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-pg 8

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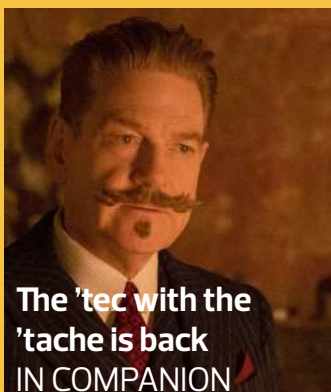


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Catholic peer slams latest North Korean human rights abuses

**2,000 escapees in
China to face torture
and 're-education' if
forced to return home**

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic peer Lord David Alton has denounced the “systematic, egregious, human rights violations” in Kim Jong Un’s North Korea, and declared that the regime is “frightened of escapees.”

His words come as 2,000 refugees who have escaped from North Korea, now face imminent repatriation from China to face imprisonment, torture and execution.

They also come as North Korea has looked to rekindle an alliance with Russia, after the high-profile meeting between its leader, Kim Jong Un, and President Putin, amid concern that a new ‘triple alliance’

could be forged between the three dictatorial states.

Lord Alton said: “China and North Korea fear that escapees will use their freedom to tell the world their stories, revealing the truth about life in Communist dictatorships. That is far more dangerous to the survival of the dictators than arsenals of weapons,” he said.

He also explained the potential ‘shocking’ consequences of repatriating the 2,000 escapees.

“If the escapees are forcibly repatriated, China is well aware that the refugees will face interrogation, imprisonment, ‘re-education’, torture and even execution in North Korea” he said.

“It is particularly shocking that, as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, China would contemplate breaking the Refugee Convention and sign the death warrant of refugees. Even

more so as the Republic of Korea and other democracies are willing to give the escapees safe passage and sanctuary.”

Lord Alton recently met three escapees from Kim Jong-Un’s regime. One told a shocking story of systematic, egregious, human rights violations committed by the Kim regime, the peer said.

“A new generation is determined that the world knows the truth about North Korea’s tyranny. That is why the regime is so frightened of escapees,” he said.

“They simply want to have the same freedoms and the same rights that we enjoy.”

Lord Alton met Sungju Lee, an escapee from North Korea, who was forced to watch a public execution at the age of 11 and found himself on the streets, fending for himself, as a teenager. He also faced starvation as North Korea experienced famine.

Meanwhile, at the age of 17, another escapee, Eunhee Park was held in a police cell for wearing clothes which were not approved by the Kim regime. Eunhee had her hair and clothes cut, and was forced to write pages of apology to the regime.

Lord Alton said that the North Korean regime was investigated by a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations. “It found that the DPRK’s atrocities were ‘without parallel’; that the regime commits ‘crimes against humanity’”, he said.

“It called for the International Criminal Court to put those responsible on trial and that if China and Russia block such a move (using their Security Council veto), that an *ad hoc* Tribunal should be created to do so.”

Continued on page 2



CAFOD joined other faith groups this week in reminding fossil fuel giants Shell and BP of their responsibilities to the planet. See pg 3

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UK Catholics to lead Synod talks on 'who' the Church is really for

Two years after Pope Francis gave all Catholics the opportunity to make their views known on the mission of the Church in the 21st Century, the first of two Synod meetings will take place in Rome from the 4th October on the theme *'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission'*.

The Synod of Bishops will, for the first time, include non-bishop voting members, comprising of a number of laymen and laywomen.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales will be well represented. Archbishop John Wilson, the Archbishop of Southwark, and Bishop Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds, were elected by their brother bishops to attend. Joining them will be Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of Westminster, who was chosen by Pope Francis, and Professor Anna Rowlands and Austen Ivereigh, who were chosen by the Vatican as expert facilitators.

Fr Timothy Radcliffe, the Domin-



Fr Jan Nowotnik will attend the Synod as a voting member

ican preacher, will lead a retreat for all Synod members prior to the official opening on Wednesday, 4th October.

Fr Jan Nowotnik, who will attend as a voting member and whose doctoral thesis focused, in part, on the preparation for a Synodal Church, will join theologian Professor Anna



Professor Anna Rowlands has stressed that the Synod will be about 'who' in the Church, not 'what'... 'this is not about doctrine'

Rowlands in Rome. Both will have a key role in proceedings.

Professor Rowlands stresses that the Synod will be concerned with the 'who' of the Church rather than the 'what' of the Church.

"It's not sorting out doctrinal issues, that's not what this will do. There's a fear of that in some quarters, that this is a Synod that's going to make big doctrinal changes – some fear that, some desperately hope for it. I think both groups will be quite disappointed if they're looking for big doctrinal change because the Pope's focus is on the 'who' of the Church, on the question of the way in which our life itself is focused on mission to the world," she said.

"It's that question of participation, the 'who' question again. Who belongs? How do they belong? Who participates? How do they participate? How is all of that being held by the inspiration of the Spirit who pours out on the Church the gifts,

skills and talents? This is how the Church is different from any other institution."

Dr Rowland reiterated that the Synod is about renewal. "So [the focus is on being] renewed for mission to the world," she said.

"What could be more important for the world to hear right now in the fractured, brittle, divisive times that we live in, the friend/enemy constant distinction? Who are you for? Who are you with? We are for Jesus Christ together as brothers and sisters."

Fr Jan Nowotnik said: "I'm often saying to people that I think what the Synod is, in Pope Francis' mind, is about drawing all the members of the Church - and those beyond the Church - into a deeper relationship with God and a deeper relationship with each other."

"The Church exists to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, and to bring his healing mercy to the Church."

Catholic peer slams latest North Korean human rights abuses

Continued from page 1

Speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Alton asked the Foreign Office "what assessment they have made of reports that China has engaged in the refolement of North Korean refugees; and what representations they have made to the government of China about the repatriation of North Korean refugees."

In response, Lord Ahmad said: "We emphasise directly to the Chinese authorities that they should not be detaining North Korean refugees with the intention of returning them to North Korea."

"At the 17 August UN Security Council meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK, the



Lord Alton with three North Korean 'escapees' who have warned what will happen to their fellow citizens if they are returned to China. Pictured are Eunhee Park, Eunji Yoo and Sungju Lee

UK called on all states to abide by the principle of non-refoulement."

Beijing is being urged to honour its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and to allow the

escapees to travel to a safe country. Lord Alton believes that the Chinese and North Korean regimes 'fear' the escapees.

A fine bromance: see pg 10

Sunak told to put UK's house in order and commit to tackling climate change

Andy Drozdziak

The Government has come under fierce pressure to alter course on climate change, after CAFOD attacked its continued use of fossil fuels and 'dubious investments' through the British International Investment's (BII), while Rishi Sunak's plans to water down existing climate change commitments were also slammed.

CAFOD was responding to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's "hands-off" approach to overseeing activity by the BII, which has more than 10 per cent of its portfolio invested in fossil fuels. BII also remains invested in Chinese businesses, despite Beijing being deemed as an "epoch-defining challenge" in the integrated review of foreign and defence policy.

Graham Gordon, Head of Policy at CAFOD, said: "The UK Government promised to stop funding fossil fuels, yet it continues to do so via dubious investments made by British International Investment (BII).

"BII should not receive any further aid money from the UK Government until it sorts out its serious failings, and should immediately pull out of fossil fuel investments.



"This month's devastating floods in Libya (pictured) are further evidence of why we need to end our dependence on fossil fuels," says Graham Gordon, CAFOD

Without stricter oversight of where BII's investments are going, the UK is losing all credibility in claiming to tackle climate change and poverty."

"In 2021, carbon-related assets through direct and indirect investments represented up to 20 per cent of the value of BII's portfolio. This month's devastating floods in Libya, Greece and Brazil are further evi-

dence of why we need to end our dependence on fossil fuels."

Also noting alleged instances of fraud and investments that have rewarded intermediary agents in tax havens, the cross-party panel urged BII to exert greater control over intermediary funds and stop subcontracting "its legal, ethical and development responsibilities".

This criticism comes as Prime Minister Rishi Sunak looked to water down climate change policies, saying they had to be "proportionate". Changes proposed include extending sales of new petrol and diesel cars beyond 2030, when they were due to stop.

Former COP 26 president and Tory MP Alok Sharma said busi-

nesses want "clarity and certainty on long-term policies because that's the basis on which they make investments and create jobs".

He added that pulling back from green commitments would put the planet "on life support" and harm Britain's global reputation.

In response to the reports of a backtrack, Neil Thorns, director of advocacy at CAFOD, said: "The Prime Minister cannot be serious? Not showing up at the UN summit, and now backtracking further? He is leaving the UK reputation in tatters and seems oblivious to the impact of the climate crisis.

"Claims to have 'over delivered' are laughable. The impact on people we work with is real. In East Africa we've seen the worst drought in over 40 years. Families in Pakistan have had their lives swept away by flooding. 3.3bn people are living in areas which are highly vulnerable to climate change.

"The UK should be demonstrating leadership on the world stage. Countries who caused this mess need to take responsibility.

"It is clear the PM is failing to deliver."

Salford vows to end all ties with BP, Shell

Andy Drozdziak

The diocese of Salford and CAFOD have condemned fossil fuel companies BP PLC and Shell PLC as "architects of the climate emergency".

Salford diocese announced its decision to divest from BP PLC and Shell PLC, saying "we must take a stand against companies that do not align with our principles and that put their profits ahead of the common good.

"We will divest from both companies by the end of 2023.

"Our investments are guided by the principle of stewardship, putting our care for people and our common home at the centre of all that we do."

Shell and BP were among 12 oil firms to be accused of greenwashing over the amount of renewable and low-carbon energy they produce.

Recent research commissioned by Greenpeace, revealed in August, analysed the annual reports of the British fossil fuel giants for 2022.

The report compared the amount of renewable electricity generated by the companies with the amount of energy they provide through own oil and gas production.

Shell and BP generated just 0.02 and 0.17 per cent of energy from renewable sources in 2022, and their investment in green energy was a fraction of that in fossil fuels.

For BP, 97 per cent of its investment went towards fossil fuels while the company reduced investments in renewable products compared to 2021, while 91 per cent of Shell's investment went towards fossil fuels, it said.

Bishop John Arnold said: "In recent weeks it has become clear that both BP and Shell are no longer ambitious enough in their decarbonisation pathways and transition plans. We would be failing in our duty to our common home and our brothers and sisters, if we decided not to act."

Meanwhile, as seen on our front page, CAFOD joined faith campaigners in unveiling mock 'blue plaques' outside the offices of Shell and BP in London, pronouncing the fossil fuel companies architects of the climate emergency'.

The stunt took place ahead of a UN 'Climate Ambition Summit' being convened by Secretary General António Guterres on Wednesday, 20th September,

Liam Finn, campaigns manager at CAFOD, said: "This is a reminder to Shell and BP of how they will be viewed by history.

"Fossil fuel companies have known for decades that burning fossil fuels is burning the earth, yet are continuing to profit from the destruction of our climate."

JIM CAVIEZEL

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In Brief

'Controversial' pensions tweak considered

Ministers may "tweak" the calculation of the state pension increase in order to reduce the cost to the taxpayer next year. Pensioners are due an 8.5 per cent rise in 2024, but ministers are considering whether to take out the public sector bonuses on the earnings figure, which could mean an increase of around 7.8 per cent instead.

It would be controversial as the Conservatives pledged in their last election manifesto to abide by the formula.

Wallace warns of rights 'lunacy'

Human rights laws are jeopardising national security and allowing terrorists to go 'uncaptured', Ben Wallace, the former defence secretary, has said.

He claimed that international treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights meant ministers were "unable to render people across borders or arrest people in countries whose police forces are unacceptable", means that the UK is "more often than not forced into taking lethal action with drones, risking killing innocent people, rather than raiding and detaining".

Poll finds sadness among girls

A "devastating" poll has found that happiness among girls and young women has hit its lowest level since 2009. Nine out of 10 seven to 21-year-olds are worried or anxious and only 17 per cent now feel very happy, compared with 40 per cent in 2009. "If I am honest", one girl told the researchers from Giurl Guides, "I am scared our world will fall into ruins and we won't be able to do anything about it".

School survey reveals worrying increase in child poverty levels

Andy Drozdziak

A Catholic headteacher has said that poverty levels had "increased significantly" and she has "never seen it as bad as it is at the moment."

Mairead Waugh, headteacher at St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School in Hatfield, said: "It's widespread. I've been a head for 25 years. I've never seen it as bad as it is at the moment and the numbers are just increasing week-on-week."

Ms Waugh's words come as a new survey revealed that more than three-quarters of school staff are having to deal with struggling students' dinner money debt and sourcing food bank vouchers amid increasing levels of child poverty.

The majority (89%) of people who took part in Education Anti-Poverty Coalition's research said they believed child poverty in their

school has increased in the past two academic years.

Ms Waugh said that at St Philip Howard, poverty is "hitting so many more families that in the past wouldn't have been necessarily affected by it".

The school does second-hand uniform sales and, in June 2021, won the Diocese of Westminster Primary School Social Outreach Award for setting up a foodbank in the school's entrance.

"In our school it's not just those that are on free school meals, for example, but because that threshold is so low, it's the next group of families that are just above it, that are also affected," Ms Waugh said.

The coalition said its survey of 1,023 people working in or with schools in England was a "first-of-its-kind" study into the experiences

of people working in education.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) said the report's findings show that school staff "want to focus on children's development but get side-tracked by dinner money debt", including having to check payments, contact parents and signpost to advice services.

When asked which policies would have the biggest effect on reducing child poverty in their school, 80 per cent of school staff said providing universal free school meals to all school children.

Free school meals were rolled out to all primary-aged pupils in state-funded schools in London for the 2023/24 academic year, in a move announced by Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan.

But elsewhere in England, only some children qualify for free school

meals, including those whose parents are on Universal Credit with a household income of less than £7,400 a year.

The CPAG's head of education policy, Kate Anstey, said: "As urgent first steps, ministers must widen eligibility for free school meals, boost help with school-related costs and increase child benefit."

"That's the minimum needed to give staff their time back and prevent millions of children from falling even further behind."

A Government spokesperson said it had extended eligibility for free school meals "several times to more groups of children than any other government over the past half a century", including introducing new eligibility criteria for families receiving Universal Credit.

Southwark takes a stand against racism

The Archdiocese of Southwark is taking a stand against racial discrimination by holding a day seminar.

The seminar is designed to advance its commitment to promote racial and cultural inclusion across the archdiocese.

Welcoming the seminar, Archbishop of Southwark John Wilson said: "Discrimination tragically continues to cast an ugly shadow, not just overseas but also on our own doorstep. There is no place for racism in our world, our society or our Church because the fundamental, God-given dignity of every person is non-negotiable."

The Seminar, entitled "Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion in Our Parishes, Schools and Communities", will be held at Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral, Southwark, from 9.30am to 4.00pm on Saturday, 28th October 2023.

The chair of the seminar will be Canon Victor Darlington, Episcopal Vicar for Southeast London, who co-ordinates the Archdiocese's Commission for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion. He said: "Pope Francis has emphasised that racism is a grievous sin and that opposing it is a duty of every Christian."

The Archdiocese's Commission for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion is working with energy and commitment to ensure that we

are an actively anti-racist and welcoming diocese."

On the day, there will be a range of speakers including the John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark; Fr Richard Nesbitt, parish priest, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, White City; Susan Elderfield, Lead for Youth Ministry, St Mary's University, Twickenham; Nana Churcher, author of *The Power of Your Words*; and Andrea Fernandes, co-chair of the Racial and Cultural Inclusion

Group, St Margaret of Scotland Parish, Carshalton.

Archbishop John said: "The racial and cultural diversity of people in our archdiocese is an immense and beautiful blessing. It is by the power of God that we are one in Christ in all our beautiful diversity. This seminar is an opportunity to celebrate our diversity and to explore ways of embedding racial and cultural inclusion in every part of our Archdiocese."



Archbishop John Wilson and Canon Victor Darlington with young people from Southwark

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Dame Rachel holds a copy of the Universe Catholic Weekly



‘Role of family will always be key in society’ – Dame Rachel

The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza DBE, has said that “we need to be more vocal about the importance of families”.

Dame Rachel made her comments while addressing the Catholic Union's annual Craigmyle Lecture, which was sponsored by the *Universe Catholic Weekly*. She told the audience that “I have come to believe there is one institution more powerful, more important, more transformational for children than a school – and that is the family.”

Speaking at the University of Notre Dame London campus, she said that “strong families are the fabric of any healthy society...” but that “the Government tends to see families for the collection of challenges they face, rather than the innate power they hold.”

Dame Rachel, who is a practising Catholic, spoke about the importance of her faith. “St Ignatius' reform spirit deeply influenced me and inspires me still in all my work,” she said.

Dame Rachel took up the role of Children's Commissioner in March 2021, as the country was emerging from the last of the strictest lockdowns in England. She said that the “magnitude and acuity” of the lockdowns is only being truly understood now.

Last year, Dame Rachel launched the Family Review which surveyed children across England about their views on family. 78 per cent of re-

spondents said they would turn to family first with a problem.

Dame Rachel used the Catholic Union's annual flagship lecture to announce The Big Ambition, which will be another major survey of young people in England.

“Children have told me that they do not believe that it is solely the role of the state to provide for them. The Church has an important role in shaping the world we want to live in,” she said.

Dame Rachel also praised the work of the Catholic Union. “The Catholic Union has played a key role in defending the common good and helping to shape the national conversation,” she said.

Catholic Union Director Nigel Parker said: “We are delighted that Dame Rachel was able to join us and give such a fascinating talk.

“Over the years, the Craigmyle Lecture has given a platform to many prominent public figures to talk about many different subjects, but few matters are more important than how we create a society where children can flourish.

It was good to hear Dame Rachel place such a strong emphasis on family life as part of her talk, this is something the Catholic Union has championed for many years.

“Please do consider supporting the work of the Catholic Union today so that we can continue to put on events like this free of charge and open to all.”

www.catholicunion.org.uk

1,000 names demand action to lift school admissions cap

Over 1,000 people have signed the Catholic Union's open letter to the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, calling on her to lift the cap on faith-based admissions to new free schools.

The letter was delivered to Ms Keegan at the Department for Education by Catholic Union President, Sir Edward Leigh MP, and Deputy Director, James Somerville-Meikle.

The Catholic Union launched the ‘Scrap the cap’ campaign in the summer. The current policy has made it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open in England as it would lead to pupils being turned away on the basis of their Catholic faith.

The campaign received the backing of former Labour and Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, and Bishop Marcus Stock, Chairman of the Catholic Education Service.

Bishop Marcus shared his views exclusively with the *Universe* in August. He said: “The cap has made it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open as the policy is incompatible with Church law.”

“The Catholic Education Service, the Catholic Union, and all those who benefit from the diversity provided by our Catholic school sector, regard it as vital that the admissions cap is lifted.”

The 1,000 names on the letter include several Catholic bishops, parliamentarians, and teachers and lay



Sir Edward presents the Catholic Union's letter to Education Secretary Gillian Keegan

Catholics from across the country.

Catholic Union President, Sir Edward Leigh MP, said: “The 50 per cent cap is a source of huge frustration to Catholics. There has never been any justification for the policy or any evidence to support keeping it in place. I was pleased to present this letter to the Secretary of State to demonstrate the strength of feeling in the Catholic community about this policy.

“With a General Election not far off, we may never get a better opportunity to finally lift the cap. 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.”

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 2017 Conservative Party Manifesto committed to reverse the policy, but this was never achieved.

Catholic Union Director Nigel Parker thanked everyone who has signed the letter. He added: “There is still more work to do, and I encourage everyone who supported us to join the Catholic Union, or make a donation so we can build on this campaign.

“We will continue to do everything we can to get this policy changed before the next General Election.”

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COMMENT

New alliance
in the East
spells trouble
for the world

As our contributor Robert Dover so eloquently outlines on page 10, any meeting between Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un would usually be vaguely comical, but this sinister alliance is far from a laughing matter at a time of such global instability.

The paranoid North Korean leader, not seen outside his benighted country for four years, travelled to Russia on board an armoured train like some latter-day Strelnikov in *Dr Zhivago*. He was heading to see his counterpart in Russia's far east for talks on unspecified topics but which were expected to focus on supplying the Kremlin with much-needed ammunition for its war in Ukraine.

If Putin is having to go cap-in-hand to one of the world's most isolated dictatorships to replenish his weaponry, then the 19-month invasion really has taken its toll. Something the Russian leadership thought would take a few days has turned into a seemingly endless war of attrition that has sapped the strength of a country that considered itself a superpower.

To counter Nato's supplies to Kyiv, the Russian military has already been buying up weapons from countries such as Iran, especially drones, but is said to be running out of shells with which to bombard Ukrainian targets, many of them civilian.

North Korea is believed to have a massive stockpile of compatible artillery ammunition built up over 60 years to thwart South Korea's non-existent plans to invade. Since Pyongyang is already a pariah state subject to sanctions and unable to feed its own people, there is little the West can do to inflict further economic punishment for aiding the Russian war effort.

But we need to be wary of whatever it is Kim is demanding as a *quid pro quo* for aid, such as access to Russian ballistic missile expertise to back up North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

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Why are those lost to COVID not formally memorialised? How politics shapes what we remember

POLITICS

Mark Honigsbaum

Every Friday, volunteers gather on the Albert Embankment at the River Thames in London to lovingly retouch thousands of red hearts inscribed on a Portland stone wall directly opposite the Houses of Parliament. Each heart is dedicated to a British victim of Covid-19. It is a deeply social space – a place where the bereaved come together to honour their dead and share memories.

The so-called National Covid Memorial Wall is not, however, officially sanctioned. In fact, ever since activists from Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice (CBFFJ) daubed the first hearts on the wall in March 2021 it has been a thorn in the side of the authorities.

Featured in the media whenever there is a new revelation about 'Partygate', the wall is a symbol of the Government's blundering response to the pandemic and an implicit rebuke to former Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other Government staff who breached coronavirus restrictions.

As one writer put it, viewed from parliament the hearts resemble "a reproachful smear of blood". Little wonder that the only time Johnson visited the wall was under the cover of darkness to avoid the TV cameras. His successor Rishi Sunak has been similarly reluctant to acknowledge the wall or say what might take its place as a more formal memorial to those lost in the pandemic.

