and empower women to better understand and navigate this important stage of life.

**Misconception: Menopause means constant hot flushes**

Yes, hot flushes are the most common symptom, affecting 85% of menopausal women. However,



this doesn't mean you have to suffer through regular discomfort. Simple lifestyle adjustments can turn down the heat.

First, avoid triggers such as smoking, wearing tight and restrictive clothing, using heavy blankets on your bed, and excessive stress. Adjust some everyday habits: establish a calming or de-stress routine (especially before bedtime), exercise during the day, dress in layers to more easily remove or add clothing, use a

bedside fan, turn the thermostat down, and maintain a healthy weight. A symptoms journal can also help you narrow down what causes your hot flush triggers.

**Misconception: Menopause doesn't happen until your 50s**

"This is one of the biggest myths I hear," Halak says, "but menopause symptoms as early as a woman's mid-30s, so being more aware about symptoms can better equip women to seek out helpful solutions."

There are several stages of the menopause transition. Perimenopause happens first, when periods start to become irregular and initial symptoms start to appear. Menopause is officially the absence of menstruation for 12 months.

After this a woman is post-menopause, which marks the end of reproductive years.

When you understand what's happening and why, you have a far better opportunity to manage your health in the way that you choose. You'll also be better equipped to talk to a doctor from a position of knowledge and power, further helping him or her focus on addressing your concerns.

**Misconception: You need to take hormones to manage your symptoms**

Yes, hormone replacement and prescription medication are options to deal with menopause symptoms, but they are not the only options.

A healthy diet of whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole

grains and high-quality lean proteins, along with stress relief techniques and certain dietary supplements, can be extremely helpful in alleviating menopause symptoms.

**Misconception: Exercise does not help symptoms**

Exercise does have an overall positive impact on your physical and mental well-being,

**Misconception: Menopause is the same for most women**

There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to menopause and symptoms women experience will vary. Women assume they will experience all of the worst symptoms of menopause, but many can sail smoothly through this phase of their lives, and it's important to know there are a wide range of options available to help women thrive through this journey. Menopause is just another life stage; the important thing is to learn how to cope with how it impacts on you.

## FOOD

## MULLET WITH MINT AND CAPER TOPPING

Mullet is an under-rated fish, healthy and perfect for a light summer meal. With this recipe, you can find out how good it is at carrying heavy flavours such as the capers, anchovies and mint.

**INGREDIENTS**

4 mullet slices  
40g plain flour  
40g olive oil  
1 sprig of parsley,  
2 sprigs of mint  
180g breadcrumbs  
2 tsp capers, chopped  
2 tsp sugar  
1 tbsp anchovy paste  
salt to taste

**METHOD**

1. Clean fish and prepare for cooking.
2. Flour fish and fry at medium heat in a pan.
3. Chop parsley and mint. Beat together with the breadcrumbs, capers, sugar, anchovy paste and pinch of salt.
4. Stir in olive oil to make the topping and serve with the fish.

Great served with steamed vegetables like greens or broccoli, and some boiled and buttered new potatoes



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## FILMS

# Grab the popcorn and buckle in for the ride: Indy's back in town

## The ultimate multiplex seat-filler is back for a last blockbuster

It's been more than four decades since Harrison Ford first portrayed adventurous archaeologist Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Since then, his character has gone on to become an iconic figure in contemporary culture.

With Ford now on the verge of his 81st birthday comes *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (Disney). How does this fifth – and presumably final – outing for the nonchalantly heroic protagonist measure up to its generally illustrious forebears?

Directed and co-written by James Mangold, the actioner may lack the staying power of some of the earlier chapters in the franchise – all helmed by Steven Spielberg. But it's an amiable diversion, suitable for a wide audience.

Mostly set in 1969, a dozen years after the events of its 2008 predecessor, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, the movie opens with an extended flashback to Jones' World War II heyday. His task back then was to keep a magical gadget called the Antikythera out of the hands of the black-shirted baddies.