Though in April the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration presented Sunak with a report on how the pandemic should be remembered, Sunak has yet to reveal its recommendations.

Lady Heather Hallett, the former high court judge who chairs the public inquiry into Covid, has attempted to acknowledge the trauma of the bereaved by commissioning a tapestry to capture the experiences of people who "suffered hardship and loss" during the pandemic. Yet such initiatives are no substitute for state-sponsored memorials.

This political vacuum is odd when you consider that the United Kingdom, like other countries, engages in many other commemorative activities central



to national identity. The fallen of the First World War and other military conflicts are commemorated in a Remembrance Sunday ceremony held every November at the Cenotaph in London, for example.

But while wars lend themselves to compelling moral narratives, it is difficult to locate meaning in the random mutations of a virus. And while wars draw on a familiar repertoire of symbols and rituals, pandemics have few templates.

For instance, despite killing more than 50 million globally, there are virtually no memorials to the 1918-1919 'Spanish' influenza pandemic. Nor does the UK have a memorial to victims of HIV/AIDS. As the memory studies scholar Astrid Erll puts it, pandemics have not been sufficiently 'mediated' in collective memory.

As a rule, they do not feature in famous paintings, novels or films or in the oral histories passed down as part of family lore. Nor are they able to draw on familiar cultural materials such as poppies, gun carriages, catafalques and royal salutes. Without such symbols and schemata, Erll argues, we struggle to incorporate pandemics into our collective remembering systems.

This lacuna was brought home to me last September when tens of thousands of Britons flocked to the south bank of the Thames to pay their respects to Britain's longest serving monarch. By coincidence,

the police directed the queue for the late Queen's lying-in-state in Westminster Hall over Lambeth Bridge and along Albert Embankment. But few of the people I spoke to in the queue seemed to realise what the hearts signified. It was as if the spectacle of a royal death had eclipsed the suffering of the Covid bereaved, rendering the wall all but invisible.

Waiting for answers

Another place where the pandemic could be embedded in collective memory is at the public inquiry. Opening the preliminary hearing last October into the UK's resilience and preparedness for a pandemic, Lady Hallett promised to put the estimated 6.8 million Britons mourning the death of a family member or friend to Covid at the heart of the legal process. "I am listening to them; their loss will be recognised," she said.

But though Lady Hallett has strategically placed photographs of the hearts throughout the inquiry's offices in Bayswater and has invited the bereaved to relate their experiences to 'Every Story Matters', the hearing room is dominated by ranks of lawyers. And except when a prominent minister or official is called to testify, the proceedings rarely make the news.

This is partly the fault of the inquiry process itself. The hearings are due to last until 2025, with the report on the first stage of the

process not expected until the summer of 2024. As Lucy Easthope, an emergency planner and veteran of several disasters, puts it: "One of the most painful frustrations of the inquiry will be temporal. It will simply take too long."

The inquiry has also been beset by bureaucratic obfuscation, not least by the Cabinet Office which attempted (unsuccessfully in the end) to block the release of WhatsApp messages relating to discussions between ministers and Downing Street officials in the run-up to lockdown.

To the inquiry's critics, the obvious parallel is with the Grenfell inquiry, which promised to learn lessons from the devastating fire that engulfed the west London tower in 2017 but has so far ended up blurring the lines of corporate responsibility and forestalling a political reckoning.

The real work of holding the government to account and making memories takes place every Friday at the wall and the other places where people come together to spontaneously mourn and remember absent loved ones. These are the lives that demand to be "seen".

They are the ghosts that haunt our amnesic political culture.

Mark Honigsbaum is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism, City, University of London

Stop UK Government funding China's genocidal regime

The Chinese Government is imposing forced abortion, sterilisation and infanticide on the Uyghur population.

As the cost of living rises, the UK Government is giving millions in aid to China's brutal regime.

- **Over £60 million** was sent to China between 2020-2021 (according to the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact).

China is the world's second largest economy and its treatment of women and babies is shocking.

£60 million of UK taxpayers' money should be put to better use.

Send a message to the Prime Minister today – sign this petition and help us build a world where abortion is unthinkable.

End the UK Government's complicity with coerced abortion in China



SIGN THIS PETITION TODAY

Either scan the QR code or access the petition at:
www.spuc.org.uk/complicit-petition



COMMENT

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Thoughts, words and deeds

Sir John Battle



The recent reports of increased shoplifting, and accompanying violent reactions when challenged, are now resulting in store staff being afraid to work.

The British Retail Consortium reports that retail theft has doubled since 2016, recording some eight million incidents a year in the UK. Leeds is fourth on the list of towns and cities suffering shop theft. Nor is it a problem only in the major stores in the city centre: neighbourhood corner shops are also under attack.

Worryingly, arrests and prosecutions are well down, from 80,000 in 2021 to 21,000 last year. There have been suggestions that this is inevitable given the recent rise in the cost of living, especially in everyday foodstuffs and clothing. Notably in Tower Hamlets, one of the poorest boroughs in Britain, it was not alcohol or sweets that is the most stolen item, but Calpol.

Poverty is no excuse for robbing local shopkeepers of their income – although the pressures on family budgets, as we witness in the work of the SVP and foodbanks, are making temptation inevitable for far too many.

Moreover, the switch to self-checkout systems have made it easier to slip out, especially if there is no automatic door screening and a large queue in the self checking area. Relying on swipe technology and a lack of staff presence leaves shops wide open to theft. Coupled with increasing levels of impatience with waiting, it is easy to see levels of temptation rise.

The tradition of our Sacrament of Confession – now renamed, positively, as Reconciliation – stressed the need to examine our sinning in ‘thought, word and deed’. In other words, according to our tradition, even ‘intentions’ and not just ‘actions’ can be sinful. Reflecting on intentions at the very least encourages us to be more thoughtfully aware of the impact of our words and deeds on others, and considerate of consequences.

Robbing a local shop which, in these times, is probably struggling to survive, can well plunge another family into poverty. Shoplifting is certainly not a victimless crime, especially if, when challenged, the perpetrator responds violently.

Yet perhaps store traders who are demanding a tougher response by the police may pause to examine whether the rush to technological cash management, and reduction of staff, is not part of the problem. Restoring person-centred, relational exchanges may not only cut across current mass store trading trends but may also reduce shop crime.

Brand is just another product of a society that takes a too relaxed attitude to sex

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



When rumours began to fly last week about serious criminal allegations being levelled towards a celebrity by a Channel 4 programme and the *Sunday Times*, my initial thought, not knowing the nature of the allegations, was that surely any criminal wrongdoing ought to be investigated by the police.

As things stand, the current blanket media coverage regarding Russell Brand, the celebrity who was subsequently named and accused, means that should the police decide to investigate and bring charges, it will be almost impossible for him to have a fair trial, as there won't be a juror in the land who won't have read something about the case.

If it is impossible to bring criminal charges against Brand, then one might argue that he is already receiving his just desserts as high-profile organisations, charities and media companies are rushing to cancel him and ensuring that all mentions of Brand's name are removed from their websites and programme schedules.

YouTube has taken the decision to demonetise his video content, depriving him of advertising income from the videos he uploads to the site. We are not talking pennies here. YouTube was one of Brand's major income streams. With 6.5 million subscribers, Brand likely received between £2,000 and £4,000 per video and could easily have been netting in excess of a million pounds a year. YouTube have cited their ‘creator responsibility’ policy which places sanctions on users if their ‘off-platform behaviour harms our users, community, employees or ecosystem’; a rule that seems to mean that they can demonetise anyone if they decide that they don't like the cut of your jib.

I have to confess that I have mixed feelings over the affair. Like all of us, Brand ought to enjoy the presumption of innocence and these allegations, no matter how compelling, should not be taken as Gospel truth. What ought to worry us is that a large technology company has already acted as judge and jury over Brand before the police have even had a chance to investigate. Brand has been deprived of the ability to make a



living not because of what he has done, but because of what he is accused of doing.

In 2014, Cliff Richard was faced with similar serious allegations levelled by five individuals but famously cleared of all wrongdoing when the accusations were proven to be wholly without substance. What YouTube have done to Brand is akin to Cliff Richard being stripped of his ability to receive royalties, even though he had not been found guilty of anything. Were Cliff to have subsequently been convicted (he was not even charged) this still would not have been the right thing to do as justice would have been served by the fact that, as happened to Gary Glitter, he would not have been given airtime.

The problem is that the allegations against Brand are all too credible. This does not appear to be a case of one person's word against another, as relevant circumstantial evidence has been published. We have to be extremely careful about judging the motivations of potential victims, but certainly none of Brand's accusers appear to be looking to build a career or make money from their experiences, but rather to expose the murky world of entertainment which often

perpetuates or turns a blind eye to sexual exploitation. Brand is the latest in the list of big name celebrities accused of using their status to coerce junior staff into inappropriate relationships.

By his own admission, Brand has also engaged in unseemly behaviour and indeed has used the fact that he repeatedly indulged his voracious sexual appetite, as comic material. When the news broke that Russell Brand was the famous name, I was taken aback by the number of people who piled in to defend him, because it ought to have come as no surprise that the man was a total reprobate. Brand's behaviour towards Andrew Sachs, bullying him and forcing him to think about the sex life of his granddaughter, indicates this comedian's lack of regard for personal boundaries.

With that in mind, one has to remember that Brand is now supposedly a reformed character who appears to have settled down, got married and whose wife is expecting their third child, and who is collateral damage in all this. Soon to be former MP Nadine Dorries wrote a column claiming that the only moral thing for Mrs Brand to do now, is to leave her husband and divorce, a suggestion

that was frankly wicked, not least because it makes a number of presuppositions and rules out the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation and will cause significant pain and upheaval to their innocent children.

Brand's supporters are claiming that he is being targeted because he presents a threat to the mainstream media and establishment and because he frequently promotes conspiracy theories. I'm not going to deny that occasionally, like a stopped clock which is correct twice a day, Brand does hit upon a nugget of truth in some of his material, and no doubt there are some who are delighted to revel in his downfall, but we should also remember that men like Harvey Weinstein who were revealed as sexual abusers were seen as having the ‘right’ political views. Weinstein was a Democrat and so too is Kevin Spacey, although despite having his professional life destroyed, Spacey was totally exonerated.

Perhaps if Brand had not been such a prolific womaniser and self-confessed sex addict, it would be easier to take a position of neutrality. It could even be feasible that such was the nature of his addiction clouding his judgement, that he genuinely believes that he has done no wrong. Ultimately none of us can know the truth without full access to all of the facts and both sides of the story, but we can still have private opinions on Brand's behaviour and character.

Rather than see a man's life destroyed, especially when he appears to have moved on and turned his life around, a more constructive and arguably Christian solution would be for Russell Brand to use his considerable platform and following to acknowledge that his self-confessed promiscuity caused incredible harm, and to take steps to atone.

Perhaps then, we can have a much-needed discussion about why he was then feted by those who are now rushing to condemn him. Brand was the product of a society that tells children and young people that they have a right to satiate their sexual appetite, so long as nobody gets hurt; indeed he was celebrated as ‘S***ger of the Year’ three times in a row by the Sun newspaper.

Like empty sex itself, destroying Brand's life may provide temporary gratification, until we move on to the next target, but unless we are honest about why these scandals are so prevalent across every institution, nothing will change.

New strategy pushes UK to think again on abortion

Andy Drozdziak

A pro-life group is encouraging people to 'make abortion unthinkable' by urging them to think about it.

March for Life UK is looking to build on the success of the recent march in London, attended by 7,000, by organising an interactive training day, entitled 'Time To Rethink Abortion', to equip people to speak about abortion in a range of situations.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce of March for Life UK, who was arrested earlier this year for praying silently outside an abortion clinic, is helping to organise the day. She explained how she wants to help those wanting to learn how to have constructive conversations on abortion.

"So often we avoid talking about abortion with those around us who have different opinions. Or, if we do

pluck up the courage and initiative to enter into a conversation, it can sometimes end, rather unproductively, in a heated argument. There is another way and anyone can learn it," Isabel told the *Universe*.

The event is taking place at St Dominic's Priory in North London on Saturday, 11th November.

"This exciting day was piloted in Birmingham earlier in 2023 and has since been to various locations in Scotland," Isabel said.

"Now it's the turn of those living in the south."

The pro-life movement is currently experiencing a pivotal moment, with controversy surrounding 'buffer zones' and pro-lifers such as Isabel and Adam Smith-Connor being arrested for praying silently outside abortion facilities.

There is also optimism in the UK



The pro-life event was piloted in Birmingham earlier this year, with Fr Sean Gough (inset) one of the speakers

pro-life community due to the *Roe v Wade* decision in 2022 which overturned abortion laws in many US states.

A previous participant, Amy, highlighted the message shared on the day. "One of the most impactful things was the message that the pro-life movement takes courage," Amy said. "We need to take initiative to bring it up with our family and friends, and today has given me the tools to do that in a more effective way."



Probation latest to be hit by staff shortages

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic prison charity Pact has criticised short staffing in prisons and a lack of support for probationers after a report on the probation service showed that the service is struggling.

Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell's annual report showed that only one out of 31 Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) inspected across England and Wales was rated as 'good' from June 2021-July 2023 – with 15 given the lowest rating of "inadequate." It also concludes that the level of supervision of people on probation is not what it should be.

In response, Andy Keen-Downs, Pact CEO, said: "This disappointing report sets out the real challenges facing the Probation Service. As with prisons, short staffing sits at the root of many of the problems."

Mr Russell said that the annual report highlighted "often chronic staffing shortages at every grade" which, Andy Keen-Downs said, places huge pressure on staff as well as preventing the service from achieving its broader objectives to reduce reoffending."

Pact supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families at every stage of the criminal justice process, and looks

to build stronger families and safer communities. Mr Keen-Downs underlined the importance of family in prisoners' rehabilitation.

"Family in particular has a crucial role in helping people to make a fresh start; all the research shows that people who stay in touch with family reoffend less," he said.

"Yet just one in five men and one in four women on probation are getting the right level of support. If we are serious about reducing reoffending, cutting crime and delivering safer communities for everyone, this must be addressed."

Mr Russell, who is due to stand down from the role on 29th September, said the "time has come" for an independent review of whether probation should "move back to a more local form of governance and control" – despite the unification of the service in June 2021.

Mr Russell said: "We have seen little improvement in our inspections over the past two years."

"The supervision of people on probation isn't at the level it should be."

"I think the time has come for an independent review of whether probation should move back to a more local form of governance and control."



Why do we take Holy Communion?

ANSWERING QUESTIONS BY YOUNGSTERS ABOUT CATHOLICISM CAN BE DAUNTING...

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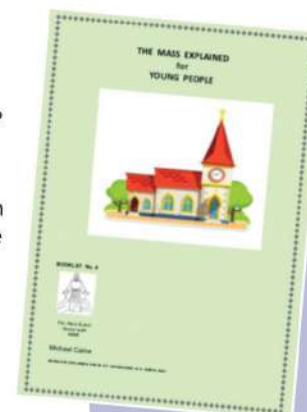
- Why do we bless ourselves?
- Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
- Why do we say Amen?
- What's Communion about?
- What's God's Grace?

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 www.catholicismrefreshernotes.co.uk

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.



In Brief

Musk may charge for using 'X'

Elon Musk has suggested that all users of X, the social media platform formerly called Twitter, may have to pay for access to the platform. The owner said a payment system was the only way to deal with bots. "We're moving to having a small monthly payment for use of the system," he said.

BP boss quits ahead of review

The boss of BP has resigned as chief executive amid a review of his personal relationships with colleagues. BP said it has started an inquiry into alleged relationships Bernard Looney had with colleagues.

BP has "strong values" and the board "expects everyone at the company to behave in accordance with those values", said a spokesperson.

The company informed investors that Looney "did not provide details of all relationships and accepts he was obliged to make more complete disclosure".

Sandwich generation taking biggest hit

Britain's "sandwich generation" is paying the price for a surge in inactivity among older and younger workers, said the Bank of England's former chief economist. Soaring long-term sickness is piling ever greater demands on those aged between 35 and 50, said Andy Haldane, as the "pressures among the young and pressures among the old" are "putting pressure on those in the middle".

It has left the sandwich generation "footing the bill of supporting both the young and the old in financial and non-financial terms".

Coastal vote warning to Sunak

Rishi Sunak risks a political "tidal wave" at the next general election unless he commits to levelling up England's seaside towns, according to a thinktank.

Communities set within 5km of England's coast are poorer, sicker and more crime-ridden than their inland neighbours, said Onward, as it called for a £500m regeneration package.

Among the "grim statistics" in the report are that early, preventable deaths are 15 per cent more likely in coastal areas than inland, crime rates are 12 per cent higher and average disposable incomes £2,800 lower. They also suffer from big challenges on affordable housing.

This unlikely bromance spells trouble for global stability

WORLD AFFAIRS

Robert Dover

Russia is currently firing some 14 million shells a year in Ukraine, but it is only manufacturing two million. The Ukrainians, on the other hand, are firing around 2.5 million shells a year, but are also struggling to source them.

A deal between North Korea and Russia for artillery rounds, which the respective leaders have said they are "actively advancing", is a simple solution to Russia's problem. But it is a deal that is fraught with dangers for global stability.

The sanctions on Russia since their invasion of Ukraine have limited where they can buy military equipment, including artillery rounds: it has made requests to China, Iran and now North Korea. China has been warm but publicly resisted directly supplying equipment into the battlefield.

Iran has sold Russia drones and a small quantity of shells. North Korea is the first nation to make the move to directly supply a large quantity of ammunition for Russian artillery. Placed within its wider context this deal will likely be written up in history as part of the journey to a wider war.

Both Russian president Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un are reluctant to travel internationally. The meeting with Putin on 13th September is the first time Kim has travelled internationally since the outbreak of COVID in 2020.

He travelled in a heavily armoured train. A face-to-face meeting is a symbolically important event for both men: because of its rarity and because its proximity signals trust.

What Russia needs

Russian ground offensives and their well dug-in defensive lines have been reliant on the extensive use of artillery.

The Russian army has been ineffective at maintaining their supplies of shells, which has increased the pressure on them to buy from the international market. By contrast, the stocks of shells on the Korean peninsula - a legacy of the Korean War (1950-1953), which still remains technically at ceasefire, rather than over - are well maintained by North and South Korea.

Consequently, the US is buying South Korean shells to transfer to Ukraine, and Russia will shortly be



Putin and Kim Jong-Un need their new-found friendship to work

receiving North Korean shells. The rates of fire from both sides can, therefore, be maintained while their domestic industries continue to transform to meet the needs of this war.

Russia is not a natural ally of North Korea. In the 1990s, Russia was part of international efforts to restrain North Korea's development of nuclear technologies.

By instinct, Russia, like China, has a strong preference for stability in its near neighbours, and a nuclear North Korea with the ability to reach the US or Europe would be destabilising. However, the invasion of Ukraine and the need for a large amount of artillery ammunition has created the basis for this pragmatic alliance.

What does Kim want?

North Korea wants to trade its ammunition for cash, for food aid and for advanced military technologies. How much Russia transfers in these categories will be the best guide to how much Russia needs North Korean ammunition.

Regardless of its need, Russia is unlikely to transfer anything beyond improved missiles for North Korea's nuclear programme: but not hypersonic missiles or miniaturised warheads. Stability in the region remains a strategic concern for Russia, which is in part why US intelligence sought to

publicise early rounds of talks to dissuade Russia from carrying on.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has strengthened international alignments. Nato has been joined by formerly neutral nation Finland and has an application from Sweden. South Korea and Japan have become much closer, while Russia, China, Iran and North Korea have also moved closer into alignment.

Collaboration on spy satellites, mapping and live intelligence, including communications hacking would also be challenging for the Ukrainians. The connection between a small and nasty war in Eastern Europe with the historical and current tensions in Asia is profoundly dangerous and provides a realistic stepping stone to a wider war.

Cyberwar implications

Both North Korea and Russia are highly capable cyberwar and cyber intelligence nations: they can disrupt or break key infrastructure and steal sensitive government information. North Korea's Lazarus group of hackers has been identified - through careful process tracing - to be responsible for thefts of crypto currency totalling tens of millions of dollars.

Russia's efforts in online fraud, disinformation and disruption to core infrastructure has become a

significant threat to western societies.

Some of the Lazarus Group's stolen cryptocurrency is stuck because the individual wallets where it is held have been identified. Russia is a potentially valuable collaborator in finding alternative routes to move the 'coins' and realise much of the profit.

Mix this with Chinese, Russian and Iranian expertise in influencing operations, hacking and psychological warfare and their collective ability to shape the politics and values of the Euroatlantic area is considerable. The digital flank of this conflict and the ongoing tensions on the Korean peninsula are greatly enhanced by closer collaboration between Russian and North Korea.

An agreement to supply artillery shells is only one aspect of this deal. The wider dangers come from how it will serve to fuel the Ukrainian conflict, and how it brings together Russia, North Korea, China and Iran into a form of alliance. Ultimately, this deal paves the way for more dangerous technology transfers and it connects the Eastern European conflict more directly with tensions in Asia.

Robert M. Dover is a Professor of Intelligence and National Security, University of Hull



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Photo: Brian Woodruffe



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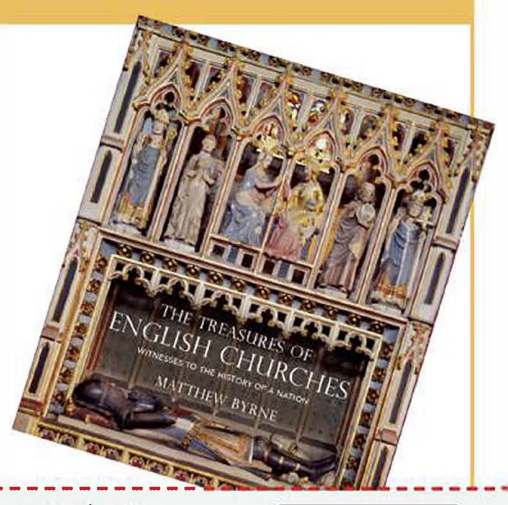
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CUW-Aug23

Finally! Online safety bill is positive step forward, says CARE

Christian charity CARE, which has spent years campaigning for children to be protected from online porn, has welcomed measures soon to become law.