Twenty-five years on, as the world focuses on Apollo 11, the resurfacing of the device draws the digger-turned-professor out of his recent retirement from the faculty of New York's Hunter College. Possession of it soon becomes the goal in a three-way scramble that finds him globetrotting to North Africa and Sicily.

Jones' principal rivals are Jürgen Voller (Mads Mikkelsen), his Nazi adversary from the earlier period – now, in the shape of Wernher von



Braun, a NASA scientist – and, more surprisingly, his not always godly goddaughter, Helena (Phoebe Waller-Bridge).

Ford recently told screenrant.com how the character of Indiana Jones learns to 'love and laugh and live again' through Helena's influence.

"Well, as much as we've come to know the character through his experiences and his relationships, this is the last Indiana Jones film for me.

"So I wanted to deal with the end

of his career. I wanted to deal with his age and a less physical capacity available to him. He's also ending his academic career which has not been the high point of his life. So he's a bit damped down in spirit.

"That is until he's challenged by Phoebe's character. In the context of that relationship, he learns to love and laugh and live again," he said.

As the opening sequence has already shown us, Helena's dad, Basil Shaw (Toby Jones), was not only Jones' ally in the earlier

struggle but a respected colleague and one of his best friends. Having gained custody of the Antikythera, Basil became obsessed with it and eventually urged Indy to destroy it. Helena, by contrast, only seems to want to profit from the gizmo.

Breezy and at times rich in creative spectacle – Jones takes turnstile jumping in the New York City subway to a whole new level – this drop of the curtain will likely keep the consumers of popcorn content. Initially wayward Helena

aside, moreover, the moral lines are drawn with decisive clarity throughout the story.

Mangold and his script collaborators, Jez Butterworth, John-Henry Butterworth and David Koepp, also keep the mayhem bloodless and the vocabulary mostly respectable. So the youngsters of those who were introduced to Jones' trademark fedora way back in the 1980s can join them in enjoying his serviceable swan song.

## Horror film adds a nice satirical take on Black culture

*The Blackening* (Lionsgate) is a brilliant comic riff on what constitutes authentic African American identity.

In adapting a sketch by the comedy troupe 3Peat, director Tim Story and writers Tracy Oliver and Dewayne Perkins use the familiar structure of a horror film as a framing device.

Perkins also plays a character named Dewayne, one of nine university friends who have planned to gather at a remote house in the woods to celebrate Juneteenth. The

place isn't haunted, but it's visited by a couple of mysterious figures with murderous intent, and, of course, doors slam shut at key moments and then won't open.

In the basement is a creepy board game with a caricatured black face that barks harsh, difficult questions about Black culture and history. It asks the group, for example, to name all the actors of colour who appeared on *Friends*.

Rather than fully developed individuals, the characters are instead stereotypes designed as

vessels for rapid-fire quips. Besides Perkins, the ensemble cast includes Grace Byers, Melvin Gregg, Antoinette Robertson, X Mayo, Jermaine Fowler and Sinqua Walls.

As tipped off by the picture's ad campaign, the plot also deals with the decades-old trope of an African American character – usually a male – being the first to die in any cinematic killing spree. But the script turns this on its head when

the Sambo face demands to know who among the pals is the Blackest.

Since she has a white father, Byers' Allison doesn't qualify.

Nnamdi (Walls), despite having grown up in California, has African parentage and draws the wry observation: "You're a still-in-its-original-packaging Black."

Is racial identification genetics, upbringing or attitude? The moment, like everything else in the movie,

passes quickly, yet lingers. As with all satire based on in-jokes, the effectiveness of the humour is uneven. But *Story* keeps the wisecracks flowing with a pleasant rapidity. More substantially, there's obvious deep affection underlying the way in which the female characters express sisterhood telepathically.

Overall, grown moviegoers will appreciate the sharp wit *The Blackening* brings to bear on the issues and topics it explores.



# The narcissist politician: How the Greeks controlled them - and what modern society can learn from them

HISTORY

**Steve Taylor**

Ancient Greece was in many ways a brutal society. It was almost perpetually at war, slavery was routine and women could only expect a low status in society.

However, there is one important sense in which ancient Greeks were more advanced than modern European societies: their sophisticated political systems. The citizens of ancient Athens developed a political system that was more genuinely democratic than the present day UK or US.

Our modern concept of democracy is actually a degradation of the original Greek concept and has very little in common with it. Modern democracy is merely representative, meaning that we elect officials to make decisions on our behalf, who become members of legislative bodies like the British Parliament or the US Congress.

The ancient Greeks practised direct democracy. It literally was 'people power'. And they took measures specifically to ensure that ruthless, narcissistic people were unable to dominate politics.

Recent political events show that we have a great deal to learn from the Athenians. Arguably, a key problem in modern times is that we aren't stringent enough about the people we allow to become politicians.

## Negative traits

There's a great deal of research showing that people with negative personality traits, such as narcissism, ruthlessness, amorality or a lack of empathy and conscience, are attracted to high-status roles, including politics.

In a representative democracy, therefore, the people who put themselves forward as representatives include a sizeable proportion of people with disordered personalities – people who crave power because of their malevolent traits.

And the most disordered and malevolent personalities – the most ruthless and amoral – tend to rise to the highest positions in any political party, and in any government. This is the phenomenon of "pathocracy", which I discuss at length in my new book *DisConnected*.

Numerous American mental



**Boris Johnson: A fan of Greek history, how would he have coped as a politician in Athens?**

effect.

In fact, in recent years, many political thinkers have recommended reviving sortition in government. In 2014, Alexander Guerrero, professor of philosophy at Rutgers University, published an influential paper advocating what he called 'lottocracy' as an alternative to representative democracy.

In this system, government is undertaken by 'single-issue legislatures' assemblies that focus on specific issues such as agriculture or healthcare. Members of the legislatures are chosen by lot and make decisions after consulting experts on the relevant topic.

The political scientist Hélène Landemore has advocated a similar model in which assemblies of randomly selected citizens (ranging in size from a 150 to 1,000) make political decisions.

Landemore's model of 'open democracy' also includes referendums and 'crowd-sourced feedback loops' (when large numbers of people discuss policies on internet forums, and the feedback is passed to legislators).

In addition, the political philosopher John Burnheim has used the term 'demarchy' for a political system made of small randomly selected "citizen's juries" who discuss and decide public policies.

Such measures would be a way of reducing the likelihood of people with personality disorders attaining power since they would make leadership positions less attractive to ruthless and amoral people.

Direct democracy means less individual power and more checks and limitations to individual authority. Governments and organisations become less hierarchical, more cooperative than competitive, based on partnership rather than power.

This means less opportunity for disordered people to satisfy their craving for dominance in the political sphere. We would then become free of pathocracy, and all of the chaos and suffering it causes.

**Steve Taylor is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Leeds Beckett University**

health professionals have argued that Donald Trump has a serious personality disorder which made him unfit for the role of president. These experts included the president's niece, Mary Trump – a qualified psychologist.

One of the key concerns was his apparent failure to take responsibility for his actions or mistakes. Under Trump, the US government effectively became a pathocracy.

In the UK, Boris Johnson has shown similar personality traits. The most recent example was his petulant, narcissistic reaction to the House of Commons report that found he had deliberately misled parliament on multiple occasions while in office.

Time and again, Johnson has arguably shown a self-deluded inability to admit to mistakes or take responsibility for his actions – along with traits of dishonesty and glibness – which are characteristic of a "dark triad" personality.

## Ancient democratic practices

The ancient Athenians were very aware of the danger of unsuitable personalities attaining power. Their standard method of selecting political officials was *sortition* – random selection by lot. This was a way of ensuring that ordinary people were represented in

government, and of safeguarding against corruption and bribery.

The Athenians were aware that this meant a risk of handing responsibility to incompetent people but mitigated the risk by ensuring that decisions were made by groups or boards. Different members of the group would take responsibility for different areas and would act as a check on each other's behaviour.