The Online Safety Bill has passed its final stage in the House of Lords and will receive Royal Assent next month, after years of delay.

Provisions in the Bill will mandate age checks for all users seeking to access porn on both porn sites and social media platforms, with penalties for companies that fail to comply. State regulator Ofcom will be responsible for enforcement.

Content targeted in the safety regime includes material relating to drugs and weapons, revenge porn, self-harm, and suicide. A controversial 'legal but harmful' clause in the bill was dubbed a threat to free speech and removed last year.

CARE has pushed for many of the measures, particularly age checks. Ross Hendry, CEO of CARE, welcomed the bill, which he described as a vital reform.

"These measures follow a long-running campaign by CARE, which drafted amendments and worked with other charities including Barnardo's and CEASE to have them accepted," he said.

"For many years, CARE has been calling for much tougher online safeguards, based on very well-evidenced concerns about the devastating impact of pornography on our children and young people.

"With the implementation of age checks, we are within touching distance of a vital reform that will help

protect Britain's children."

In 2019, the UK Government abandoned plans to introduce age-verification on porn sites, despite legislating for the change in the Digital Economy Act 2017. Part 3 of the Act would have seen regulations laid to make sure anyone wishing to access online porn would require proof they are 18.

The scheme was delayed several times, despite evidence children are being exposed to porn at a young age, and that technologies are safe and effective.

Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan said the Online Safety Bill was "game-changing". "The Online Safety Bill is a game-changing piece of legislation," she said.

"Today, this Government is taking an enormous step forward in our mission to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online."

Mr Hendry is now hoping for 'fast action' to implement the new legislation. "The Online Safety Bill requires that new measures be enforced within 18 months.

"Parliament has done its job and all eyes now shift to Ofcom, which will be responsible for implementing the new law.

"Parents across the UK desire meaningful action to protect their children from vile online content. Children themselves desperately need new protections, given the immense harms associated with pornography.

"More dither and delay with these measures is simply not an option. We urge fast action," he said.

Pact calls for a day of prayer for prisoners on 8th October

With the support of bishops, Pact is inviting parishes across England and Wales to bring people in prison and their children and families before the Lord in prayer on Prisoners' Sunday, 8th October.

It can be difficult and upsetting to visit someone you care about in prison. In more than 60 prisons across England and Wales, Pact staff and volunteers are there to welcome children and families arriving to visit loved ones inside.

Pact's work matters more than ever because, across England & Wales, the number of people in prison is rising – and, of course, the number of children and other family members affected is rising too. Pact estimates that there are more than 99,000 children who will go to bed tonight knowing their mum or dad is in prison.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said: "Pact builds bridges of hope

and opportunity for people who want to make a fresh start after prison. This year – with your help – Pact will enable hundreds of men and women to start life again after a custodial sentence. And during their sentence, when things get very dark, when people can lose hope, we are there inside the prisons, alongside hard-working prison officers, nurses and chaplains, providing hope and practical support to enable people to cope."

Every parish has now received a Pact Prisoners' Sunday pack with ideas how you can get involved.

Prisoners' Sunday is also Pact's annual appeal. The faithful support of Catholic parishes has been and continues to be both important and deeply appreciated.

To find out how you can support Pact's Prisoners' Sunday Appeal, [CLICK HERE](#)

Archbishops demand a response as lough hit by poisonous algae

The Archbishops of Armagh have said the response to the outbreak of toxic blue-green algae at Lough Neagh has been "too slow" and called for a task force to "avert disaster".

Blooms of the algae have covered large parts of the lough, which is Ireland's largest freshwater lake and supplies 40% of Northern Ireland's drinking water.

Archbishops Eamon Martin and John McDowell said in a statement that the lough was facing an "environmental disaster" and that the issue was not being given the necessary attention.

"In this, the season of harvest and creation we share the grave concerns, expressed by many, about the future of our beautiful and precious Lough Neagh," they said.

They added: "In recent days, we have heard words of reassurance from those charged with protecting Lough Neagh.

"Still, the algae bloom persists and poses a real threat to livestock, pets and humans.

"It is indiscriminate in nature and a blight on the natural landscape and ecosystem.

"We are facing an environmental disaster and, as Church leaders, we worry that the issue is not being given the priority it deserves.

"Before Lough Neagh approaches the point of no return, a collective examination of the causes and development of a robust plan to save this unique and ancient ecosystem is needed."

Blue-green algae can pose a health risk to people, pets and wild animals who come into contact with it or ingest it.

A warning sign on Lough Neagh
Photo Liam McBurney/PA



Contact or ingestion can cause skin rashes, eye irritations, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and muscle and joint pain.

Nitrogen and phosphorus from agricultural fertiliser running off fields is believed to be a major contributory factor in the growth of the algae which is linked to excess nutrients in the water.

Climate change has also contributed to the degradation of Lough Neagh which has seen temperatures rise by 1C in just 20 years.

Archbishops Martin and McDowell said the response to battle the algae growth was not fast enough.

"Each one of us is called to be a custodian and a steward of creation, we all share a collective responsibility to safeguard the beauty and well-being of our natural surroundings and must maintain and preserve the lough for future generations to enjoy.

"We cannot take it for granted," they said.

"Our primary concern is that the response is too slow and is tied up in multi-agency bureaucracy.

"While multiple stakeholders debate the remit of responsibility, Lough Neagh and those who live near and around it suffer. There is a clear need for decisive leadership.

"We must identify the causes of pollution and devise an action plan capable of arresting the decline."

The bishops are urging that a task force comprised of experts and relevant agencies be formed to submit a report outlining procedures and actions required to "avert a disaster".

The Ulster Unionist Party environment spokesman Tom Elliott MLA has called on the head of the NI Civil Service, Jayne Brady, to hold an interdepartmental, cross-agency summit to address the Lough Neagh algae growth.



'We are facing an environmental disaster and, as Church leaders, we worry that the issue is not being given the priority it deserves' said Archbishops Martin and McDowell

Walk hand-in-hand with migrants – they are all our brothers and sisters

Sunday, 25th September is the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Here Patrick O'Dowd, Director of Caritas Salford, offers his reflection on the importance of the day

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees is always an important occasion to pray for people facing the challenges of being on the move and to express concern and solidarity with them, highlighting and increasing awareness.

Against a complex political and economic backdrop, the UK Government is implementing its recently passed new Illegal Migration Bill, described by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) as a “cruel and unworkable Bill which is an affront to human dignity and a breach of our responsibilities to the global common good and our obligations under international law.”

Caring for people on the move has always been an integral part of the Catholic faith and an important pastoral and practical priority. In the current challenging landscape, the Catholic Church in England and Wales continues to increase awareness of and address the issues which confront refugees and migrants to the UK and advocate on policy issues.

There is considerable rhetoric in the press, in parliament and in local and national government, rooted in various agendas. The reality is that charities, especially those from faith communities, are often the ones leading efforts to ensure the protection of those who are marginalised and vulnerable, especially refugees and migrants.

Central to Catholic social



Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees, Bishop Paul McAleenan, believes that welcoming refugees is “an act of justice”

teaching is the fundamental principle of respecting the dignity of every human person, regardless of nationality, race, or status. Guided by this moral imperative, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales recently published their teaching document ‘*Love the Stranger*’ as a guide to social teaching on migrants and refugees in the contemporary political and social context.

Catholic charities across England and Wales, and in particular the expanding Caritas Social Action Network, continue to put this teaching into practical action by working to ‘welcome, protect, promote and integrate’ refugees and migrants to the UK. The group is also now a member of the UK wide coalition Together With



Refugees, working with organisations and faith groups from across the UK to call for a kinder, fairer, and more effective approach to supporting refugees.

Numerous agencies are engaged in delivering crisis response

support such as during the evacuation of Afghan nationals following the Allied withdrawal and supporting Ukrainians fleeing war. Many provide ongoing immigration advice and accompaniment to those fleeing

conflict, providing opportunities for employment support or access to English classes.

Several continue to provide support to those in asylum contingency hotels as well as nurturing and developing parish and local groups to organise safe resettlement of families through the Community Sponsorship programme.

Some, like Seeking Sanctuary based in the Archdiocese of Southwark, even provide support to refugees in northern France by collecting donations, “spreading facts” about the experience of refugees and providing practical assistance.

While Catholic charities make significant strides in their efforts to aid refugees and migrants, other challenges persist. One key aspect moving forward is to enhance collaboration with governments and international organisations to create comprehensive and compassionate policies.

Beyond responding to immediate challenges, Catholic charities must continue to also address the root causes of forced migration or forced displacement. This involves advocating for just and peaceful solutions to conflicts, supporting sustainable development projects, and holding governments accountable for their international obligations.

By walking hand in hand with the most vulnerable members of society, Catholic charities can and must lead the way in building a more just, inclusive, and compassionate world for all.

To read Patrick O'Dowd's article in full, visit [CLICK HERE](#)

Catholic schools in call for governors

Andy Drozdziak

The director of the Catholic Education Service says that Catholic education is in a healthy place – but is asking for help from the public by becoming school and college governors.

“Catholic education is by far the largest charitable activity of the Church in this country, but is now in need of your help,” Paul Barber told the *Universe*. “Since the pandemic, the Catholic sector has vacancies for foundation governors, and more are needed to sustain Catholic ethos and leadership.

“Find out more about this way to serve your community and live out your faith by contacting your diocese.”

The director took the opportunity to highlight the Catholic Church's role in education. “Amid the disrup-

tion caused by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), there is still much to celebrate,” he added.

“Catholic schools continue to be true to their mission in educating more pupils from the most deprived backgrounds, as well as routinely outperforming national averages in GCSE English, maths and RE.”

The generosity of Catholic education was also highlighted, with nearly half of all 2,175 Catholic schools across England and Wales raising more than £610,000 for CAFOD, including for relief following flooding in Pakistan and earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Mr Barber pointed out the academic achievements of Catholic higher education institutes. “Birmingham Newman University (was) rated number one nationally for student satisfaction and highest overall

positivity in all categories in the most recent National Student Survey,” he said. “St Mary's University, in Twickenham, was ranked best in London for academic support, while Leeds Trinity University has introduced innovative nursing degrees designed to support the NHS.”

He ended by calling on Catholics to continue the success story of Catholic education. “Catholic education is one of this country's great success stories,” he said.

“Back in the Victorian era, parishes and clergy prioritised the building of schools ahead even of that of churches. This is because they saw education as the principal means of handing on the faith and improving the lives of children living in poverty. It is up to us to continue to protect and to hand on this legacy to future generations.”

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Caritas horror as vital Ukraine store destroyed in drone attack

Andy Drozdziak

CAFOD has strongly condemned a Russian airstrike which has destroyed 300 tonnes of vital food and water supplies destined for war-torn Ukraine.

Russia launched a massive drone attack on the western city of Lviv on Monday, damaging a warehouse facility in a fire and killing one man, Ukrainian authorities said.

CAFOD said that its local partner in Ukraine, Caritas-Spes, was affected by the attack.

“We strongly condemn the Russian airstrike on Lviv, which has destroyed over 300 tonnes of humanitarian aid,” Josie O’Reilly, CAFOD’s Ukraine programme manager, told *The Universe*.

An artillery strike in Kherson in the south hit a bus, killing a police sergeant and wounding two men, said Ihor Klymenko, Ukraine’s minister of internal affairs. The strike also set a warehouse on fire, affecting key humanitarian supplies.

During the Ukraine war, CAFOD has been working with sister Caritas agencies and partner organisations to help people across Ukraine and the wider region.

Josie O’Reilly said: “The warehouse fire destroyed food packages, water, hygiene kits, clothes and other vital humanitarian supplies of



The Caritas SPES warehouse was totally destroyed.
Photo: Caritas-Spes

our local Church partner in Lviv, including 33 pallets of goods that had just arrived from Poland and were destined to help over 600 families in Ukraine.”

She added her support for her fellow humanitarian workers. “We stand in solidarity with humanitari-

an workers under attack. Aid should never be a target,” she said.

Edward Kava, auxiliary Bishop of Lviv, reiterated the extent of the damage.

“As a result of the night attack, a number of civilian facilities were destroyed, including a warehouse

that was being provided to Caritas-SPES Ukraine,” Bishop Kava said. “Caritas had been using this warehouse for 1.5 years and from this place humanitarian aid was transported further east in Ukraine to those in need. Everything was destroyed.”

Libya flooding death toll above 11,000

The death toll in Derna, the city hardest hit in flooding that ravaged Libya’s northeastern coast, is now above 11,000 – but another 10,000 are still missing, the Red Cross said.

Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed when torrential rains from Storm Daniel caused two dams to burst, sweeping thousands of people into the sea.

A United Nations official said if the country had “a normal operating meteorological service,” most of the casualties could have been avoided. “They could have issued the warnings” and carried out evacuations, World Meteorological Organisation head Petteri Taalas said in Geneva.

Ukraine pleads for more weapons

Ukraine said the West can give more weapons to Kyiv because “warehouses in the West are not empty”, the country’s chief spy has said. Maj Gen Kyrylo Budanov said Ukraine must build up its arsenal in order to outlast Russia, which he predicted would run out of weapons in 2026. “We are dependent on external players,” he said. “Russia is dependent on itself.” Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian president, urged allies to continue their military support during a speech to the UN this week.

JRS calls for an end to migrant detention after ‘damning’ report on conditions inside Brook House

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic social justice group JRS UK says “the use of detention for immigration control must end” after a horrifying report into conditions at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre revealed that detainees were on the receiving end of physical violence and abusive language.

At the centre in Crawley, West Sussex, men were generally held in shared cells with poor ventilation and unscreened toilets, an inquiry said, noting the “harsh” and “prison-like” conditions.

Chairwoman Kate Eves described footage of incidents at Brook House, which was shown to the inquiry, as “often very distressing to watch” but said they acted as a “visceral reminder of the suffering” experienced by detainees.

She concluded that 19 incidents of mistreatment had taken place in a five-month period in 2017, with detainees treated like prisoners and an “us and them” mentality among staff.

Responding to the report, Sarah



Teather, JRS UK’s director, said: “If we are serious about this never happening again, the use of detention for immigration control must end.

“This report is further, painful proof of just how destructive immigration detention is. The horrifying events in Brook House are not isolated. They are part and parcel of a wider system. Detention routinely dehumanises people and denies them justice.”

The inquiry was launched in 2019, two years after a BBC *Panora-*

ma programme broadcast undercover footage showing alleged abuse towards detainees.

The report is the outcome of an independent inquiry into abuse by staff of people detained at Brook House IRC between April and August 2017. The violent abuse against detained people described in the report includes dangerous uses of force and force used to “provoke and punish”.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said the report set out “failings in both oversight and governance to

protect the welfare of detained individuals” at Brook House. She told MPs that “significant improvements to immigration detention” had been made since the 2017 events covered by the report, but Kate Eves repeated her observation that past calls to Government reform had fallen on deaf ears.

Sarah Teather criticised the Government’s continued use of detention centres for immigration – particularly as new powers to detain people will be introduced in the Government’s controversial Illegal Migration Act.

“The government is aggressively expanding it and even planning to subject children to routine and indefinite detention. Sweeping new powers allowing the government to detain people arbitrarily are about to come into force. This is outrageous, and the inquiry report again shows why. It is not too late to take a different course,” she said.

Ms Eves has made 33 recommendations which she said must be implemented “wholesale”.

Enver Solomon, chief executive of



Kate Eves, chair of the inquiry, delivered a ‘damning’ report

the Refugee Council, described the inquiry as “damning” and said it had “not only exposed grave safeguarding failures, but highlighted that the Home Office “is not able to provide basic levels of care and humanity for vulnerable people in detention”.

He added that “pushing forward with new legislation will only lead to more overcrowding and abuse in understaffed detention centres, while shutting down the asylum system will see costs spiral even further,” calling instead for “order and compassion”.

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Argentinian barbs upset papal trip plans

A leading Argentinian presidential candidate has heavily criticised the Holy Father, with his comments appearing to have dampened hopes Francis may make a papal visit to his homeland.

The candidate, Javier Milei, said Pope Francis “has an affinity for communist murderers,” naming former Cuban President Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro as examples.

In an interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson, Milei said the pope “plays politics” and “is lenient of those on the left, even if they truly are murderers.”

Argentine priests celebrated a community Mass in a poor neighbourhood of Argentina to “make amends” for comments Milei made against the pope.

Argentina’s general elections are scheduled for 22nd October.

In April, Pope Francis told the Argentine newspaper *La Nación* that he planned to visit Argentina in 2024, but also asked, “Please don’t link me with Argentine politics.”

A Vatican spokesman suggested the interview could have an impact on any future papal visit: “why would the pope go somewhere he was not invited?”, he asked.

Weapons check needed, says pope

As the threat of nuclear war grows due to the war in Ukraine, so does the need to reflect on the ethical implications of all new military weapons, Pope Francis said in a message to a conference to mark the 60th anniversary of St. John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

The conference is “most timely as our world continues to be in the grip of a third world war fought piecemeal, and, in the tragic case of the conflict in Ukraine, not without the threat of recourse to nuclear weapons,” Pope Francis wrote.

He called for “ethical reflection on the grave risks associated with the continuing possession of nuclear weapons” and urged scholars to analyse other “military and technology-based threats to peace,” including AI and cyber.

Russia sends new man to the Vatican

Russia has sent a new ambassador to the Holy See.

Ivan D. Soltanovsky officially began his mission this week, four months after his predecessor left Rome. Soltanovsky, 68, met the pope at the Vatican, and also met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state.

The new ambassador had served as Russia’s representative to the Council of Europe until the council voted to expel Russia because of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Tensions rise over migration as leaders urged to tackle challenge

Forgiveness, received freely and constantly from God, is a “fundamental value” for Christians that must be practiced and passed on to others, Pope Francis said.

“Forgiveness is the oxygen that purifies the air of hatred; forgiveness is the antidote to the poisons of resentment; it is the way to defuse anger and heal so many maladies of the heart that contaminate society,” the pope said before praying the Angelus with some 20,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

Reflecting on the day’s Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which Jesus tells St. Peter to forgive his brother not seven times but 77 times, Pope Francis said Jesus’ response shows that “when one forgives, one does not calculate; that it is good to forgive everything, and always.”

“Forgiving is not a good deed that we can choose to do or not do: forgiving is a fundamental condition for those who are Christians,” he said. “By forgiving one another, we can bear witness (to God), sowing new life around us.”

Pope Francis then invited the crowd in St. Peter’s Square to think of someone who has hurt them and to ask God for the strength to forgive that person. “Let us forgive them out of love for the Lord. Brothers and sisters, this will do us good; it will restore peace to our hearts,” he said.

After praying the Angelus, the pope mentioned his trip to Marseille, France, next week for a meeting of bishops and government leaders from the Mediterranean region, a meeting that he said will give “special attention to the phenomenon of migration.”

His comments came as over 7,000 migrants arrived on the small Italian island of Lampedusa, overwhelming reception centres and humanitarian resources. Pope Francis said that migration “represents a challenge that is not easy, as we also see from the news in recent days, but which must be faced together, since it is essential



The Gospel does not divide, but unites, by urging people to be close to others in a spirit of service and peace, Pope Francis told visitors from South Korea on the anniversary of the martyrdom of the nation’s first Korean-born Catholic priest and martyr, St. Andrew Kim Taegon. “I would then like to invite you to rediscover your vocation as ‘apostles of peace’ in every sphere of life,” he told his visitors. The group included South Korean

Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik, prefect of the Dicastery for the Clergy, and Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, retired archbishop of Seoul. While just a student, St. Andrew Kim Taegon witnessed “the horrors of the Opium Wars; yet, in that conflictual context, he managed to be a seed of peace for many, proving his aspiration to meet everyone and dialogue with everyone,” the pope said.

for the future of all, which will be prosperous only if it is built on fraternity, putting human dignity and real people, especially those most in need, in first place.”

The Italian government approved new measures to crack down on migration on Monday, as talk of a naval blockade surfaced again in the Mediterranean – much to the disappointment of the Vatican, which has previously criticised blockade plans.

The latest measures approved by the Italian Cabinet focus on migrants who do not qualify for asylum and are set to be sent home.

The Government extended the amount of time such people can be detained to the EU maximum of 18

months. It also plans to increase the number of detention centres.

Premier Giorgia Meloni announced the “extraordinary measures” after Lampedusa received more migrants than its resident population, and their arrival once again stoked tensions on the island and in political corridors, especially ahead of European Parliament elections next year.

Ms Meloni was joined at Lampedusa by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who took an equally hard line and was cheered on by Ms Meloni’s supporters.

“We will decide who comes to the EU, and under what circumstances.

Not the smugglers,” Ms von der Leyen said as she laid out a 10-point plan that included a pledge to prevent departures of smuggling boats by establishing “operational partnerships on anti-smuggling” with countries of origins and transit.

The plan envisages a possible “working arrangement between Tunisia and Frontex”, the EU border force with air and sea assets that currently assists search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and a co-ordinating task force within Europol.

The Commission has not ruled out the possibility that a naval blockade is under consideration.

“We have expressed the support to explore these possibilities” raised by Italy, Commission spokeswoman Anitta Hipper said on Monday.

Under the deal Ms von der Leyen signed with Tunisia, the EU pledged to provide funds for equipment, training and technical support “to further improve the management of Tunisia’s borders”. For example, the funds are helping to pay for the refurbishment of 17 vessels belonging to Tunisian authorities.

The latest influx is challenging unity within the EU, especially with European elections looming. Some member countries have objected to the way Ms Von der Leyen pushed the Tunisia plan through and complain that they were not properly consulted.



Lampedusa saw over 7,000 migrants arrive last week – that’s more than the island’s resident population. Aid and health care services were unable to cope with the influx

Pope to global leaders: Save children and the planet ‘before it’s too late’

Justin McLellan

Kicking off a global meeting of leaders, Pope Francis told former US President Bill Clinton and the global community to take action to ensure peace for future generations and stop climate change “before it’s too late.”

Opening the 2023 Clinton Global Initiative meeting of leaders in New York City, Clinton asked the pope, connected by video call, what ordinary people can do to address society’s towering problems.

“We are in need of a great and shared assumption of responsibility,” the pope said, adding that “no challenge is too great if we each meet it with personal conversion and the personal contribution that each of us can make to solve it from an awareness of what makes us part of one destiny.”

“Difficulties can bring out the best or the worst in us,” he said. “Therein lies our challenge: fighting selfishness, narcissism, division, with generosity and humility.”

Started in 2005, the Clinton Global Initiative aims to bring leaders to create and implement solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges. Participants for 2023 included US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, California



“It is time for the weapons to cease, for us to return to dialogue, to diplomacy. For the plans of conquest and military aggression to cease. That is why I repeat: No to war, no to war.”

Pope Francis speaking to former US President Bill Clinton’s Global Initiative

Governor Gavin Newsom and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The topics were to include climate change, implementing artificial intelligence, healthcare accessibility, migration and economic justice.

In his opening talk, Pope Francis elaborated on the need to confront together the principal challenges facing society, particularly the “winds of war that blow across the world” and the climate crisis.

“It is time for the weapons to cease, for us to return to dialogue, to diplomacy. For the plans of conquest

and military aggression to cease,” he said. “That is why I repeat: No to war, no to war.”

The pope also urged the leaders to “work together to stop ecological catastrophe before it’s too late,” again sharing that he decided to write another document on the subject eight years after the publication of his encyclical *Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home*. The document, which Pope Francis has said will be an apostolic exhortation, is expected to be released on 4th October, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

The pope said that when people speak about migration, it is important to remember that they are not talking about numbers, but people.

“When we think of migration, let’s think of the eyes of the children we find in refugee camps,” he said.

He also recalled the work of the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù paediatric hospital, where children from around the world are given free medical care – including more than 2,000 Ukrainian children who fled their country will parents or relatives.

“It’s evident that our great little hospital cannot solve the problems of sick children in the whole world,” he said. “However, it wants to be a sign. A testimony of how it is possible, in the midst of so many efforts, to combine great scientific research aimed at curing children and the free welcome of those in need.”

Clinton thanked the pope for his remarks and told him, “You make us all feel empowered, and perhaps that is your greatest power as the pope, that you make everybody – even people who aren’t members of the Catholic Church – feel that they have power and therefore responsibility.”

Pope Francis closed by saying he was concerned about the situation of children worldwide and the fight against climate change. “Let us take action before it is too late,” he repeated.

The pope met with Clinton and an 11-person delegation during a private audience on 5th July in his residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae. Vatican News reported at the time that the meeting “was held in private” and did not provide the names of those in the delegation, however, it said “the topic discussed was peace.”

Christians must radiate the Gospel, not point fingers, at others, pope says

Christians should not use the Gospel to accuse others or speak ill of their brothers and sisters, but draw people to its message by exemplifying it in their lives, Pope Francis said.

“In a globalised but fragmented, world devoted to consumerism, in contexts where family and social roots sometimes appear to dissolve, there is no need for finger-pointing Christians, but for passionate witnesses that radiate the Gospel,” he told the fifth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates at the Vatican.

“This is always the temptation, to go from ‘Christian witnesses’ to ‘Christian accusers,’ the pope said. “There is only one accuser: the devil; let us not assume the role of the devil, let us assume the role of Jesus.”

The congress is an international gathering of Benedictine oblates – lay or consecrated people who commit themselves to living according to the monastic ‘Rule of St Benedict’ through prayer and service.

Recalling the life and teachings of the 5th-century Italian saint, who established the rules for monasticism later adopted by generations of Christian monks, Pope Francis said those inspired by



Pope Francis blesses a bas-relief of Mary, the Faithful Virgin at the Vatican as he met police officers and their families to mark 80 years since the Nazis executed Carabinieri Deputy Brigadier Salvo D’Acquisto for protecting innocent civilians

St. Benedict are called to be “yeast in dough” and transform the contexts they live in through their meekness and compassion.

He encouraged the participants to always remain “seekers of God” by contemplating creation, everyday events, the people they encounter and by “living your work as prayer, to the point of making the very means of your work into instruments of blessing.”

The pope noted the historical role of monasticism in the West, which, through its “evangelical model of life marked by prayer and work,” led to the “peaceful conversion and integration of numerous populations” in pre-medieval societies. “All this zeal is born from a passion for the Gospel,” he said.

Pope Francis also reflected on the

Benedictine call to hospitality, to which St. Benedict dedicates an entire chapter in his book.

“As oblates, your big monastery is the world, the city, the workplace,” he told participants, “and there you are called to be models of welcome by respecting who knocks on your door, with preference to the poor.”

“This is what welcoming is. The temptation is to close yourself, and today in our society, in our culture – even Christian culture – one way of closing yourself is gossip, which ‘dirties’ others,” Pope Francis said. “It seems that our society is slowly suffocating in locked vaults of selfishness, and gossip closes us in this. “If you reform your life to not speak badly about others, you will keep the door open to your cause for canonisation!”



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WORLD NEWS

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

Higgins attacks UN over climate change failure

The President of Ireland has accused the United Nations of “losing credibility” as he called on both citizens and farmers to “play their part” in combating climate change challenges.

Michael D Higgins also criticised the EU for promoting a “US style” of agriculture while addressing farmers and families gathered at the National Ploughing Championships.

While criticising countries who had not achieved global sustainability goals, he said that the United Nations (UN) was “falling”.

“It is unable to stop war, it is unable to end famine, it is unable to stop conflicts, it is unable to manage migration, and it will be saved by the influence of countries like Ireland who have no... other aim or ambition other than to have a safe, sustainable and peaceful world,” he said.

Mr Higgins also warned that biodiversity was being destroyed and that the “darkest period of climate change consequences have begun” as farmers attended an event showcasing their craft and way of life.

He also praised the Ploughing Championship and said he was heartened by the number of young people who he saw attending.

He said the “last thing we need” is a conflict between rural and urban Ireland, and that customers “should support those who sustainably produce our food” amid inflation.

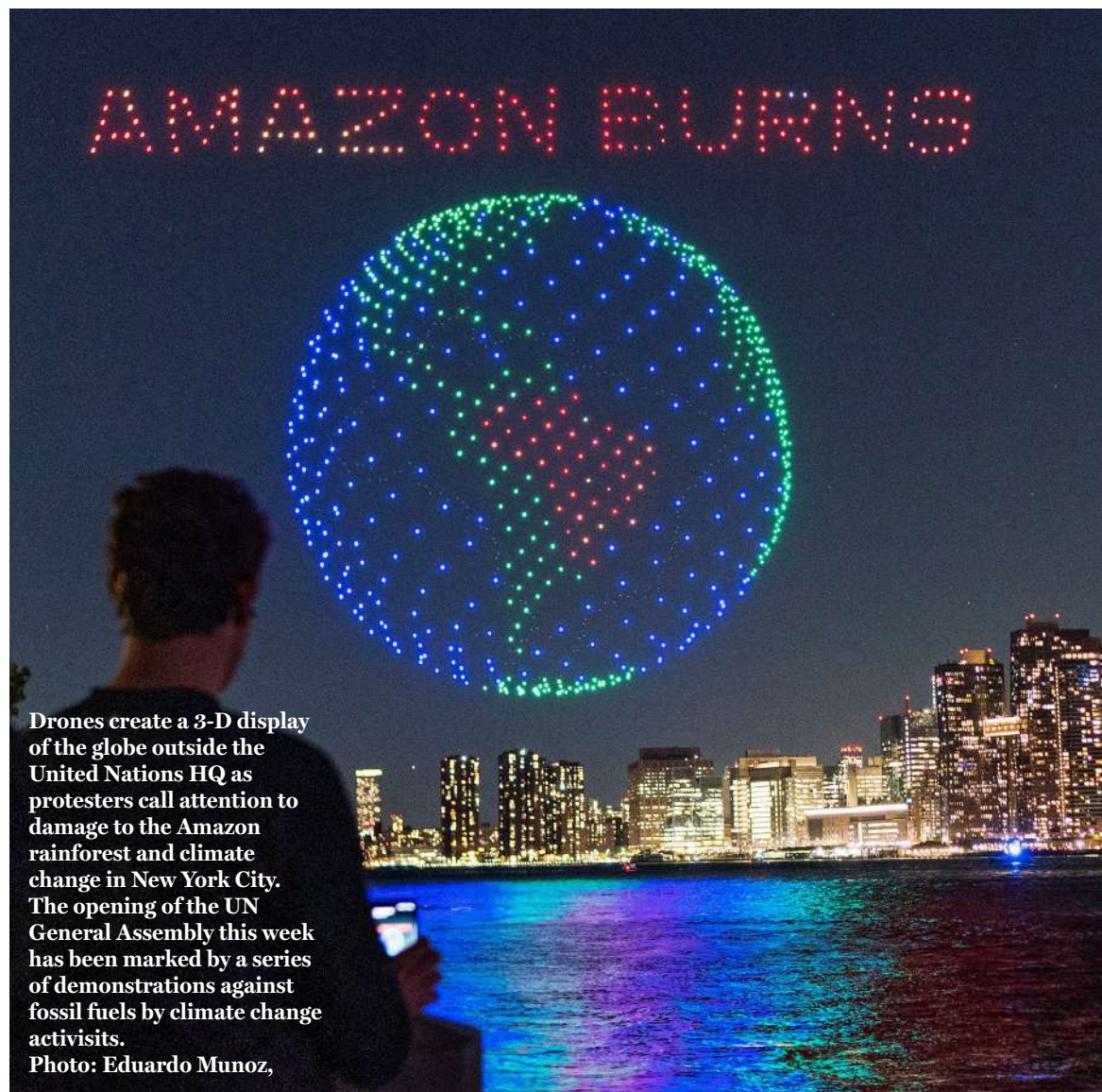
He accused the European Union of “promoting a United States style of agriculture for a very long time”. “I do think that farm families have to be supported and secured. I believe that this in the future will in fact have to be by direct payments. Farm family security cannot be delivered by the market,” he said.

The event comes as political pressure is put on Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue by some farmers over an EU obligation that Ireland should reduce the volume of nitrogen it produces per hectare.

Farmers held protests at Fianna Fail and Fine Gael’s respective think-in events last week, insisting the cut in the nitrate limit would force them to reduce herd sizes.

At a media event with Mr McConalogue, John O’Brien, vice chair of the Barryroe Co-Op, questioned the minister and said limiting the nitrate level would make “no difference” to water quality in Ireland.

“You need to get fighting for us,” he told the minister.



Drones create a 3-D display of the globe outside the United Nations HQ as protesters call attention to damage to the Amazon rainforest and climate change in New York City. The opening of the UN General Assembly this week has been marked by a series of demonstrations against fossil fuels by climate change activists.

Photo: Eduardo Munoz,

Azerbaijan pauses shelling as talks begin with Armenians

A ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan has been reached to end two days of fighting in the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region, local authorities and Azerbaijani officials said.

With the agreement in place, talks are set to begin this week between Azerbaijani officials and the breakaway region’s ethnic Armenian authorities.

The deal was reached through negotiations with the Russian peacekeeping contingent in the region and envisages the withdrawal of Armenian military units and equipment from Nagorno-Karabakh and disarming the local defence forces, according to the region’s officials.

It comes a day after Azerbaijan launched a military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh and used heavy artillery fire on Armenian positions there, an attack that local officials said killed or wounded scores of people.

Azerbaijan has called the artillery fire an “anti-terrorist operation” and said it will continue until the separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh dismantles itself and “illegal Armenian military formations” surrender.

It claimed to be only targeting military sites, but significant damage is visible on the streets of

the regional capital, Stepanakert, with shop windows blown out and vehicles punctured apparently by shrapnel.

The blasts reverberated around Stepanakert every few minutes on Wednesday morning, with some explosions in the distance and others closer to the city.

Armenia’s Foreign Ministry denied that its weapons or troops were in Nagorno-Karabakh and called reported sabotage “a lie”.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan alleged that Azerbaijan’s main goal is to draw Armenia into hostilities.

The escalation had raised concerns that a full-scale war in the region could resume between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which for more than three decades have been locked in a struggle over the mountainous territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The most recent heavy fighting there occurred over six weeks in 2020.

Ethnic Armenian officials in Nagorno-Karabakh said in a statement that Stepanakert and villages in the region were “under intense shelling”.

The region’s military said Azerbaijan was using aircraft, artillery and missile systems, as well as drones in the fighting, with scores of civilians killed.

UN chief says people are looking to leaders for way out of global ‘mess’

Edith Lederer

The UN secretary-general has called on the world’s leaders to find ways to end conflict, defeat climate change and eradicate inequality as the global body met for its annual General Assembly.

Antonio Guterres said the world needs action now – not merely more words – to deal with the worsening climate emergency, escalating conflicts, “dramatic technological disruptions” and a global cost-of-living crisis which is increasing hunger and poverty.

“Yet in the face of all this and more,” Mr Guterres said, “geopolitical divisions are undermining our capacity to respond.”

This year’s week-long session, the first full-on meeting of world leaders since the Covid pandemic disrupted travel, has 145 leaders scheduled to speak.

It is a large number which reflects the multitude of crises and conflicts.

But for the first time in years, US President Joe Biden, who will speak soon after the UN chief, will be the

only leader from the five powerful veto-wielding nations on the UN Security Council to address the 193-member assembly.

China’s Xi Jinping, Russia’s Vladimir Putin, France’s Emmanuel Macron and Rishi Sunak are all skipping the UN this year.

The absence of leaders from the four Security Council powers has sparked grumbling from developing countries who want major global players to listen to their demands – including for money to start closing the growing gap between the world’s haves and have-nots.

The G77, the major UN group of developing countries that now has 134 members including China, lobbied hard to make this year’s global gathering focus on the 17 UN goals adopted by world leaders in 2015. Those are badly lagging at the halfway point to their 2030 due date.

At a two-day summit to kick-start action to achieve the goals, Mr Guterres pointed to grim findings in a UN report in July. He said 15% of

some 140 specific targets to achieve the 17 goals are on track. Many are going in the wrong direction and not a single one is expected to be achieved in the next seven years.

The goals include ending extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring every child gets a quality secondary education, achieving gender equality and make significant inroads in tackling climate change – all by 2030.

But by 2030 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty and 84 million children will not be going to school in 2030 – and it will take 286 years to reach equality between men and women.

Mr Guterres told leaders to rescue the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that they promised in 2015 to build “a world of health, progress and opportunity” for all people – and to pay for it.

A separate body has vowed to meet the targets, but sceptics point out that the UN is good for talking but in recent years has lacked the unity to achieve very much.

Gallagher presses UN to help protect Jerusalem's religions

Justin McLellan

The Vatican urged the international community to press for a “special statute” to guarantee religious freedom in the city of Jerusalem in any agreements regarding a peace deal between Israel and Palestine.

Addressing a ministerial-level meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, called for an internationally guaranteed statute on Jerusalem to ensure “the equal rights and duties of the faithful of the three monotheistic religions (Christians, Jews and Muslims), the absolute guarantee of freedom of religion and of access to and worship in the holy places, and respect for the status quo regime, where it applies.”

“To this end, the specific multireligious character, spiritual dimension and the unique identity and cultural heritage of Jerusalem must be preserved and promoted,” he told a group of foreign ministers from some 50 nations.

The meeting launched working groups from the European Union,



Holy Land Christians protest after an attack on the Stella Maris Carmelite monastery in Haifa. Attacks on Christians are said to be growing in Israel

the League of Arab States and Jordan to create incentives for Israel and Palestine to strike a peace deal.

A joint statement released by participants after the meeting urged contributors to the “peace supporting package” to work toward “ensuring the historic status quo of Jerusalem’s holy sites” which includes the role of Jordan in managing Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city.

Archbishop Gallagher said that establishing guidelines for the administration of Jerusalem is a “central

point of contention that needs to be addressed in order to achieve a stable and lasting peace” between Israel and Palestine, and he lamented the “acts of intolerance” in the city “recently perpetrated by some Jewish extremists against Christians.”

“Any such actions must be clearly condemned by all governments, first and foremost the Israeli government, as well as prosecuted by the law and prevented in the future through education in fraternity,” he said.

In July, Israeli President Isaac Herzog denounced increasing violence against Christians throughout the country and particularly in Jerusalem, calling attacks against Christians “a true disgrace.”

“The Holy See,” Archbishop Gallagher said during his address, “sees Jerusalem not as a place of confrontation and division, but as one of encounter where Christians, Jews and Muslims can live together with respect and mutual goodwill.”

Archbishop Gallagher recalled that Pope Francis “has repeatedly called on Israelis and Palestinians to engage in direct dialogue,” and that the Israeli and Palestinian presidents met at the Vatican in 2014 to pray for peace together and planted a symbolic olive tree in the Vatican gardens.

“It seems to me that there have not been any more similar high-level meetings,” he noted.

“Nevertheless, we continue to water that olive tree, waiting for the presidents of both states, accompanied by their governments, to come again for talks, to reap the fruits of peace.”

Bishops criticise EU genetic bill

EU Catholic bishops have expressed “deep concern” over a draft EU law on the use of embryos, cells and “substances of human origin,” warning it could facilitate genetic and gender interference across the bloc’s 27 member-states.

“This regulation will set the course for future discussions regarding prenatal human life ... and will raise numerous ethical and constitutional conflict issues,” the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community, or COMECE, said. “(It) degrades unborn human life to a mere ‘substance of human origin,’ equating it on the same level as skin cells or blood plasma. ... Human subjects are thus subdued to be mere objects in disregard of their inherent dignity.”

The European Parliament has given approval to a draft law on ‘Quality and safety standards for substances of human origin intended for human use,’ referred to by legislators as “SoHO.”

The bishops added that the bill denied that “life possessed its own dignity,” and also pointed out that the new measure also threatened the right of EU member-states to determine their own social and moral norms, stopping opt-outs from the law by concerned nations.

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Vatican real estate office opens palace to media in show of transparency

Carol Glatz

Transparency means more than just releasing annual financial reports and balance sheets, Bishop Nunzio Galantino, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, told Vatican-accredited reporters during a press conference last week.

Transparency also means showing “the quality of what is safeguarded. This is a step forward,” he said inside the sumptuously frescoed Sala Vasari, just one of dozens of rooms in the Vatican-owned Palazzo della Cancelleria that were specially opened to reporters for a brief tour.

The bishop’s office, which is known by its Italian acronym, APSA, controls most of the Vatican’s investment portfolio, including real estate. APSA directly administers 4,072 properties, which include churches, Vatican office buildings, residences for Vatican officials and apartments rented to Vatican employees, commercial office space and farmland, it said in its 2022 annual report.

Only 19 per cent of the property is rented on the open market, it said, while 12 per cent is rented at reduced rates to employees or retired employees; the rest is used by Vatican offices or religious orders.

Bishop Galantino told reporters that the administration of these assets “means to take care of them and make available (their) culture, beauty, history and wonder.”

APSA decided to make the Palazzo della Cancelleria available to the press for a special tour since the massive Renaissance building is normally only open to the public for special events or talks or by special request.

It houses several Vatican tribunals: the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal dealing with matters of conscience, the sacrament of reconciliation and indulgences; the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, which mainly deals with appeals filed in marriage annulment cases; and the Vatican’s highest tribunal, known as the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Signature.

Three experts in architecture and engineering, who were part of the building’s four-year restoration several years ago, took turns pointing out many of the rooms’ special features and history.

It is the first large building in Rome built from the ground up in the early Renaissance with work starting in 1484. It was made to be the residence of Cardinal Raffaele Riario, who was camerlengo or chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church and nephew of



Above, a fresco is seen in the Sala Vasari of the Palazzo della Cancelleria, a Vatican-owned building in Rome, which houses several Vatican tribunals. The building was built for Cardinal Raffaele Riario, who invited Michelangelo to Rome; the artist’s face can be seen at the far left facing the viewer. To the right, can be seen a depiction of St. Peter’s Basilica being built.

Pope Sixtus IV.

Rooms are filled with frescoes, such as the Sala Vasari, which was decorated by Giorgio Vasari.

One of the guides, Mauro Tomassini, said stone was repurposed from the Colosseum, the Roman Forum and the thermal Baths of Diocletian as Cardinal Riario loved the style of Imperial Rome.

It was built atop the very early Christian-era Basilica of San Lorenzo in Damaso, which was razed for the new building. The fourth-century foundation walls can still be seen underground as well as a small pile of human bones nearby, which the guides said, were evidence that the area had also been used as a cemetery in the early centuries. A new minor basilica was built within the palazzo complex later.

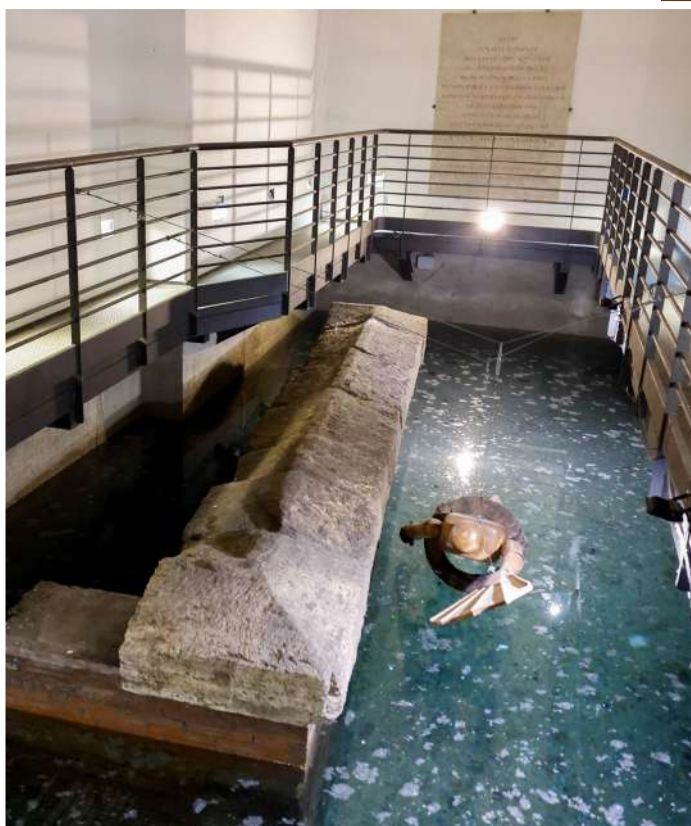


“The bishop’s office controls most of the Vatican’s investment portfolio, including real estate ... it directly administers 4,072 properties ... the administration of these assets means to take care of them and make available (their) culture, beauty, history and wonder...”