Athenian democracy was direct in other ways too. Political decisions, such as whether to go to war, the election of military leaders or the nomination of magistrates, were made at massive assemblies, where thousands of citizens would gather.

A minimum of 6,000 citizens was required to pass any legislation. Citizens usually voted by showing hands – also sometimes with stones or pieces of broken pottery – and decisions were carried by simple

majority.

The ancient Athenians also practised a system of ostracism, not dissimilar to some egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups (who were also aware of the danger of alpha males dominating the group). Ostracisms took place annually, when disruptive people who threatened democracy were nominated for expulsion.

If a sufficient number of citizens voted in favour, the disruptors would be banished from the city for ten years. In a sense, the decision to deny Johnson a former member's parliamentary pass can be seen as a form of ostracism to protect against his corrupting influence.

## A return to direct democracy

Sortition is still used in modern democracies, most notably in jury service, but these ancient democratic principles could be used much more widely to positive

“

*Ostracisms took place annually, when disruptive people who threatened democracy were nominated for expulsion... the decision to deny Johnson a former member's parliamentary pass can be seen as a form of ostracism to protect against his corrupting influence.*

# The sporting pope: How St John Paul II combined the two loves of his life

FAITH IN SPORT

## Fr Vlad Felzmann

While Pope St Pius X showed that the Church approved sport, it was another 20th century papal saint, John Paul II, who realised the full evangelising potential of sport on which his successors have built.

Karol Józef Wojtyła was born on 18th May 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. His parents were Karol Wojtyła, a military officer, and Emilia Kaczorowska, who was a seamstress. He was the youngest of three children.

He was nine years old when his mother died in 1929. His father supported him so that he could study. His brother was a doctor who died when Wojtyła was 12. He lost everyone in his family – a sister, brother, mother, and father – before he became a priest.

He played a lot of sport and is quite well-known for his love of football, where he played goalkeeper.

Wojtyła and his friends would also play ice hockey when the Skawa river froze over during the winter. Besides playing with his friends, Wojtyła also enjoyed kicking the ball around with his father. A friend remembers entering the Wojtylas' apartment and finding father and son playing soccer with a ball made of rags.

His sporting prowess earned him two nicknames. While some called him the 'skiing pope', his time in goal left him with the nickname 'Lolek the Goalie'. Karol Wojtyła played in pick-up matches that pitted Jewish boys against Catholic boys, and Wojtyła would volunteer to play with the Jewish boys to create even numbers.

During his pontificate - from 1978 to 2005 - he published 34 pastoral statements on sport.

He often drew comparisons between sport and faith. Here are some of his favourites.

Virtues, realising the Gospel Values acquired through sport, are transferable to everyday life.

"Playing sport has become very important today, since it can encourage young people to develop important values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, sharing and solidarity," he said.

Sport can help create peace. "Sport is a factor of emancipation for poor countries and helps to eradicate intolerance and build a more brotherly and united world."

Sport enhances diversity and inclusion. "Sport...protects the weak and excludes no-one...frees

The skiing pope: in black, adjusting gloves



young people from the snares of apathy and indifference and arouses a healthy sense of competition in them."

"Sports, in fact, can make an effective contribution to peaceful understanding between peoples and to establishing the new civilization of love."

Sport helps us realise life to the full (Jn.10:10) "Sports contribute to the love of life, teaches sacrifice, respect and responsibility, leading to the full development of every human person."

Sport generates lives that reveal the presence of The Kingdom of God. "Every Christian is called to become a strong athlete of Christ, that is, a faithful and courageous witness to his Gospel. But to succeed in this, he must persevere in prayer, be trained in virtue and follow the divine Master in everything."

Sport develops the whole of our PIES – the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual constituent parts of our lives. "Sport trains body and spirit for perseverance, effort, courage, balance, sacrifice, honesty, friendship and collaboration."

Sport is a gift from God. "Give thanks to God for the gift of sport, in which the human person exercises his body, intellect and will, recognising these abilities as so many gifts of his Creator."