Above, Bishop Nunzio Galantino, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, speaks to reporters in the Sala Vasari in the Palazzo della Cancelleria, a Vatican-owned building in Rome, which houses several Vatican tribunals



One of the many frescoed rooms inside the Palazzo della Cancelleria. The room is rarely seen by the public



Above, the remains of a tomb from 43 BC, partially submerged in water from an underground aquifer under the Palazzo della Cancelleria



Right, walkways outside the Palazzo della Cancelleria, a Vatican-owned building, which houses several Vatican tribunals in Rome, Sept. 12, 2023. All photos: Lola Gomez

LETTER FROM THE VATICAN

GRETCHEN CROWE

Life with the family and talks at the Synod require the same communication skills

For almost two years, the global Church has been actively engaged in a process of listening and discernment. Maybe you participated in synod conversations at your parish, maybe you didn't. Maybe you chatted about topics with friends or colleagues, maybe you didn't. But very soon, this Synod on Synodality, which opened 18th October, 2021, will enter its next phase: a gathering at the Vatican that uniquely brings together clergy and laity to continue, well, being synodal.

"The Synod is about dialogue: among the baptised, among members of the Church, on the life of the Church, on dialogue with the world, on the problems that affect humanity today," Francis said in a press conference on 4th September.

In preparation for this dialogue, which starts on 4th October and is scheduled to run until the 29th, an *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL), or working document, was released during the summer as a starting point for the conversation, as is

customary before synod gatherings.

"The IL is not a document of the Holy See, but of the whole Church," Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary general of the General Secretariat of the Synod, said when the document was released. "It is not a document written at a desk. It is a document in which all are co-authors, each for the part he or she is called to play in the Church, in docility to the Spirit."

He added: "You will not find in the text a theoretical systematic explanation of synodality, but the fruit of a Church experience, of a journey in which we have all learnt more by walking together and questioning ourselves on the meaning of this experience."

Worksheets within the IL will serve as discussion prompts for synod delegates, with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, on all manner of topics affecting the life of the Church today. Even with limited media access – journalists will be reduced to redacted synopsis of the day's discussions –

"The IL is not a document of the Holy See, but of the whole Church... all are its co-authors, each for the part he or she is called to play in the Church..."

it is sure to be an interesting few weeks. Expect a lot of 'off the record' briefings, and at atmosphere alive with gossip, hear say and fact-digging.

What's especially interesting to me as a communicator is that, at its core, this synod demands good communications skills of its participants. They must know when to speak and when not to speak. They must understand how to make a point or observation effectively and concisely. They must listen with empathy and respect. They must be polite, yet truthful. They must be in the moment

completely, not planning one's response in the midst of another's intervention. These are the skills needed for fruitful conversations and communication – for synodality to fulfill its potential.

It's very similar to how we ought to function in a family, isn't it? Love demands willing the good of the other, not of one's self – and that means we must be more interested in what the other person has to say than in that excellent point that we, ourselves, must get across.

"In the family, we learn to embrace and support one another, to discern the meaning of facial expressions and moments of silence, to laugh and cry together with people who did not choose one other yet are so important to each other," said Pope Francis in his message for the 49th World Communications Day in 2015, one of my favourites of his many colourful quotes. "This greatly helps us to understand the meaning of communication as

recognising and creating closeness. When we lessen distances by growing closer and accepting one another, we experience gratitude and joy."

Of course, we are not always great at good communication – in our homes, in our society, in our Church. We are not always good at assuming the best of those who are speaking to us, or of being truly open to what another has to say. But this is how bridges are built, and this is how communion is achieved.

As synod delegates convene in Rome for the month of October, they have a unique opportunity to model and exercise excellent communication. They have the opportunity to, as the Rule of St. Benedict dictates, 'listen with the ear of the heart.'

Please join me in praying not only for the effective discernment of the will of God for the Church, but for truly excellent communication among all who represent her next month.

Doubting Thomas, science and Eucharistic knowledge

Scott P. Richert

Jesus said to [Thomas], "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed," (Jn 20:29).

A recent article by Maria Wiering examined Eucharistic miracles – particularly situations in which a host appears to bleed. In a number of these miracles over the years, scientific examination of the host has revealed the presence of striated muscle tissue – the kind of tissue found in the human heart – and the presence of AB-positive blood, the same blood type found on the Shroud of Turin.

Fr Robert Spitzer, head of the Magis Center in California and author of the forthcoming OSV book *Science, Reason, and Faith: Discovering the Bible*, sees in these miracles God's response to the widespread lack of belief in the Real Presence among Catholics, documented in a 2019 Pew Research Center survey.

In a world in which only knowledge that is derived from the scientific method is regarded as true, such miracles may, in fact, reinvigorate the faith of those doubting Thomases for whom seeing is believing.

Yet, as Christ himself said to



Caravaggio's Doubting Thomas

Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Our knowledge of the reality of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is not confined to those rare circumstances in which the true substance of the host post-consecration, normally hidden beneath the appearance of bread, is revealed. The sacrament itself is the sign of the hidden reality of Christ's presence among us, in the Body and the Blood. As Pope St. Leo the Great put it, "what was visible in

our Saviour has passed over into his mysteries."

Coming to recognise that reality is not a mere matter for the intellect. 2,000 years ago, Christ himself walked the earth, and yet, as Matthew makes clear in Chapter 16 of his Gospel, not everyone who met him recognised him as the Son of God. When Jesus asked his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter responded in faith, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

And to that, Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father."

Thomas was already a follower of Christ before he encountered him in the Upper Room. He had faith, but his faith had been shaken by Christ's passion and death. How did he recognise Jesus? Through the wounds of his passion. How did the disciples who walked with Christ on the road to Emmaus say that they recognized him? In the breaking of the bread. "What was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries."ù

Revivifying a flagging faith

The scientific confirmation of Eucharistic miracles may revivify a flagging faith, but it is unlikely to spark faith where none previously existed nor, on its own, to sustain the faith it has temporarily revived. The only sign that we truly need to feed our faith is present before us in the hands of the priest at every Mass. The outward appearance of bread and wine may be all that we can see, but it need not be all that we can sense. Peter, in declaring that Jesus is 'the Son of the living God' was not judging by outward appearance

('flesh and blood has not revealed this to you') but was distilling his lived relationship with Christ into a statement of faith.

That experience – that lived relationship with Jesus – cannot be quantified and tested and retested in scientific experiments. But it is no less real than the presence of heart tissue or type AB-positive blood in a host in Poland or in Argentina.

There is a difference, though, between knowledge of a verified Eucharistic miracle and the experience of a lived relationship with Christ. The knowledge that we gain from that lived relationship requires action on our part. No true relationship can only flow one way. A true relationship requires our active participation.

We aren't called merely to know what the Church teaches about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Many nonbelievers know that. In the Eucharist, we are called to a relationship with Christ in his death and resurrection. We are asked to place ourselves at the foot of the cross, to unite ourselves with his sacrifice, to die with him that we may rise to new life in him. Only then can we truly proclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



The lives of saints

I find reading the lives of the saints and martyrs a very enjoyable and inspirational hobby. One day recently it amazed me when I found two from two very different periods in history, but who had defied similar rulers. One was the Ancient Romans, who had brutally conquered and controlled most of the Mediterranean land areas. The other were the Nazis during the 1940s. They two were St. Lawrence (early 2nd Century); and St. Sister Maria Restituta (during 1940 -1945)

St Lawrence

Lawrence was born early in the second century and was raised in a Christian household. In his early 20s he met the future Pope Sixtus II in the modern Spanish town of Zaragoza, and travelled with him from Spain to Rome.

When Sixtus became the Pope in 257, he ordained Lawrence, who was only 22, as a deacon, and later appointed him as Archdeacon of Rome. This was a senior position of trust, being responsible for the treasury and riches of the Church and the giving of alms to the needy.

At that time, Rome was still anti-Christian and in 258, Emperor Valerian ordered all Christian bishops, priests, and deacons to be



St Lawrence on the gridiron

put to death. Pope Sixtus II was captured and killed.

At the same time, the Prefect of Rome captured Lawrence and reminded him that Jesus had said "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's", and ordered him to turn over the riches of the Church to the emperor Valerian. Lawrence said it would take three days to gather the wealth.

He was given the time and used it to distribute much of the Church's riches to the needy to stop it being seized by Rome.

On the third day he went to the Prefect, who was expecting him to deliver the treasures of the Church.

Lawrence showed the Prefect people who were blind, crippled, lepers, orphans and widows, saying "Here are the treasures of the Church. You see, the Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor!"

The Prefect was so annoyed that he had Lawrence tied to a gridiron and placed over burning coals. It's said that before he died he cried out, "I'm well done on this side. Turn me over." He was martyred four days after the pope Sixtus.

The feast day of St. Lawrence is 10th August.

He's the patron of cooks, chefs and comedians.

St Sister Maria Restituta

Helena Kafka was born in Austria on May 1 1894, the sixth child of the devout Catholics, Anton and Marie Kafka.

At 19, she became an assistant nurse at Lainz City Hospital. This was Helena's first contact with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. On 23rd October 1915, she joined that order and became Sister Maria Restituta. She soon began working as a nurse and within a year or two became the lead surgical nurse at Modling Hospital in Vienna.

In March 1938, the Austrian Nazi Party took control of the Austrian government: Adolf Hitler now controlled Austria.

Sr Restituta did not support the Nazi regime and said so. When a new wing to the hospital was built, she hung a crucifix in each of the new rooms. The Nazis demanded that she removed them, but she refused. The crucifixes remained on the walls.

She was denounced to the Nazis by one of the doctors. On Ash Wednesday, 1942, she was arrested by the Gestapo as she came out of the operating room. The charges against her included: 'hanging crucifixes, and writing a poem that

mocked Hitler.'

She was sentenced to death by the guillotine for 'favouring the enemy and conspiracy to commit high treason.'

They offered her freedom if she would abandon the Franciscans but she refused. Although many nuns lost their lives in the extermination camps, Sister Restituta would be the only Catholic nun ever charged, tried and sentenced to death by a Nazi court.

An appeal for clemency was sent to Hitler's personal secretary and Nazi Party Chancellor, Martin Bormann. He refused, saying that the sister's execution "would provide effective intimidation for others who might want to resist the Nazis."

Sister Maria Restituta spent her final days in prison caring for the sick. She was beheaded on 30th March, 1943. She was 48 years old.

Pope John Paul II visited Vienna in 1998 and there beatified Helena Kafka. She was declared Blessed Maria Restituta.

Her feast days are: 30th March and 29th October.

When I read the lives of the saints and martyrs, I often wonder if I would have the bravery to respond to persecution as they did.

JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Autumn falls on us as a reminder of our own fragility

We have nearly reached the month of October, living our way through the Season that the Americans call The Fall, for obvious reasons.

Taking a cup of coffee a few mornings ago, I wrote these few lines.

Until
Day start
Week-end
Autumn
Leaves fall
damp ground
rain
Shortening days
lengthening nights
wind
Until stripped trees,
bend their bared
thin fingers
before Winter storms,
beckoning
another year-end dream.

There is something emotive about the 'back-end', as farmers often describe the days from late August through to late September. The days of warmth, sunshine and clear, blue skies seem long gone. It is the time for the outdoor coat, as the wind and rain of Autumn

become more prevalent. It is a seasonal change that is often used as a model for our own life change, as we move from one stage to another.

Nowhere has this been more graphically used than in the words of John Henry Newman, taken from his *Letters and Diaries*. 'after a most glorious Summer, there was a week of pouring rain, and then it was fine again and the sky as radiant as the week before. But the season had changed, the ground had become thoroughly chilled, and never recovered itself. Autumn had unequivocally set in, and the week of wet divided the two seasons, as by a river. And so I think I have now passed into my Autumn.'

So we use the metaphor of seasonal change for our own inevitable ageing, our transition from childhood, through the teenage years, the time of marriage and the arrival of our own children, reaching forward to our old age and a gentler pace of living. None of the boundaries are absolute, none clearly defined by a date. We make our journey with a blurring of ages and a change of circumstance, sometimes smoothly and cared for, at other times with difficulty and

frustration. Yet pass through them we must.

As we approach November and a time of memory, the words of Lawrence Binyon will again be quoted.

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them."

With age comes the recollection of memories, the thinking back to where we have been, friendships, the tears and laughter we have experienced.

For some, however, that is not possible, their loss of memory has deprived them of recall and they live in the present, needing our care, concern and love.

It is sometimes hard for younger people to appreciate passing years; having no immediate understanding of their parents' social experience, they depend on the stories we tell them to get somewhere near the reality of bygone years. The world before modern technology to them seems empty and unreal.

When my own son Luke was six, he enquired of me one Sunday at Mass if "they had candles in ancient times when you were young."

We live where we are, passing our days in the society our parents helped create and which we, in our own way, now shape and form. It is a one way street, with a clear white arrow painted on the ground indicating a forward direction.

The adage "if I were going there, I wouldn't start from here" is quite useless. However much we feel uncomfortable with our lot, there is no going back. We might learn from experience, and hopefully we do, but the direction is firmly determined.

Reflecting on our Christian life within the Church, it is as it is. Those who have walked their pilgrim path before us did so to the best of their ability, in times and social conditions very different to our own.

There is no doubt that they, like us, struggled to be Christ-like in times of change, often taking the consequences for the courage of their actions. We are no different. We cannot time-travel to find the imagined comfort of what used to be.

Friendly correction - the Christian way

Settling differences is vital to maintaining harmonious relationships. It is clear from a reading of Matthew 18: 15-20 that genuine correction does not set out to condemn, scold or poke its nose into other people's business. Correction, to be effective, must be done in a friendly, tactful and loving way: "If your brother commits some wrong against you, go and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you."

Friendly correction sets out to win back a person whose loss is sorely felt. It is the result of a genuine sense of caring for the other person and of a strong sense of community that cannot bear to be adversely affected.

The procedure in settling differences that is set forth in Matthew 18 is very clear, and it marries a sense of justice with compassion. The procedure is as follows:

First, the gospel proposes that "if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone." If that works, good, for "you have won over your



brother." This is a wholesome way of dealing with differences because it respects the other person enough to settle the matter privately at the outset of a fractious dispute or injury. This approach cuts abuse of any kind off in the bud because, in the interest of reconciliation, it prevents it from festering and spreading.

Second, if the wrong cannot be settled privately "take one or two

others along with you" so that "every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses." Rushing to judgement without establishing the facts is clearly contrary to justice and the gospel. Every effort must be employed to establish the facts and to be faithful to them in order to get to the truth. This is how we overcome hear-say or prejudice, and arrive at the truth of the matter

based on facts and the evidence of witnesses.

Finally, if the person "refuses to listen" to the testimony of witnesses "tell the Church. If he refuses to listen even to the Church, then treat him as you would a gentile or a tax collector." Jesus describes the Church in Matthew 18:20 as a community of believers: "wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Thus, if a person has committed a wrong and has no respect even for the community of believers, forget about it. You've done all you could.

The Christian sense of the faithful, in theology, is referred to as 'the sense of the faithful' (*Sensus Fidelium* in Latin) because this community is based on a deep respect for the gospel.

It is clear that fraternal correction, whether offered or received, must be anchored in love. This love is practical. It does not float about in the air. It does not spend all day pondering noble thoughts and sentiments. It takes

on the delicate business of friendly correction without resorting to vengeance or disinterested criticism. As one saint said, "you can achieve more with a spoonful of honey than a barrel of vinegar."

It is the Christian's business to walk with Christ and to put aside anything that smacks of selfishness.

The sense of solidarity among the faithful bids us pay attention to the self destructive and anti-community choices of some members. Thus, we must come to the aid of a weak member who has strayed from the right path in the best way we can by following the procedures, anchored in love, outlined in Matthew 18: 15-20.

There will always be differences and disagreements among the people of God, but to let them fester and destroy unity would be a grave error. This message challenges us individually and collectively to face these differences courageously in the right spirit so that unity and harmony may be fostered among the followers of Christ.

Strive to be tactful when you correct one another.

When people hunger, they need to look to Jesus

The people who sought out Jesus after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes were led to him not by their faith, but by their stomachs. They were looking for a handout, a bellyful of bread. They did not understand that the eating of the bread was a sign of greater partaking. They were hungry, plain and simple, and they wanted more bread. Jesus loses no time in getting the crowd to recognise a deeper sort of hunger. He speaks to them of lasting bread, bread that nourishes, not just human life but offers life eternal. To their credit, the crowd listens. Thinking that they had to fast or do some "work" to get this bread, the people asked what they must do. Jesus tells them to believe in Him (John 6:29).

This was not the answer the people expected, so they ask Jesus for a sign that would earn their faith. A sign such as the manna God sent their forebears in the desert. Jesus explains that the old testament manna was but perishable bread. The bread He gives is imperishable, the true bread that comes from God. The people, still not fully understanding, respond to Jesus' offer by saying, "Sir, give us this bread always." (John 6 : 34) Then Jesus delivers the punch line of his message: "I myself am the bread of life."

And the people? They still do not

recognise that the Messiah for whom they've been awaiting for generations is standing before them. He is a spiritual Messiah, not a political one, who will nourish them with His Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

We also keep making the same mistake. Do you fail to recognize the bread of life in the Eucharist. This Sunday, when you are presented with the bread of life, the Body of Christ, remember, this is the bread you have been waiting for. Receive this bread worthily for this bread is as good as it gets. It is the body of Christ.

Before we eat the bread, during mass, that is the Body of Christ, we say "Amen." This is a pledge that says, "Yes, I will be the Body of Christ for others. I will be like Jesus who laid down His life for others!" Understand this when you receive the Eucharist. You cannot receive Christ worthily in the Eucharist if you do not see Christ in your brothers and sisters. There is a beautiful, but brief ceremony during mass before we approach the altar to receive Christ in communion. It is called, The Sign of Peace. We turn to each other and offer the sign of peace. Thus we must be reconciled with our brothers and sisters, we must be prepared to see Christ in them in order to approach the Eucharist worthily. Jesus insists that you need to be reconciled with your brother



or sister first before going to the altar. (Matthew 5 : 24)

Recognise, the next time you receive the Eucharist at mass, that you are promising to be Christ-like since you have received Christ, the Bread of Life.

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst."

Gospel of John 6 : 35

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Those who labour at the last can still get their reward in Heaven

24th Sept 2023; 25th Sunday, (A)

“Seek the Lord while he may be found.” But on the other hand, God’s mercy is beyond measure, so that even those who come late to his vineyard will be welcomed by his infinite love. We all can identify with those workers of the eleventh hour, whom the master of the vineyard treats so well. As Isaiah said, God never ignores the needs and prayers of those who are humble in heart.

Isaiah 55:6-9

Turn to the Lord in urgent prayer; for he never ignores the prayer of the humble

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Responsorial: Psalm 144:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

R./: The Lord is near to all who call him

I will bless you day after day and praise your name for ever. The Lord is great, highly to be praised, his greatness cannot be measured. (R./)

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

The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. (R./)

Philippians 1:20-24, 27
Though Paul wants to be with Christ in heaven, he will serve the Gospel as long as God wills it

It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that



means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16
The parable of the workers in the vineyard; God welcomes all into his kingdom

Jesus said to his disciples: “For the kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, “You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.” So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, “Why are you standing here

idle all day?” They said to him, “Because no one has hired us.” He said to them, “You also go into the vineyard.”

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, “Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.” When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.

Now when the first came they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, “These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.” But he replied to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Only God sees the full picture

The core of the Gospel parable is also in the Isaiah passage: “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” Try as we may, it is impossible to justify the payment of the workers in the vineyard in ordinary social terms. It could hardly be said to be fair. Yes, the owner is generous to the last comers, but why is he not

generous to the others as well? It is simply that there is no reckoning up deserts when man meets God.

In Our Lord’s time Judaism had reached a legalistic state, and the mentality was prevalent that salvation could and must be earned. There were many commands which must be fulfilled, and people were divided into two classes, the righteous who were on the road to salvation by fulfilling the commands, and the unrighteous, outcasts despised by those who kept the law. It was this slot-machine conception of God that Jesus opposed by his emphasis on love, for in love there is no calculation of duties, rights and obligations; there is only an open-handed giving without counting the cost, and a grateful receiving. We can never say that we have earned our salvation, or anything from God, but can only stand suppliant before him. The latest workers in the vineyard have not earned what the owner gives them, and the mistake of their envious colleagues is to think that they can deserve well of the owner.

Devout Christians may find it hard to stomach that someone who repents on his deathbed is admitted to the kingdom no less than those who have struggled and suffered all their lives for what is right. But this would presuppose a commercial attitude of reward and punishments from God, and it neglects the nature of love. The relationship of the believer to God must be personal love, and as such it is its own reward, for it brings its

own happiness also in this life. The greater the struggle, the more a Christian turns to God and finds comfort in the security of his love. Also, fidelity through a long life does bring some advantage over a skimpy final conversion, for it may well be that the relationship of love has so deepened over the years that the Christian, faithfully following Christ, has more capacity for the full enjoyment of God’s company than one who comes to know God only at the last moment. Here it is not a matter of God giving a greater reward, but of the person being more capable of receiving it.

Of this deep and rewarding relationship with God and with Christ Paul shows himself in the second reading to be a shining example. Writing as he does under persecution he is yet filled with the joy of Christ. His life is already united with Christ’s life, and he longs for the fulfilment of final union.

The parable of the vineyard-workers is no blueprint for labour relations, but it illustrates very well Jesus’ teaching about grace and mercy. There are consequences to be drawn, and, in The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis wrote: “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.” (§114)

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■ QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

JENNA MARIE COOPER



The Church can annul some ‘marriages’ easily when they were invalid to start with

Q: Are there certain divorce situations for Catholics that do not require annulments? I’m thinking about Justice of the Peace marriages, marriages at sea or even marriages conducted by someone who is ‘ordained’ online. How does the Church handle these types of divorce situations?

A: There are certain situations where the Church might declare a union invalid even without a full marriage nullity process.

Technically, “declaration of nullity” – the more accurate term for what is popularly called an “annulment” – is just what it sounds like. It’s an official declaration by the Church that, while a union might have appeared on the surface to be a binding and valid marriage, that union was affected by a serious problem that prevented a true marriage from being contracted in the first place.

There are a number of reasons why a marriage might be determined to be invalid, such as: a defect of consent on the part of one of the parties (for example, if one of the parties never intended to be faithful or open to life); consent obtained by fraud or deceit; or a psychological condition that rendered one of the parties unable to consent to marriage or otherwise incapable of fulfilling the essential obligations of marriage.

Such reasons are rarely what we would call ‘manifest’, or readily and unquestionably obvious in an objective way. Proving that someone was unable to marry because of psychological issues or a lack of proper intention, for instance, requires at least some focused investigation and serious consideration from well-trained and unbiased third parties. This is the typical way the Church grants declarations of nullity, which in Catholic marriage tribunals we refer to as the ‘formal process’.

But as you observe, there are some situations where the usual in-depth formal process for marriage nullity is not required. Specifically, it should be noted that all the examples you mention are cases where a Catholic was married in a non-Catholic ceremony.

In addition to all the normal human, universal requirements for a valid marriage, such as sufficient freedom, insight, and willingness to embrace all the obligations marriage entails, Catholics have a unique obligation to observe “canonical form”: for a Catholic to



A woman looks at a Bible on the altar with a cross on it at the Chaldean Catholic Cathedral of St. Joseph in Baghdad

Photo: Khalid al-Mousily, Reuters

marry validly, they must do so in the context of a Catholic wedding ceremony.

Granted, there are a few loopholes. For example, if a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic, for a serious pastoral reason it may be possible to obtain a dispensation from canonical form from the local bishop. This would allow the Catholic to marry validly in a non-Catholic religious celebration or even in a secular marriage ceremony.

Since we know that Catholics need to observe canonical form for the sake of validity, if a Catholic marries in a non-Catholic wedding without a special dispensation, then it clearly follows that the resulting marriage would be null. The circumstances of a wedding outside of canonical form are a matter of plain historical fact, and thus are generally very clear-cut and black-and-white. Therefore, unlike more subtle reasons for marriage nullity, there is no need for a lengthy formal process to determine and declare the nullity of a marriage that lacked canonical form. “Lack of form” cases are typically just a matter of submitting relevant documents like baptismal

and civil marriage certificates, and they can be resolved relatively quickly.

Keep in mind also that individuals who were never Catholic at any point in their lives are not bound to canonical form, which means that even a non-religious marriage of two non-Catholics would be presumed valid until proven otherwise.

Q: My cousin told me I could get an annulment for about £800. Is that still true?

A: It is important to keep in mind that Catholic marriage tribunals exist to conduct an impartial investigation as to whether a marriage that initially appeared valid was indeed valid and binding in fact. Or in other words, the goal of a marriage nullity process is simply to uncover the truth. This is why the preferred term is ‘declaration of nullity’ rather than ‘annulment’. The word ‘annulment’ implies that the Church is actively making a union null, whereas the term “declaration of nullity” makes it clear that an objective fact is simply brought to light.

Thus, the possibility of a particular marriage being declared

a sacrament, is not a sacrament itself.

And like any administrative process, there are real costs involved. For one thing, there is the overhead involved in running any office for things like supplies, rent, postal costs, and utility bills. Additionally, although many tribunals make use of volunteers or clergy working on a part-time basis, the church is obligated to pay the full-time lay professionals who staff tribunals a living wage.

The Church’s ministry of justice is meant to be open to every member of the faithful, regardless of their personal financial circumstances, so even in tribunals that do charge fees for trying marriage nullity cases, there is always some provision to ensure that the process is accessible for those who cannot afford to pay. Therefore, nobody should be deterred from approaching their diocesan marriage tribunal due solely to a lack of money.

Q: Our priest has recently stopped using the processional cross, and now we have no crucifix on the altar during Mass or at any other time. I have always thought that there is supposed to be a crucifix on the altar to remind us all of the suffering and passion of Christ.

A: Yes, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the “instruction book” for how Mass is to be celebrated, specifically indicates that “on the altar or close to it, there is to be a cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified” (GIRM, No. 117). Presumably, this is not only to remind us of Christ’s passion, but also to help call to mind how the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the same thing as Christ’s original sacrifice of his life on Calvary. GIRM 117 goes on to tell us that a processional crucifix may also be used for this purpose. But either way, it is clear that a crucifix is required. If it looks as though your own parish is not following this norm, the best thing to do would be to share your concerns directly with your pastor in a respectful way. Sometimes your local diocesan liturgy office can also be a good resource for these kinds of liturgical questions.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

null is never something that can be promised at the outset of the process, and therefore nobody should be able to buy a declaration of nullity from a Catholic marriage tribunal.

The Church’s canon law has several rules in place to ensure that the process won’t be swayed in one direction or the other for monetary reasons. For example, canon 1456 of the Code of Canon Law states: “The judge and all officials of the tribunal are prohibited from accepting any gifts on the occasion of their acting in a trial.” Similarly, canon 1488 warns that advocates in a marriage nullity process can face serious consequences—including being forbidden from practicing in a particular tribunal – if they attempt “to resolve the litigation by bribery or to make an agreement for an excessive profit.”

While you cannot guarantee the outcome you want from a marriage nullity trial by paying a certain amount, it is in principle legitimate for marriage tribunals to charge a fee for taking your case. Although it is against canon law to charge fees for sacraments per se, a marriage nullity trial is an administrative process which, despite investigating

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Stumbling through the darkest night

My personal spiritual journey continues into the night

Last week I described how I was being led into what St John of the Cross called the Dark Night of the Soul when I was in the noviciate.

We can all take part in the totally selfless other-considering, unconditional loving where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit love each other without the slightest let or hindrance. This was the opportunity that was offered to me when my meditation suddenly came to an end in the noviciate if I had only known it.

Thanks to some unseen gift of the Holy Spirit I did persevere in giving without receiving after compline in the evening in the House of Studies where I had come to learn first philosophy and then theology. Had I only realised that the Holy Spirit had led me into the *Schola Divine Amoris* as St Angela of Foligno has called it, I am sure I would have journeyed on without the spiritual grumbling that nearly made me give up what seemed to be pointless prayer. It was full of darkness, dryness and aridity, with a thousand and one distractions and temptation besieging and battering my mind and heart with the slings and arrows of my outrageous fortune.

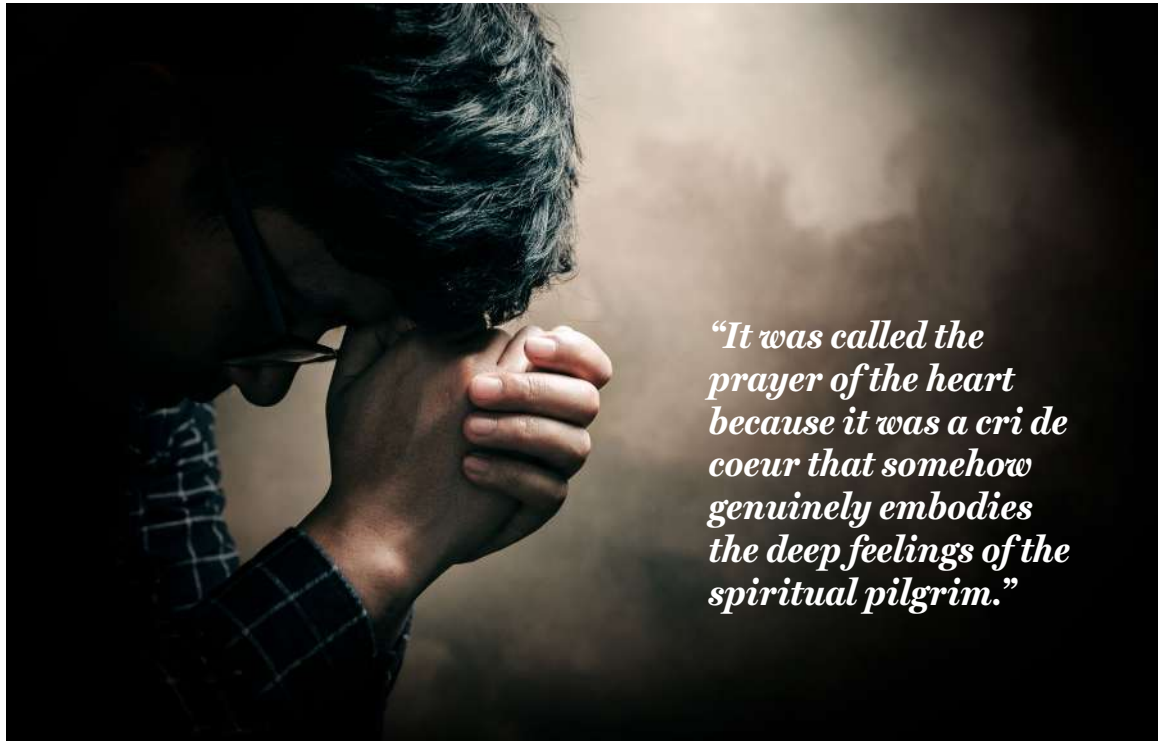
The call to journey on

But I did journey on and because I had no idea at all of the spiritual journey in prayer, as detailed by the great mystics, I was not always looking at my watch wondering how long it would be before the resurrection came. With hindsight that was to my great advantage.

Another thing to my advantage was that although I could neither meditate or contemplate in the brave new world in which I found myself, I could return to the vocal prayer that I had been taught by my mother, and to the morning and night prayer that she had taught me, too. This gave me a solid spiritual foundation to which to return when all else, all other forms of prayer, including the divine office, seemed to be all but impossible to pray with any degree of fervour. Even the reading of the scriptures that moved me so much before moved me no more.

If I had only realised that I was learning to love as God loved, learning the only form of love that could enable me to be united with his love!

After about six months more, pressing on in my dark meaningless



“It was called the prayer of the heart because it was a cri de coeur that somehow genuinely embodies the deep feelings of the spiritual pilgrim.”

prayer, I learnt a new form of prayer that I later discovered had been used by the Desert Fathers when they found themselves in the same predicament into which I was placed. It was called the prayer of the heart, or the prayer of naked faith. It was called the prayer of the heart because it was a cri de coeur that somehow genuinely embodies the deep feelings of the spiritual pilgrim. The sort of prayers that I turned to were, ‘That this chalice may pass away – but not my will but your will be done’, or ‘Out of the depth I cry to you’ or ‘Oh God, come to my aid, Oh God make haste to help me’.

Or simply, and perhaps best of all, ‘Jesus, help’.

Somehow these and similar short prayers did help to smother the distractions and temptations that buzzed around inside my head like a nest of hornets while helping me keep my heart and mind fixed on the void where I thought God must be.

The student house

The whole atmosphere at the student house was refreshingly pleasant after the claustrophobic intensity of the noviciate. There were over 40 other students, all full of life and genuinely delighted to welcome the new intake. However, in time I noticed that no one stayed on after Compline for personal prayer. The liturgy was paramount and they ‘performed’ it well, but no one seemed too interested in private prayer. Perhaps like me, they had also experienced first fervour and when it all disappeared they took the advice on offer and

simply moved on with their lives.

The church that remained empty for hours after Compline made me feel I would receive no more help here than I did at the noviciate, either from other students or our teachers. The effects of the hideous heresy of Quietism that I will focus on later had done its work in the Franciscan Order and, as I was later to discover, in all the other Orders and Congregations, but I did not know it at the time. How sad that the nicest community of men who I had, or would ever live with, were blissfully unaware that the effects of a hideous heresy had been visited on them without them even realising it.

One thing, however, was in my favour. There was an excellent library.

St John of the Cross

I had no idea what books I should read, but the very title of *The Dark Night of the Soul* seemed to describe what I experienced each time I went to pray. No other book before or since has had such a dramatic effect on me. This Spanish Carmelite who I had hardly ever heard of before, died 400 years before I was born, but he understood exactly what I was experiencing and detailed it with such precision that I could be in no doubt that I was on the right path. It encouraged me to press on come what may, although his words did nothing to alleviate the darkness that he insisted was God-given and even deserved the name contemplation, even though it was a dark form of contemplation that could not see through the

gloom that enveloped me.

I did not even have a ‘kindly light amidst the encircling gloom’ to lead me on, except the faith of the saint whom I believed would in time lead me on ‘to see the distant scene’.

But now I understood. I did not like facing the truth: the self-centred young man who so recently believed he was about to scale the heights of Mount Carmel was in fact hardly in the foothills and would never make much headway on his ascent until he was relieved

of all the baggage weighing him down. With relentless accuracy St John of the Cross detailed all my faults and failings, all the sins and the selfishness that first fervour had done nothing to purify away. In fact, it actually encouraged the biggest sin of all, the pride that led me to believe that I was about to reach the mystic heights and that levitation, bilocation and other esoteric gifts were only a matter of months away.

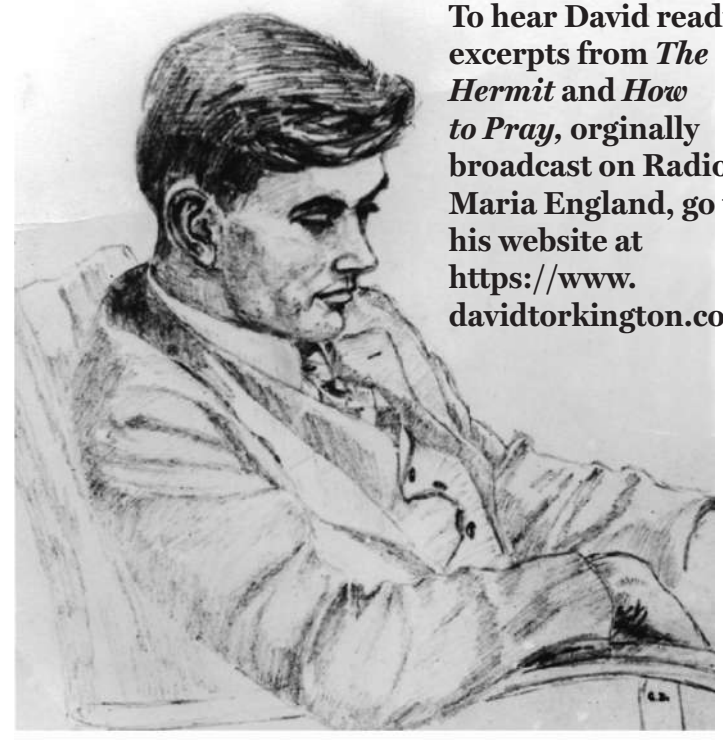
What he said made sense, even if I did not like it at the time. How could a seriously flawed human being like me be united with the most perfect human being who ever lived, in his transformed, transfigured and glorified body, and then share with him in his pure and perfect loving of his Father in mystical contemplation?

That the deep purification in what St John of the Cross called the Dark Night of the Senses and the Dark Night of the Spirit was necessary could not be doubted.

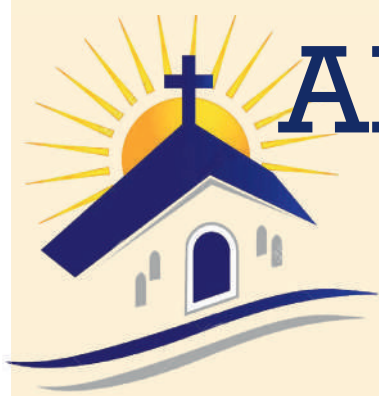
Whether or not I could make it – that could be in doubt. I now understood that this purification was simply the purgatory that we all must go through before union with Christ would enable us to be united with his Father to enjoy the delights of eternal life and love to eternity.

You can read more from David 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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And we love great photos – so send them, too!



Relics tour is an open invitation to be inspired by three saints

A rare opportunity to pray before the relics of three inspiring saints triggered an invitation from Bishop John Arnold for the faithful to follow their example of faith and mission.

This month, parishes across the diocese of Salford are welcoming the relics of Saints Columba, Andrew, and Margaret as part of a special tour organised by the Knights of Saint Columba.

The relics visited churches in Colne, Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn, and Darwen, inviting parishioners and schools to attend Mass in the presence of the relics or simply spend time in prayer.

Last Monday, the relics made their way to St Mary's Church in Horwich, where Year 6 pupils from St Mary's RC Primary attended Mass and enjoyed the opportunity to see the relics up close.

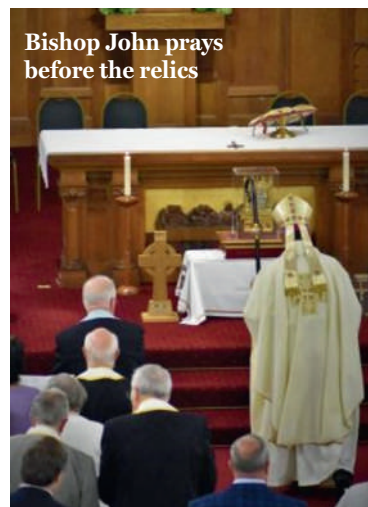
Dominique Hayes, Headteacher at St Mary's RC Primary School, said: "It was a wonderful occasion for our Year 6 children to attend Mass and visit the relics of the saints. The opportunity to be so close to an actual physical link to a best friend of Jesus was incredible. It will be a memory we will all keep forever."

Later that day, parishioners from across the deanery and beyond gathered for a special Mass celebrated by Bishop John, in which he reflected on how these saints might inspire us in our faith today.

Drawing attention to the example of St Columba in his homily, Bishop John said: "Celtic monasticism was rather different to the monasticism that we have today. Young men and women would enter monasteries and convents in order to learn about Christ, to grow in that sense of prayer and knowledge of the



St Mary's pupils with the relics



Bishop John prays before the relics

scriptures and to live in a community of holiness. The second stage was that some of the very best monks and nuns would then be sent out on mission to found other communities and to preach, and so it was that Columba was sent to

found the community of Iona.

"So there's a great tradition in Celtic spirituality of establishing the Church, growing in that sense of faith and prayer and knowledge of God and the going on in mission.

"And I think that is a very good recipe for all of us as Christians that we need to start by trying to grow in that sense of faith and prayer for ourselves in order that we may be more effectively missionary disciples."

Bishop John then went on to recall Pope Francis' call to a life of mission, reminding us that faith is not something to be kept private and away from the world, but is something to be taken out into the world as a light to others.

He said: "Pope Francis had only been pope for a few months when he addressed bishops in South America, saying: 'It's no good you lot sitting in your cathedrals – even with the doors open – waiting for

people to come in. Do you have the courage to go out there and to walk with people even while they're walking away from the Church?'"

Bishop John continued: "St Paul uses a little phrase, which is quite hauntingly beautiful. In his second letter to the Corinthians, he says: 'So, we are ambassadors for Christ'."

"What's an ambassador? It's someone who is delegated by somebody else to stand in their place, to carry on their work with their authority. And you and I are delegated by Jesus Christ to stand in His place, to carry on His work with His authority.

"What a challenge and privilege. And that's something we need to be renewing in our lives constantly, saying, 'I want to be an ambassador for Christ. Therefore, every action, decision, and choice I make, I want to try and emulate what Christ was – and is – for all of us. That's our vocation as missionary disciples.'"



Oftsed in glowing report for St Mary's, Jarrow

Happy, proud and superbly behaved pupils who love to learn – that's the children of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, according to its latest Ofsted report.

The school, part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was rated 'Good' overall, with 'Outstanding' leadership and management and behaviour and attitudes.

Lead inspector Jenny Thomas said in her report: "Behaviour around school is superb. Any issues with behaviour are picked up promptly by adults.

Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour in lessons and around school. The leadership of the school is outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the schools. Parents say that leaders and staff 'go the extra mile'.

Executive headteacher Marie Graham said: "We are absolutely delighted with our Ofsted report. It acknowledges the hard work, energy, commitment and team spirit of our children, staff, governors and our very supportive parents and carers in the family of St Mary's and Bishop Chadwick Trust."

Mahawa's workshop brings LOUDfence initiative to a beautiful conclusion

Talented fibre artist Mahawa Keita led a creative ribbon workshop at St Chad's Cathedral and Birmingham Cathedral St Philip's which responded to recent LOUDfence initiatives.

The ribbons, which were originally dedicated and placed on the railings at both cathedrals as a sign of solidarity with those who have suffered abuse, were used to create a memorable piece of art.

Mahawa opened the workshop by talking about how the weaving of ribbons symbolises connection and the flowers symbolise care, and how we can all personalise our weaving to tell the story and show how we care, as a community.

Attendees created elements of what will be a larger piece in recognition and support of those who have experienced abuse.

This joint event brought together many organisations to support abuse survivors including LOUDfence, the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Birmingham Anglican Cathedral.

Born in Dakar, Senegal, Mahawa moved to Gunjur, in The Gambia after the sudden death of her father. She started trading to make ends meet and to help pay her school fees. Her first crafts were toys for the local children, using materials she could find.

Mahawa relocated to the UK over 10 years ago, since when she has pursued a career in the textile industry, learning advanced constructive textile techniques such as machine knitting and embroidery techniques and gold work.



Mahawa at work with the LOUDfence ribbons, which were originally pinned to railings outside St Chad's Cathedral and Birmingham Cathedral St Philip's (below)



Knock pilgrims pray for renewal of Jesus

Archbishop of Cardiff Mark O'Toole went on pilgrimage to Knock, where he gave a homily in the Holy Shrine of Our Lady.

During his homily, he emphasised the need to listen to God and to hear Him whisper the mystery of His love to us, saying he came to Knock "as pilgrims. It is good for us to be together. As we gather here we experience the truth of Jesus anew through the presence and witness of His mother. We are strengthened in the journey of faith. To be a Pilgrim is "to be on the way". To walk together. Pope Francis encourages us in this 'walking together', it is how

we build a synodal Church.

"Mary will help point the way. We know from our experience at this Shrine that it is Mary who always points the way."