JP2 prayed: "Lord Jesus Christ, help these athletes to be your friends and witnesses to your love. Help them to put the same effort into personal asceticism that they do into sports; help them to achieve a harmonious and cohesive unity of body and soul."

"May they be sound models to

imitate for all who admire them. Help them always to be athletes of the spirit, to win your inestimable prize; an imperishable crown that lasts forever.

At its finest, sport is a great virtues gymnasium. "The correct practice of sport must be accompanied by practicing the virtues of temperance and sacrifice; frequently it also requires a good team spirit, respectful attitudes, the appreciation of the qualities of others, honesty in the game and humility to recognize one's own limitations. In short, sports, especially in less competitive forms, foster festive celebration and friendly co-existence with the Christian outlook, becomes a "generative principle" of profound human relations and encourages the building of a more serene and supportive world."

Sport can help us be more objective in the way we see the world. "In the midst of all this entertainment, you referees have a fundamental role to play. Your capacity to judge in a quick, accurate and impartial manner will contribute greatly to ensuring that the rules of the game are respected and that good sportsmanship is maintained."

"I hope, above all, that you approach this competition with that disciplined and focused attitude which helps to form every person and which can teach order, loyalty and respect for people and laws as well as being a training ground for building strength and dignified behaviour."

Sport is a means, not an end, on our journey through time to eternity. "It is important that you know how to witness to the

masses who follow your sporting abilities. As athletes, before being fit and skilled in responding quickly on the pitch, be men who seek after and conform to all that is good, true and excellent. Make sure that man is never sacrificed to sport!"

JP2 reminded us that sporting prowess does not negate our need for God's grace. "When facing fundamental questions about existence, even the greatest sporting champions find themselves defenceless and in need of God's light in order to overcome the difficult challenges that human beings are called to face."

Competitions, originating from the Latin word "competere," which means "to strive together," are 'ubuntu', helping all participants to develop their potential. "Athletic competition develops some of the noblest qualities and talents in people. They must learn the secret of their own bodies, their strengths and weaknesses, their struggles and breaking points. They must develop the capacity to concentrate and the habit of self-discipline through long hours of exercise and fatigue as they learn to take account of their own strength. They must also learn how to preserve energy for the final moment when victory will depend upon a burst of speed or a last push of strength."

Sport can help us develop our image and likeness to God. (Gen. 1: 26-7). "The Church cannot but encourage everything that serves in harmoniously developing the human body. It is rightly considered the masterpiece of the whole of creation, not only

because of its proportion, strength, and beauty, but also and especially because God has made it His dwelling place and the instrument of an immortal soul, breathing into it that "breath of life" by which man is made in His image and likeness."

Sporting enthusiasm needs to be rationally controlled. "The dignity of sport is increased when it is inspired by healthy principles and is void of excessive risky behaviour by athletes and the disturbing attitudes by some fans who get carried away during competition."

"Sport is an activity that involves more than the movement of the body; it demands the use of intelligence and the disciplining of the will. It reveals, in other words, the wonderful structure of the human person created by God as a spiritual being, a unity of body and spirit. If sport is reduced to the cult of the human body, forgetting the primacy of the spirit, or if it were to hinder your moral and intellectual development, or result in you serving less than noble aims, then it would lose its true significance and, in the long run, it would become even harmful to your healthy full growth as human persons.

"You are true athletes when you prepare yourselves not only by training your bodies but also by constantly engaging the spiritual dimensions of your person for a harmonious development of all your talents."

In 1979, Pope John Paul II addressed the Milan soccer team after they won the Italian Championship. He encouraged them to set a good example both on the field and off, saying,

"In a world in which we sometimes behold the painful presence of young people who are weary, marked by sadness and negative experiences, be for them wise friends, expert guides and trainers not only on sports fields but also on the ways that lead to the goals of the true values of life. In this way to the satisfactions of competitive sport you will add merits of a spiritual nature, offering society a valuable contribution of moral health."