He emphasised how, during the apparitions, "mary pointed to Jesus", putting him at the centre. "So, we come to the Eucharist, the Mass. It at the Eucharist that we encounter Jesus most profoundly. We deepen our love of him. We go forth from the Mass, to witness to him in the world. During this time of pilgrimage, we pray for a renewal of a love of Jesus, present in the Eucharist."



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Mark 10 Mission is ready to go again with its rosary challenge

Andy Drozdziak

A Catholic school ministry is hoping to create a “rosary revolution” among young people.

After being blown away by a previous rosary challenge, Catholic ministry The Mark 10 Mission is hoping to lead a Rosary revival in Catholic schools in October.

Last year, they launched their inaugural Rosary Challenge, and tens of thousands of children used audio recordings to pray a decade of the Rosary in class each day.

“Last Autumn, we were blown away by how many schools threw themselves into the challenge and prayed the rosary,” Mark 10 founder Greg Finn told the *Universe*.

The Mark 10 Mission was initially founded by Catholic teacher Greg in 2020 to help children hear the Gospel during the pandemic. Since then, it has grown in popularity, with thousands of pupils and teachers tuning into its weekly liturgies enthusiastically including the rosary.

“At first, I was a little concerned that children could find the prayer repetitive and dull, but I needn’t have worried – the opposite was true. We had such wonderful feedback. Children loved the routine and rhythm of the daily

devotion and were excited about praying each and every mystery (of the rosary),” Greg said.

This year, The Mark 10 team is hoping to make an even bigger impact by filming a series of rosary videos at the national shrine at the Slipper Chapel Shrine in Walsingham.

Greg works closely with Diocese of Leeds priest, Fr Henry Longbottom, and with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal who minister at St Patrick’s Mission in Bradford. Worship leader Angel Anyamele and missionary Pippa Baker are also part of the team.

As well as promoting the rosary, Mark 10 also want to encourage young pilgrims to travel to Walsingham. Their videos include footage from around the shrine, and they hope that ‘showing off the beauty of Walsingham will increase the number of school trips there this academic year.’

Serving Catholic schools with free weekly online Gospel liturgies, the Mark 10 mission is inspired by the passage in Mark 10:13-15, in which Jesus says: “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

• **Find out more at**
www.themark10mission.co.uk



Ipswich pilgrimage honours the memory of Cardinal Wolsey

Jean Johnson

The annual pilgrimage to Ipswich’s historic shrines concluded on 3rd September, drawing at least 75 attendees and featuring an appearance by the town’s Mayor.

Led by local clergy, the walk commemorates Cardinal Wolsey and focuses on Christian unity and devotion to Our Lady of Grace.

The annual pilgrimage walk to the site on Lady Lane in Ipswich – home to the pre-Reformation shrine of Our Lady of Grace – and onwards to the ecumenical shrine at St Mary at the Elms, the church closest to the original shrine, took place on Sunday, 3rd September, on a beautiful sunny day.

We were privileged to welcome the Mayor of Ipswich, who is well-versed in the shrine’s history and firmly believes that our original statue now resides in Nettuno, Italy. The ecumenical shrine features a replica of that statue, carved from English oak in Ipswich 21 years ago by a parishioner from

ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE WALK



TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GRACE OF IPSWICH
Sunday 3rd September 2023
Starting at 3.00pm

St Pancras. Meanwhile, St Pancras has a statue carved in Italy.

The pilgrims gathered at St Peter’s Church and followed the route originally planned by Cardinal Wolsey, who was born 550 years ago in Ipswich. The tradition of an annual walk along this route was revived in 1978, and five individuals present this year were part of that first pilgrimage.

The walk was led by Fr John Thackray, vicar of St Mary at the Elms, who proudly carried our Guild banner, and by Fr Joseph Welch, the parish priest of St Pancras, representing Bishop Peter.

Walking in silence, we made five stops to recite the joyful mysteries of the rosary and to sing hymns. Upon our final arrival at Lady Lane, members renewed their commitment to pray for unity among all Christians through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to promote devotion to her under the title of Our Lady of Grace.

Fr Joseph then led a brief service at the shrine. His homily, which quoted St John Henry Newman, focused on the significance of honouring Our Lady. The event concluded with refreshments and was a joyous occasion.

Next year, we plan to celebrate on Sunday 8th September, Our Lady’s birthday, and hope to welcome even more pilgrims.



Some of the Year 2s with the bird boxes they helped build

We’re just wild about nature!

A Catholic Primary school trip to Washington Wetland Centre has inspired a new generation of mini ornithologists in Peterlee, as students learned about God’s creation.

Year 2 pupils from Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School, Peterlee, part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, were thrilled to stumble across an enormous nest at the centre where they discovered ‘Ava the osprey’, who helped them learn more about animals and the natural world.

Year 2 teacher Susan Jones

organised the visit to Washington Wetland Centre as part of The Generation Wild project at the centre. She said: “In RE, Year 2 have been learning about God’s creation and ways we can care for his precious world, and in science, we have been learning about plants and animals.

“This visit help pupils connect with nature.”

During the visit, the children met Ava the osprey. Ava gave the children a “translator phone” to allow the children to listen to what the creatures were saying.

After their visit, the classmates

followed Ava on her journey via an interactive website and carried out nature activities in the school grounds and at home. On completion of 10 activities, the children were awarded their Guardians of the Wild certificate and pin badge.

Fledgling twitcher Daniel Hammond, seven, said: “I love helping the birds. It really is important to me because I just love birds!”

The children were each given a certificate signed by Sir David Attenborough for their hard work and dedication to the project.

Fr Peter blessed with Ratzinger scholarship to support PhD study

Keith Morris

Fr Peter Wagnanski, who is working part-time towards a PhD at the University of Durham, has been awarded a Vatican Research Scholarship from the Ratzinger Foundation.

Each year, the Foundation selects five PhD candidates in theology, patristics or holy scriptures to receive academic grants. These competitive scholarships support and promote the study of Pope Benedict's theology, in particular research which demonstrates Pope Benedict's commitment that faith in Jesus Christ is the only true ground for human flourishing, both for the individual and for society.

Fr Peter, who has recently been appointed as personal secretary to Bishop of East Anglia Peter Collins, is working to respond to new secular philosophies about our relationship to humanity's long term future, using the theology of Pope Benedict XVI to bring to light



Fr Peter Wagnanski. Photo: Fields Photography

the meaning future generations have for us today.

Fr Peter said: "Secular philosophy has identified that for the first time in history, humanity is now the greatest threat to itself, and the Catholic faith has a potentially enormous role to play in ensuring that the coming centuries are a time when humanity's future flourishing and blessedness are assured rather than squandered."



Drumming up a storm

More than 200 visitors flocked to a Coventry Catholic school to marvel at pupil creations in a celebration of arts.

The annual event at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, part of the Romero Catholic Academy, celebrates the school's achievements in the creative arts, giving pupils the chance to express themselves across multiple artistic mediums.

Students were encouraged to get out of their comfort zone across a range of projects.

Parents, carers and friends gathered to celebrate their achievements, with around 100 student works on show including GCSE and A-Level projects.

The event celebrated the diverse creative arts produced by pupils including photography, drama, and art, and featured students

embracing natural talents through dance, music and song.

Zoe Seth at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School said: "It was a joy to welcome so many members of our school community to witness such a special evening."

The event "allows students to express themselves through their talent, involving students across all key stages to show their talents to parents, carers, and friends."

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COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES BRITAIN



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

GARDENING



The cool season vegetable garden: it really is the best part of autumn

Just because summer is over, it doesn't mean your vegetable garden has to end too.

It might not be sunny and warm every day, but autumn is for gardening just as much as spring and summer, especially when it comes to growing edibles.

Some of the best crops of the year won't even grow until things cool down. You might get the fruit you want but lovely crunchy veg are just ready to be picked. So keep your tools handy and read on to know what you need to know to prepare your autumn garden for planting.

A lot of people I know think of autumn as a good time to give their green thumb a rest for a while. But not me! I think this time is a great one to be in the garden, especially when it comes to growing edibles! The days are cooler and humidity is low, pests and diseases are far less,

and the demands of watering are minimal. Even the weeds are fewer.

And if that weren't enough of an incentive, some of my favourite edibles are best grown and thrive only in cooler weather.

Think green leaf and you're on the right track: Spinach, turnips, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, lettuce, endive, arugula, leeks and collards... these are all autumn crops and come up nice and easy. Add to these root crops like carrots, beets, and parsnips, which all love cooler weather, too.

In fact, heat is not a friend to these plants, which is why you typically don't see them in a summer garden.

So what do you need to know to get ready for planting your autumn garden? Well, if you're using the same space as earlier in the year, now's the time to tidy up the planting area by cleaning out the remains of the summer garden. Most of your plants are likely past their prime and beyond harvesting; so out they go to the compost pile. And while you're at it, remove crop

residue and any weeds. And most important, now is the perfect time to incorporate more organic compost or well-rotted manure into the soil. The garden beds open again, so you don't have to worry about having to work around the plants in the ground. It's much easier now!

And by now the heavy feeders from your warm-season plants have depleted many of the nutrients in the soil. So we need to add back some natural fertiliser. Compost is the perfect amendment for doing that while recharging the soil with plenty of organic matter.

Some vegetables like spinach, collards, and cabbage are often sown directly for autumn crops but if you're anxious for a faster start like

me, transplants from garden centres or on line are readily available and an easy way for some instant satisfaction and long-term rewards.

Now some plant varieties are harder than others, while a few are even known to actually "sweeten up" after being exposed to a few frost events. Brussels sprouts and broccoli are two of the most popular frost-tolerant choices. But overall, like with all edibles, depending on where you live, will determine when you need to plant. You can find that information on the seed packs and plant tags and of course in books and online, even apps for your smart phone.

But for now just focus on the planting. Now go get dirty!

"The days are cooler and humidity is low, pests and diseases are far less, and the demands of watering are minimal. Even the weeds are fewer. And if that weren't enough of an incentive, some of my favourite edibles are best grown and thrive only in cooler weather..."

HEALTH

Hypothermia: how it affects you, why it's so dangerous – and how to treat it

What happens to your body when you get left in the cold

Adam Taylor

Pret a Manger, the popular urban sandwich and coffee chain, was handed an £800,000 fine recently after one of its employees became stuck in a walk-in freezer.

The employee was trapped in the -18deg C freezer for two-and-a-half hours before being found. Reports suggest the employee displayed symptoms of hypothermia as a result.

This is not the first instance where an employee has become locked in a walk-in freezer, with a 2022 US case sadly resulting in death from hypothermia.

Extreme cold temperatures are no joke. It only takes a short amount of time in the cold for the body to be seriously affected.

The body's normal temperature is about 37 deg C. When the body deviates from this temperature, it's either because it's fighting an infection (causing temperature to rise) or because it's been exposed to cold.

One of the body's first responses to a temperature drop is to undergo a process called vasoconstriction. This reduces blood flow to exposed areas – such as fingers and toes – by narrowing the diameter of the blood vessels. This process helps maintain core body temperature, which keeps vital organs functioning. In temperatures below -4 deg C, vasoconstriction also prevents ice crystals from forming in the blood.

When core temperature drops below 35 deg C, hypothermia occurs. This means the body is unable to produce enough heat to keep up with the rate it's being lost.

In the case of the Pret employee, they were only wearing jeans and a T-shirt in a -18 deg C environment. Since most body heat is lost through our skin and when we exhale, even just a few minutes in this environment would lower body temperature and cause hypothermia to set in.

Hypothermia has three stages.

In the mild stage, body temperature drops to between 32 and 35 deg C. The heart beats faster, breathing rate and blood pressure increase and muscles become tense from shivering. This all happens to generate heat. You may also need to urinate more often, as the body



diverts blood to the kidneys. Confusion and reduced co-ordination may also happen.

In the moderate stage, body temperature drops to between 28 and 32 deg C. By this stage all body functions begin to slow and shivering ceases.

In the severe stage, body temperature drops below 28 deg C and most body systems stop functioning. Most will be unconscious by this stage. Heart function deteriorates and the lungs lose function as they become congested with fluid due to the lack of blood circulation.

Research suggests that for every 5 deg C drop in temperature, there's a 1.6-fold increase in the risk of injury or death. There's no exact information on how long a person can survive in a walk-in freezer, but based on information from past cases it could only be a matter of hours. Modelling also predicts a healthy man could survive naked in -20 deg C for two and a half hours. This is extended to around 15 hours when wearing two layers of clothing.

Dangers of the cold

Hypothermia is so dangerous because it progresses gradually, with the sufferer becoming unaware and confused. This confusion, brought on by the temperature drop, leads to a decline in brain function.

In some cases of hypothermic death, people

have been found naked or hidden in small, enclosed spaces (known as terminal burrowing) in an attempt to keep warm. Removing one's clothes, termed "paradoxical undressing", happens in the final stages of hypothermia. It's caused by the blood vessels opening one last time to push blood into tissue to warm them. This causes people to become extremely hot.

Hypothermia commences quicker in water as it conducts heat away from the body 25 times better. Body size and shape can also affect how quickly hypothermia commences. Surprisingly, people with higher body fat are more likely to develop hypothermia. This is because they have an increased body surface area to lose heat, and less muscle mass to generate heat through shivering. Women also develop hypothermia faster than men.

Although hypothermia due to cold air takes longer, air movement can cause it to set in faster. This is because continually moving air shifts the body's warmth away from the skin's surface.

There's also the risk of tissue damage from frostbite from cold exposure. At -18 deg C, frostbite happens in as little as 30 minutes. Frostbite is the freezing of the skin, which progresses to deeper tissues if cold exposure continues. This results in tissue death and can lead to loss of fingers and toes.

Movement can be beneficial in the early

"Movement can be beneficial in the early stages of frostbite. But as hypothermia sets in this can be counterproductive as it circulates blood from the cold limbs back to the core, risking even greater body temperature drops. Movement during moderate or severe hypothermia can increase the risk of death ..."

stages of frostbite. But as hypothermia sets in this can be counterproductive as it circulates blood from the cold limbs back to the core, risking even greater body temperature drops. Movement during moderate or severe hypothermia can increase the risk of death due to this rush of cold blood to the core.

Hypothermia is treated through rewarming. For people with mild hypothermia, removing them from the cold, taking off any wet clothing and giving them extra layers to warm up usually helps.

Offer them warm food or drink to give them energy to generate heat through shivering.

People with moderate or severe hypothermia will require heat from an external source as their body isn't able to generate heat. This can be provided in the form of external warmth, such as chemical heat packs, applied to the head, neck or torso. In extreme cases, warmed saline may need to be inserted into body cavities. Be wary of applying heating pads to limbs or immersing the person in warm water, as this may burn the skin or increase the risk of death from cold blood rushing to the core.

It's unlikely you may find yourself trapped in a freezer. But should you ever find yourself in a situation where hypothermia is a risk, your best bet for slowing its progression is layering clothes (or other materials you can find) to help trap the body's heat.

Adam Taylor is a Professor and Director of the Clinical Anatomy Learning Centre, Lancaster University



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FOOD

Eating healthy for you – and the planet

A simple guide to living a more plant-based lifestyle

Whether you're seeking a better approach to your diet, a more environmentally conscious lifestyle or both, you're in good company. Interest in plant-forward eating is not slowing down. Whatever your reasons for wanting to make this change, you probably have questions. Do you want to go vegan, or just vegetarian? Can you add a few more plant-based foods to your diet and reap the benefits?

"A diet centred around fruits, vegetables and other plant-based foods can deliver nutrients your body uses for energy while avoiding many of the drawbacks associated with eating meat," said Dr. Luigi Gratton, vice president of Training for Herbalife. "Eating whole fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and grains is beneficial because they contain a plethora of nutrients that support healthy function across all bodily systems."

Although any effort to incorporate more plant-based foods into your routine offers benefits, it may be difficult to do all at once. To make lasting change, experts recommend taking one step at a time. New ways of shopping, cooking and eating take getting used to – as does adjusting to new flavours and textures.

What is a plant-based lifestyle?

'Plant-based' means you primarily eat food derived from plants. This is similar to the term



'plant-forward', emphasising whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, seeds and nuts – but not limiting you to those foods. Versions of plant-based diets include:

Vegetarian: You abstain from eating animal products including meat, poultry or fish. Vegetarians consider it acceptable to eat animal by-products, such as milk and eggs, if the animals are kept in adequate conditions.

Vegan: In the strictest version of the plant-based approach, you eliminate any food of animal origin. In addition to avoiding meat and seafood, vegans also avoid dairy products, eggs and honey. Vegan foods never contain byproducts of animal agriculture like lard, whey or gelatin.

Flexitarian: An alternative to vegetarian, flexitarians focus on fruits, veggies, whole grains, legumes and nuts, but occasionally include meat, poultry, fish or eggs. When eating meat, flexitarians choose organic, free-range, pasture-raised or grass-fed beef, chicken or turkey. This is a great option if you're just starting a plant-based lifestyle.

Are you're getting enough nutrients?

One question for anyone considering going vegetarian or vegan is whether they'll get enough protein and other nutrients for optimal health. Beyond seeking plant-based forms of protein like beans and legumes, nuts and seeds, iron-rich tofu and spinach, and whole grains like

quinoa, you can add supplements to support well-being with plant-based certified products.

"While following a plant-based lifestyle can be a very healthy way of eating, it may be tough to meet all your goals. For example, vegans seek good options to increase or meet their protein goals, including supplementation," said Gratton. "Plant-based certified products like the shakes in the Herbalife V line can help you hit your macro target while taking out the guesswork of plant-based living." The product line offers four plant-based certified products to help simplify plant-based nutrition:

Plant-based Protein Shakes: Available in classic and chocolate flavours, their 20 grams of protein (pea, pumpkin seeds and chia) satisfies hunger, reduces food cravings, maintains lean muscle tone, sustains energy and promotes healthy skin. The shakes are also a source of non-heme iron.

Greens Booster: Formulated with special blends derived from organic fruits, vegetables, superfood powders and green tea, this is an easy way to add more fruit and vegetable ingredients to your daily routine.

Immune Support: Contains vitamins C, D and zinc to help balance and support immune health.

Digestive Support: Oat and guar fibres support a healthy gut, digestion and regularity.

Ready to get started? Add one plant-based meal per day, then slowly increase to three a day over the course of a month or two. Before you know it, you'll be following a plant-forward lifestyle. Making one small change at a time can help improve your daily diet and overall wellness.

Thai classic to get you back in the swing

With autumn back in full swing, everyone's schedules are busier than ever. Between school, work, after-school activities, errands and more, it's all too easy for quality time like family meals to take a back seat. But here's a straight forward and really tasty meal that ticks all the boxes of taste, health and and fun. make sure you use Egglard's Best eggs.

Pad Thai

Prep time: 45 minutes Cook time: 30 minutes Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons tamarind paste or substitute
- 3/4 cup water (boiling)
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 tablespoons peanut oil or vegetable oil
- 8 ounces dried rice stick noodles, about 1/8 inch wide (the width of linguine)
- 1/4 teaspoon table salt
- 12 ounces medium shrimp, peeled and deveined if desired
- 3 cloves garlic, pressed through garlic press or minced (1 tablespoons)
- 1 medium shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons dried shrimp, chopped fine (optional)
- 2 tablespoons Thai salted preserved radish (optional)
- 6 tablespoons chopped unsalted roasted peanuts
- 3 cups bean sprouts
- 5 medium scallions, green parts only, sliced thin on sharp bias
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves (optional)
- Lime wedges

METHOD

1. Soak tamarind paste in 3/4 cup boiling water for about 10 minutes, then push it through mesh strainer to remove seeds and fibres and extract as much pulp as possible. Stir fish sauce, rice vinegar, sugar, cayenne and 2 tablespoons oil into tamarind liquid and set aside.

2. Cover rice sticks with hot tap water in large bowl. Soak until softened, pliable and limp but not fully tender, about 20 minutes. Drain noodles and set aside. Beat eggs and 1/8 teaspoon salt in small bowl and set aside.

3. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over high heat until it just begins to smoke, about 2 minutes. Add shrimp and sprinkle with remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt. Cook, tossing occasionally, until shrimp are opaque and browned about the edges, about 3 minutes. Transfer shrimp to plate and set aside.

4. Off heat, add remaining tablespoon of oil to skillet and swirl to coat. Add garlic and shallot, set skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly, until light golden brown, about 1-2 minutes. Add eggs to skillet and stir vigorously with wooden spoon until scrambled and barely moist, about 20 seconds. Add noodles, dried shrimp and salted radish (if using) to eggs. Toss with 2 wooden spoons to combine.

5. Pour fish sauce mixture over noodles, increase heat to high and cook, tossing constantly, until noodles are evenly coated. Scatter 1/4 cup peanuts, bean sprouts, all but 1/4 cup scallions and cooked shrimp over noodles. Continue to cook, tossing constantly, until noodles are tender, about 2-3 minutes. If not yet tender, add 2 tablespoons water to skillet and continue to cook until tender.

6. Transfer noodles to serving platter, sprinkle with remaining scallions, 2 tablespoons peanuts and cilantro. Serve immediately, passing lime wedges separately.





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FILMS

The 'tec with the 'tache is back!

Kenneth Branagh returns to the big screen as super sleuth Hercule Poirot

A Haunting in Venice (20th Century) is the third in a series of Agatha Christie adaptations, all featuring her famed sleuth Hercule Poirot, on which director and star Kenneth Branagh has collaborated with screenwriter Michael Green.

Yet, in at least two related respects, the newcomer is noticeably distinct from its predecessors.

Both 2017's *Murder on the Orient Express* and last year's *Death on the Nile* were straightforward whodunnits and both included dialogue indicating that Poirot, a self-identified Catholic in print, was indeed a believer.

This time out, the brilliant Belgian is up against supposedly supernatural forces and is also portrayed as having lost his faith.

In large part, that's due to the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, both of which are still recent events given the film's 1947 setting.

Apparently worn out and disenchanted, Poirot has retired to La Serenissima where, with the help of police officer-turned-bodyguard Vitale Portfoglio (Richard Scamarcio), he resolutely refuses all attempts to lure him back to work.

He does so, that is, until celebrated detective novelist Ariadne Oliver (Tina Fey), an old friend, appears on the scene. Instead of a murder case, she presents Poirot with the opportunity to unmask the fraudulent techniques of spiritualist Joyce Reynolds (Michelle Yeoh).

At the invitation of renowned opera singer Rowena Drake (Kelly Reilly), Reynolds will be presiding over a Halloween-night seance at Drake's reputedly haunted palazzo. Reynolds' goal will be to summon up the spirit of Alicia, Drake's recently deceased adult daughter who died in tragic, and murky, circumstances.

Of course, where Poirot goes, homicide either precedes or follows – and the seance proves no exception. As Poirot sets out to solve the

ensuing crime, Green's script, loosely based on Christie's 1969 novel *Hallowe'en Party* (along with some of her other works) raises an interesting philosophical point.

Poirot's habitual method is, of course, to use logic to arrive at a rational explanation for whatever set of circumstances he's investigating and thus bring order out of chaos. Yet, without God, the ultimate source of rationality, the universe is an unintelligible tumult of accidental circumstances.

Accordingly, just as Poirot's withdrawal from work is mute testimony to his newfound atheism, so his return to it suggests a restored belief. So far so good. However, in establishing this theme, Green somewhat conflates necromancy with religion.

If souls can be conjured up, the argument seems to run, then human beings are not merely physical but spiritual as well and must have been endowed with their souls by God. Yet, while scripture appears to indicate that communicating with the dead is a real possibility, it's quite clear on the point that engaging in such a practice is sinful and very dangerous.

Not a very apt starting point, then, for a proof of God's existence.

Although some of the thinking at work in the screenplay may be muddled, it's at least sophisticated enough to deserve careful analysis. Parents will have to assess whether mature teenagers are sufficiently equipped to take on such material. Those who are will appreciate, along with their elders, a lush, eerily atmospheric production with a generally satisfying outcome.

Kenneth Branagh told hollywoodreporter.com that the film was an "exotic and mysterious supernatural thriller."

"I would say that we are firmly a supernatural



Kenneth Branagh stars in a scene from the film *A Haunting in Venice*. Photo: Rob Youngson, 20th Century Studios

thriller, and the normal rules do not apply," he said. "So, as magnificent as Venice is, the film and the story itself is not as Gothic as it might appear, but it's certainly exotic. It's certainly mysterious."

He added that Poirot has to face some considerable challenges as he tackles the

conundrum in *A Haunting in Venice*.

"Poirot has to face some ghosts across this long, dark night of the soul, that is this entrapment in a haunted palazzo in Venice during a terrible storm, but inside that, we want to enter, entertain, divert, compel and scare," he said.

Four strategies to make learning fun for your kids

We're all back at school – so how can parents support their children's learning?

Supporting your child's early learning isn't just important for the present. Doing so can plant the seeds for future success. According to the National Institute of Children Health and Human Development, studies show that supporting children's early learning can result in higher test scores from nursery up to age 21, better grades in maths and reading, and a better chance that children will stay in school and go to university.

Of course, getting your children interested in learning is easier said than done. Read on to learn four strategies that will make learning an engaging and entertaining experience for kids that can foster a lifelong love of learning.

1. Reward achievements

A powerful tool to motivate your children to learn is positive reinforcement. By offering rewards like stickers, extra playtime or a treat

when your child completes a tough assignment or gets a good grade, you can help them enjoy homework and other educational tasks.

A rewards system helps kids recognise their efforts and visualise their progress. This proof of their achievements can encourage them to set goals and work steadily to achieve them.

One thing to remember is that the rewards shouldn't overshadow the importance of learning itself. Make sure to emphasise both the short- and long-term benefits of knowledge.

2. Snacks as learning tools

Turn mundane lessons into a delightful experience by incorporating snacks into learning. According to a study by The Nation's Report Card, only 35 per cent of students are reading proficiently by Year 5. As such, it's important to teach literacy in an engaging, imaginative way from an early age.

A bite-size snack that's perfect for educational activities are Sun-Maid raisins. The

brand collaborated with ABCmouse, the leading digital learning programme for children, to expand access to literacy resources.

3. Plan field trips that inspire

You can extend learning beyond the classroom by taking your children on inspiring field trips. If they're learning about local history, check out a museum for exhibits on the topic. Museums, zoos, botanical gardens, historical sites and science centres offer interactive exhibits, guided tours and other activities that make subjects come to life. These hands-on experiences make learning fun and help children retain the knowledge they gain throughout the school year.

For a low-cost alternative, consider taking your children out on a walk to discover and learn new things. Take turns identifying different things based on themes (eg, name things you see that are yellow) or take a new path that leads to a fun surprise, such as stopping by a local library.

4. Get crafty

When paired with a lesson, crafts are an excellent way to make learning meaningful. Making dioramas, posters and models helps kids create a visual representation of what they're learning and gives them a hands-on approach to learning.

If your child is learning about the solar system, help them build a model of the sun and planets to help solidify the concept. Or, if they're learning about a historical event, they can design a diorama or poster that illustrates the event in a concrete way.

Parents can transform learning from a chore into an adventure by offering rewards, incorporating snacks, planning field trips and using crafts.

These tips can help you create an environment that encourages your child's curiosity and allows them to explore education in a fun and accessible way.

How tales of ancient ‘northern courage’ inspired Tolkien to write his classic sagas

HISTORY

Madeleine Killacky

How J.R.R. Tolkien’s novels were inspired by Medieval poems of ‘northern bravery’

In a moment of distraction from the laborious work of marking an “enormous pile of examination papers”, J.R.R. Tolkien flipped to a blank page on a student essay and scribbled, “in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit”.

This became the first line of *The Hobbit* (1937). From this doodle Tolkien went on to write one of the world’s most popular fantasy adventure series, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954).

His main work, however, was not as the writer of fantasies that made him so famous. For the 50th anniversary of Tolkien’s death, I want to celebrate Tolkien’s life as a medievalist and philologist (historian of languages), as well as some of his major contributions to the study of medieval literature.

Tolkien’s first teaching post was at the University of Leeds, where he worked on a translation of the 14th-century Middle English poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. For many, his is still one of the best translations.

In 1925, Tolkien won a professorship at the University of Oxford. A year later he translated the Old English poem, *Beowulf*. He remained a professor of English language and literature for the next 20 years.

Tolkien’s world was in a state of flux. The rudderless turmoil of the two world wars undoubtedly had affected his writing and this is possibly why his preference for settings was always for pre-industrial England. This can be seen in his love of fairy tales and in his drawings, which are almost all natural landscapes, with little architecture.

His love of trees was so great that he wrote a letter to his publisher saying: “I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees, and always have been and I find human mistreatment of them as hard to bear as some find ill-treatment of animals.” In another, he talks of his fondness for myth, fairy tales “and above all for heroic legend”.

Tolkien’s biographer, Humphrey Carpenter, argues that he was attempting to create “a mythology



Knights travel to battle in a Medieval tapestry

for England” through his fantasy fiction, by creating an imaginary world with its own languages, history, cultures and people.

Tolkien did this by drawing not only on his knowledge of languages and literature in Old and Middle English, but also on those languages that influenced the cultural and historical development of Britain, such as Finnish, Welsh, Old Norse, Old High and Middle German.

He loved languages – both ancient and modern – and was well versed in more than a few, including Finnish, Welsh, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Danish, Old Norse, Old English and Old Icelandic, as well as his invented Elvish languages Quenya and Sindarin, which have full etymologies and which were so lovingly used in his Middle Earth books.

“

Northern courage is at work when Gandalf confronts the Balrog on the bridge of Khazad-Dûm. In blocking the Balrog – and shouting his famous line, “you shall not pass” – he refuses to allow the enemy to cross the bridge and buys time for the rest of the fellowship to escape. He exhibits magnanimous courage in the face of inevitable defeat.

Tolkien wrote in a letter in 1951 about his desire to “make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy-story”. He wanted to dedicate it “simply: to England: to my country”.

The source of inspiration for this “mythology for England” was the medieval world Tolkien knew so well from his scholarly studies.

‘Northern courage’

One theme that Tolkien picked up from his work in medieval literature – and which runs like a thread throughout his fictional worlds – is the reckless bravery and heroic courage that many medieval protagonists exhibit.

Tolkien termed this kind of response to challenge “northern courage” in his 1936 essay, *Beowulf*:

The Monsters and the Critics. It was ‘northern’ because this type of courage is highly prevalent in the Old Norse sagas that Tolkien was so familiar with and which grew out of the northern Scandinavian countries between the 9th and 13th centuries.

This concept is probably best expressed in a line from the Old English poem, *The Battle of Maldon* (AD991): “Will shall be the sterner, heart the bolder, spirit the greater as our strength lessens.”

Simply put, northern courage is when one exhibits the courage to keep persevering despite the knowledge that sooner or later defeat is inevitable. In constructing his “mythology for England”, Tolkien drew on medieval poems such as *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon* as he argued that the people of ancient England would have had a “fundamentally similar heroic temper”.

Northern courage in Lord of the Rings

Northern courage is at work in *The Lord of the Rings*, when Gandalf confronts the Balrog on the bridge of Khazad-Dûm. In blocking the Balrog – and shouting his famous line, “you shall not pass” – he refuses to allow the enemy to cross the bridge and buys time for the rest of the fellowship to escape. He

exhibits magnanimous courage and perseverance in the face of inevitable defeat.

In a different way, the protagonists Bilbo and Frodo Baggins exhibit courage as they leave the comforts of the Shire to fulfil a greater heroic duty. This is probably best summed up in Frodo’s exchange with Gandalf: “I wish it need not have happened in my time”, said Frodo. “So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

The wizard’s words here are steeped in northern courage. They insist that we must rise to the challenges offered in our time.

Fifty years on from Tolkien’s death, that spirit of northern bravery endures as an alluring concept. What makes Tolkien’s fantastical world so appealing is the recurrent suggestion that the courage manifested to defeat the big monsters in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* is the very same courage that can be found in hopeless situations of a more ordinary sort.

Madeleine S. Killacky is a PhD Candidate, Medieval Literature, Bangor University

Surrender was never an option for world champion Carolina Muñoz

SPORT

Joe Jordan

As a fighter standing exactly 5 feet tall, her opponents have always been bigger than her. As a youth minister, many of the teenagers in her group tower over her. What stands out about Carolina Muñoz is her confidence. She can command a room with a few well-aimed words about faith and control the ring with a precision of punches. In either situation, she undisputedly believes in a victorious result.

That confidence made her a world champion in taekwondo. Its shattering made her a champion for Christ.

When Muñoz first arrived in the United States from Ecuador at age 3, she was a very shy child. It was only when her mother introduced her to martial arts at the age of 6, after witnessing what the classes did for her older brother's confidence, that something changed in her.

Her natural talent and love for the sport saw her become a dominant athlete throughout her childhood and teenage years. With every win, her confidence grew. She even began teaching martial arts as she became older. In teaching, Muñoz found another love-one that, later in life, became a love for teaching youth.

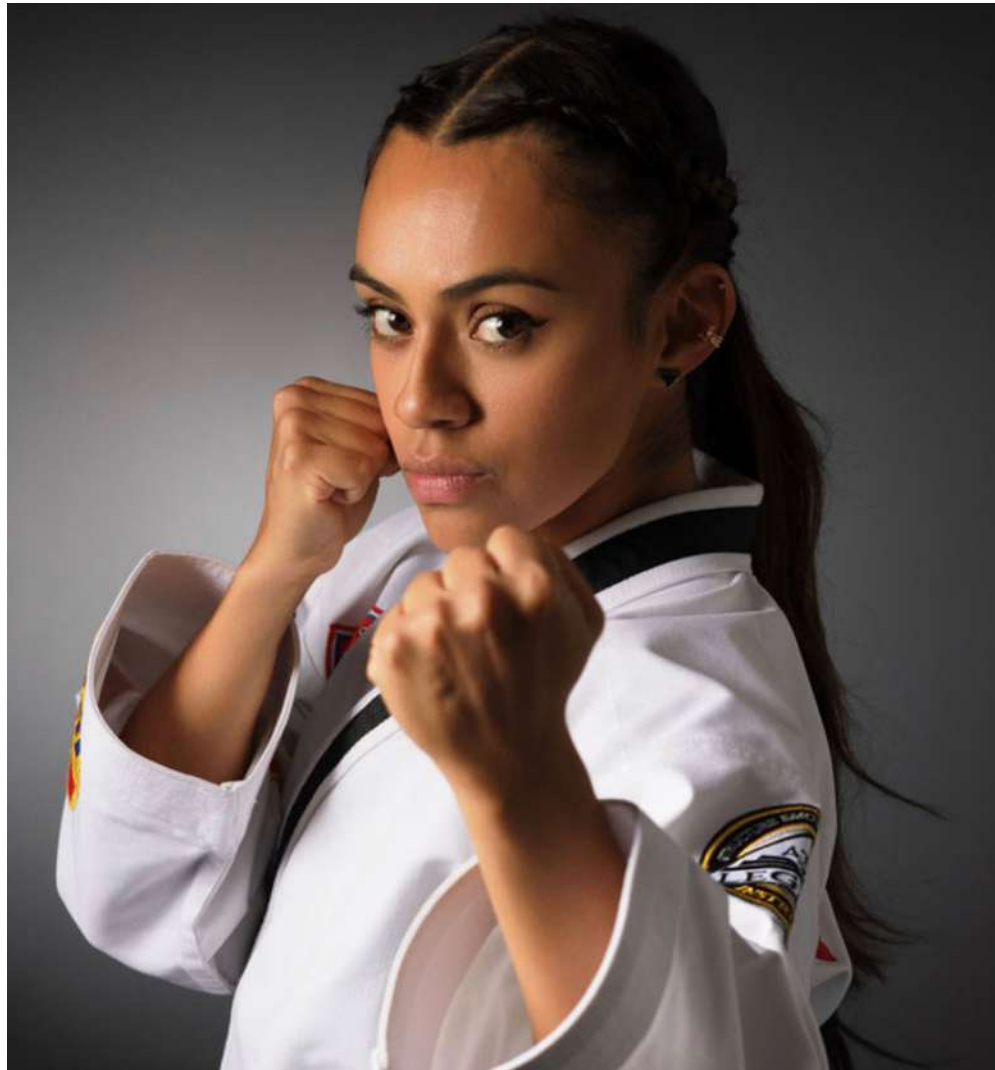
But as a teenager and an immigrant, she realised that there was one playing field that was not quite equal. Muñoz was a Dreamer – someone with undocumented migration status who was brought into the US as a minor and would have qualified for the DREAM Act (The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, known as the DREAM Act, is a United States legislative proposal to grant temporary conditional residency, with the right to work, to illegal immigrants who entered the United States as minors, with a later chance of residency).

By the time she was 16, she found that she could not apply for university or get a car.

In response to this, one of Muñoz's teachers challenged her to speak about her experience as a Dreamer. Her confidence from martial arts and teaching translated well to public speaking, and soon she was sharing her experience with hundreds of students.

On top of that, Muñoz was now fighting nationally. Taekwondo was firmly first in her life, before faith, family or friends.

"My identity was martial arts," she said. "Leading up to my world



championship, I sacrificed a lot. A lot of time with family, a lot of time with friends. I didn't go out. For instance, on Sunday, when my whole family would get together, I would instead go train for hours and hours. I knew my path at that moment and I was so hungry for it."

While her family did not agree with the violence of fighting, or the time it took away, they always supported her. And even though faith was not at the forefront of Muñoz's mind then, it was her devout Catholic family that reminded her of God amid the success. Her mother, especially, had a way of gently bringing Jesus to her daughter.

"In any conversation that I have with my mum, she brings up Jesus and her faith," she said. "Even though my faith wasn't as strong as it is today, she was still feeding me - planting the seed and watering it. There was wisdom in the approach that my parents had, because if you force something upon someone, it's not going to be well received. They just kept giving me these tidbits here and there."

There was only one goal for Muñoz: to become an ATA Martial Arts World Champion.

"I worked so hard for years and years; I always had it in my mind ever since I was super young that I

wanted to be a world champion," she recalled. "There were points where I thought it wasn't possible."

Some of those points were financial. Not wanting her parents to pay the cost, Muñoz spent her late teenage years working to support her dream and then flying around the country by herself to various championships. It was lonely, especially when adversity struck.

In 2013, not long out of school, she advanced as far as she ever had in her career. Muñoz was only weeks away from the World Championships, competing in districts for a qualifying spot when she pulled her hamstring. She could not move, ending her run with bruises all over her leg and tears in her eyes.

Muñoz qualified for her first world championship in Little Rock, Arkansas. There were three separate categories in which she could win: forms, fighting, and weapons. She began with forms, where a fighter presents their technique.

"I was taking all this numbing cream and wrapping everything," she remembered. "Because of my adrenaline, I didn't really feel my hamstring."

She performed what she considers her best-ever form

'I'm the smallest one. It takes bravery to show up and to get in the ring. It takes bravery to speak in front of hundreds of people. So, I ask the teens all the time, 'Who wants to volunteer? Or read at the Mass?' Then we talk about having courage and being brave and they're like, 'OK, I get it. Let me take that one step to becoming braver.'"

Photo Argenis Perez, courtesy of Carolina Muñoz

time during her recovery, especially at God. But eventually that anger turned into questions, and those questions turned into prayer. For perhaps the first time, she contemplated a different type of surrender—the surrender in prayer.

"At that moment I felt so at peace," she said. "I'm the type of person who likes to be in control, but it made me realise I'm so much more than a martial artist."

The ACL injury did not physically end her career. Muñoz recovered and could still attempt a return to competition if she wished – but that is no longer at the top of her priorities anymore.

"I thought everything that I learned in life was because of martial arts, but now it's flip-flopped," she said. "Martial arts is maybe 10th on my list of who I am. First is being a daughter of Christ."

Now she focuses on the two things that pulled her out of the depths of despair: her faith and boxing, which she turned to when she could not kick.

As she was evaluating her life after ACL surgery, the local youth minister contacted her. She was leaving her position to move to Pennsylvania and, ironically, Muñoz was leaving Pennsylvania to move back to New Jersey. The timing felt providential.

"I loved the idea of serving and I had done it before, co-leading the youth group at my mum's parish. So, I said let's do it," she said.

"It's become a second family with the main objective to get them closer to God each and every day," she continued. "I challenge them and try to figure out their gifts, what God has given them."

Of course, martial arts finds its way into many of the lessons. Muñoz can often be seen demonstrating some kicks or a combo of punches.

"We talk about bravery a lot," she said. "I can think of many instances in martial arts when I had to be brave."

"I'm the smallest one. It takes bravery to show up and to get in the ring. It takes bravery to speak in front of hundreds of people."

"So, I ask the teens all the time, 'Who wants to volunteer? Or read at the Mass?' So, then we talk about having courage and being brave and they're like, 'OK, I get it. Let me take that one step to becoming braver.'"

Often, it is Muñoz's little sister who is the first to volunteer in the group, continuing the family tradition of leading youth.

It's a daily battle, but winning confidence in Christ is now the fight of Carolina Muñoz's lifetime – a fight not of this world for the world champion.

technique but tied the three-time reigning world champion. They performed their techniques again. Simultaneously, one judge pointed at the reigning champion and the other two pointed at Muñoz. She was a world champion.

"I threw my hands over my head. I couldn't believe it," she said. "I felt like it was all worth it. All the injuries, all the late nights, all the skipping family events. Feeling the pain right after, that was awesome."

Muñoz no longer competes officially after a life-altering moment in 2020.

That October, she was sparring with a man who far outweighed her, which was not an unusual scenario. But their legs got tangled and his full weight came down on her one leg stuck in an awkward position. The result was the worst pain of her life: a torn knee ligament. She faced months of recovery.

"I physically couldn't walk," she recalled. "I was a world champion who couldn't kick over a box. For me that was wild. Because I didn't have the martial arts, I had to ask the question of 'Who am I really?' And it was a wonderful time, although very hurtful. I was heartbroken. I was mentally drained every day."

Muñoz recalls being angry all the

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days

Dancers from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre in Canterbury Cathedral's cloister as they prepare for their new show, Revelations, which uses African American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs and holy blues.



People in costume as the Mad Hatter and Kazuha from Genshin Impact, attend the Sheffield Anime & Gaming Con at the Mercure Sheffield.

Competitors take part in the Horse section during the Irish National Ploughing Championships at Ratheniska, Co Laois.



Above, The Prince of Wales (left) with the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, at the UN General Assembly in New York during his two-day visit to the US city.



Renowned sculptor Luke Perry puts the finishing touches to his latest piece, 'Strength of the Hijab', which has been commissioned to give visibility to women who wear hijabs as they are largely underrepresented. Believed to be the first sculpture in the world of a woman in a hijab, the monument will be installed in the Smethwick area of Birmingham on the border of the Black Country next month.



Left, bad news, parents... Christmas is just 94 days away, which is why Santa popped in to oversee the launch of the Selfridges Christmas Shop as it opened to the public in London.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, September 24: 25th

Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa. 55:6-9; Ps. 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18
r.18; Phil. 1:20-24, 27; Mt. 20:1-16

Monday, September 25:

Ezra 1:1-6; Ps. 126; Lk.8:16-18

Tuesday, September 26: Weekday

in Ordinary Time or Ss Cosmas and
Damian, Martyrs Ezra 6:7-8,12,14-
20; Ps. 122:1-5; Lk.8:19-21

Wednesday, September 27: St

Vincent de Paul, Priest

Ezra 9:5-9; Tobit 13:2,4,6-8; Lk.9:1-6

Thursday, September 28: Weekday

in Ordinary Time or St Wenceslaus,

Martyr; Ss Lawrence Ruiz, and

Companions, Martyrs

Haggai 1:1-8; Ps. 149:1-6,9; Lk.9:7-9

Friday, September 29: Ss Michael,

Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels

Dan.7:9-10,13-14; Ps. 138:1-5;

Jn.1:47-51

Saturday, September 30: St Jerome,

Priest, Doctor of the Church

Zechariah 2:5-9,14-15; Jeremiah

31:10-12,13; Lk.9:43-45



St Vincent de Paul, Priest

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Died: 23rd September 1968, aged 81.

Canonised: 16th June 2002.