He then concluded his talk by saying: "May the Lord Jesus grant you that 'goal,' that is, that final target, which is the true and ultimate destiny of life."

As we have experienced – and read about in my previous piece – Pope Francis has built on the foundations laid by Pope St John Paul 2. I hope his successor continues that great work.

# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days

Spirit of Britain living history group stand by a Spitfire during the annual Duxford Summer Air Show at IWM Duxford in Cambridgeshire. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first air show at Duxford.



A sculpture called Anything To Say, which features life-sized bronze figures of whistleblowers (left-right) Edward Snowden, Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, each standing on their own individual chair, is unveiled at Parliament Square, London, during a protest to step up demands for the release from prison of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Gardeners Toby and Charlotte in the wildflower meadow at King's College in Cambridge. Establishing the meadow has made a considerable impact to the wildlife value of the land, increasing biodiversity while reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its upkeep.



A group of babies attend a protest in Parliament Square, London, calling for a national strategy to reduce nappy waste in line with other single-use plastic targets.

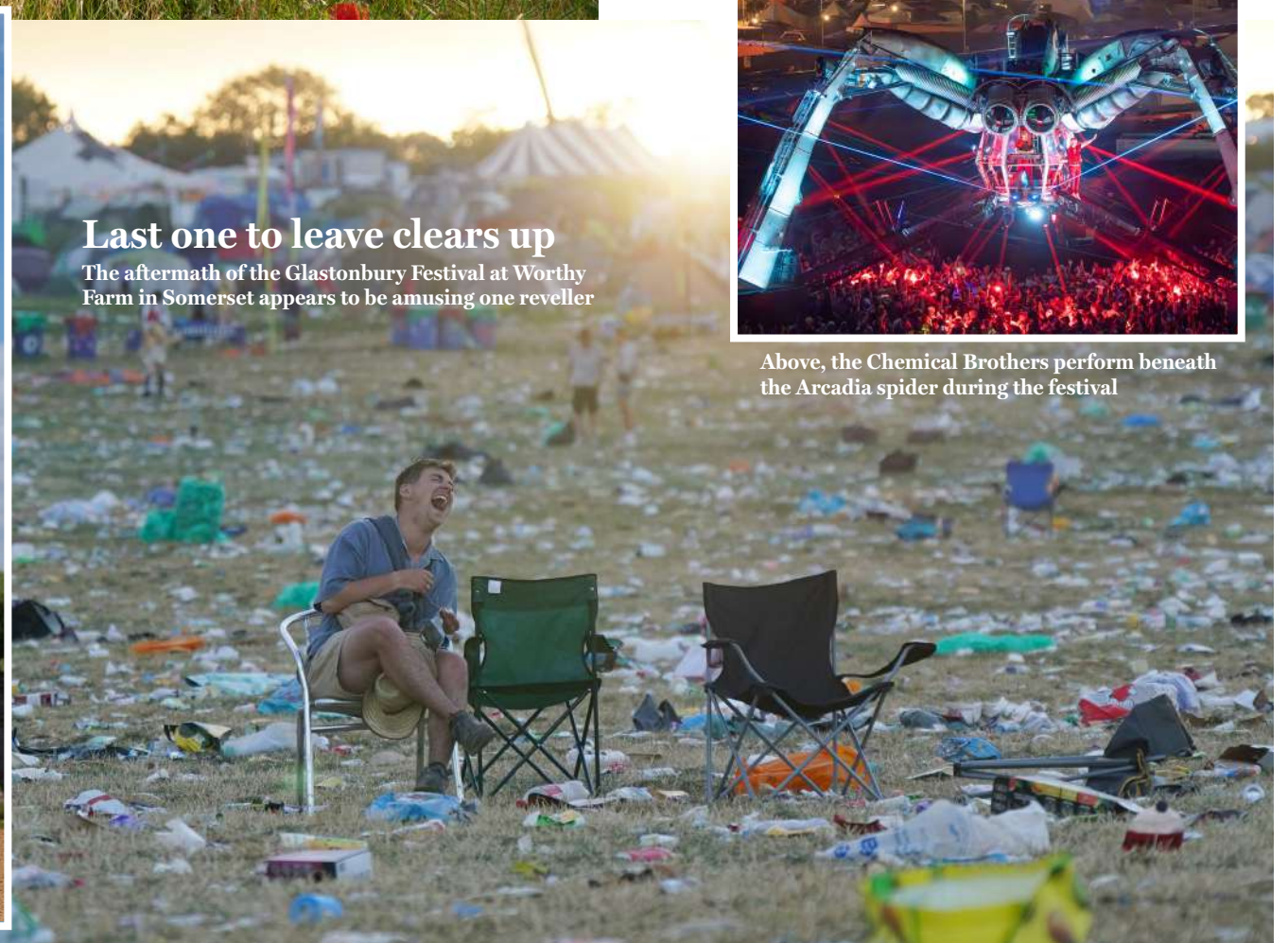


Cambridge University PhD student James Cozens juggles seven balls while unicycling around King's College. The engineering student has equalled a Guinness World Record for 'The most objects juggled while riding a unicycle', at seven balls for 16.77 seconds



## Last one to leave clears up

The aftermath of the Glastonbury Festival at Worthy Farm in Somerset appears to be amusing one reveller



Above, the Chemical Brothers perform beneath the Arcadia spider during the festival

## LITURGICAL CALENDARS

### Ordinary Form

#### Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

**Sunday, July 2:** 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2 Kgs. 4:8-11, 13-16; Ps. 89: 2-3, 16-19 r.2; Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11; Mt. 10:37-42

Ps.34:7-8,10-13; Mt.8:28-34

**Thursday, July 6:** St Maria Goretti, Virgin, Martyr Gen. 22:1-19; Ps. 116:1-6,8-9; Mt.9:1-8

**Monday, July 3:** St Thomas, Apostle Eph.2:19-22; Ps. 117:1-2; Jn.20:24-29

**Friday, July 7:** Gen.23:1-4,19,24:1-8,62-67; Ps. 106:1-5; Mt.9:9-13

**Tuesday, July 4:** St Elizabeth of Portugal Gen.19:15-29; Ps. 26:2-3,9-12; Mt.8:23-27

**Saturday, July 8:** Gen.27:1-5,15-29; Ps.135:1-6; Mt.9:14-17

**Wednesday, July 5:** St Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Priest Gen.21:5,8-20;

### Extraordinary Form

According to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

**Sunday, July 2:** Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 1 Pet.3:8-15; Mt.5:20-24

**Thursday, July 6:** Feria Readings of Sunday repeated

**Monday, July 3:** St. Irenaeus, Bishop and Martyr 2 Tim.3:14-17; 4:1-5; Mt.10:28-32

**Friday, July 7:** Ss Cyril and Methodius, Bishops and Confessors Heb. 7: 23-27; Lk.10:1-9

**Tuesday, July 4:** Feria Readings of Sunday repeated

**Saturday, July 8:** St. Elizabeth of Portugal, Queen and Widow Prov.31:10-31; Mt.13:44-52

**Wednesday, July 5:** St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Confessor 1 Tim. 4: 8-16; Mk.10:15-21

## Our Lady of Fidelity



The Church needs religious sisters **URGENTLY** to bring Christ to others by a life of prayer and service lived in the community of Ignatian spirituality. Daily Mass is the centre of community life. By wearing the religious habit we are witnesses of the consecrated way of life.

If you are willing to risk a little love and would like to find out how, contact Sister Bernadette.

*Mature vocations considered.*

### Convent of Our Lady of Fidelity

1 Our Lady's Close, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3FA  
Telephone 07760 297001

## PRAYERS/THANKSGIVING

'Grateful thanks to St Jude for favours granted'  
MCLBEW



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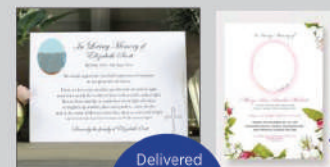
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