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# UNIVERSE

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# Time to end 'disaster' of pills-by-post abortions

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pro-life groups are urging the Government to scrap its 'pills-by-post' policy and reinstate in-person appointments before every abortion after another woman was charged with illegally procuring a termination under the controversial scheme.

Bethany Cox appeared at Teesside Crown Court in Middlesbrough this week to answer charges of unlawfully carrying out an abortion on her child.

She denied taking a drug on 6th July 2020 with intent to destroy the life of a child that was capable of being born alive in the knowledge it would lead to the termination of the pregnancy. She is also accused of administering a poison with intent to procure a miscarriage.

It follows the case of Carla Foster, 44, who was imprisoned in June after illegally obtaining pills and inducing an abortion eight months into pregnancy.

She obtained the pills through the British Pregnancy Advisory Service's (BPAS) 'DIY' abortion scheme, dubbed 'pills-by-post,' which allows women to be sent abortion drugs without seeing a medical professional in person to establish the unborn baby's age of gestation.

Similar cases have also taken place – Bethany's is the fourth such case in eight months.

The pills-by-post scheme, which allows

home abortions up to 10 weeks, was introduced during Covid lockdowns, but it soon became evident that many women were incorrectly estimating their babies' gestational age at home.

Now SPUC is calling for change, labelling the scheme as a "disaster".

"The trial of Bethany Cox shows what a disaster the pills-by-post abortion policy is," SPUC told the *Universe*. "In 2020, abortion providers hijacked the pandemic to start sending women abortion pills in the post, without seeing a medical professional in person to establish gestation and check on the woman's wellbeing."

"We are now seeing the horrific consequences of that policy. In the trial of Carla Foster we heard about baby Lily being born dead at 32 weeks, and her mother scarred for life."

"We await the details of the Cox case, but it is clear that the pills-by-post policy is the direct cause of these prosecutions – the fourth in eight months."

"Abortion providers, instead of using these tragic cases to campaign for a liberalisation of abortion law, need to take responsibility for their dangerous policy which has left viable babies dead and exposed women to prosecution."

"In light of these cases, we call on the Government to end the pills-by-post policy immediately."

**Continued on page 2**



Geraldine outside Reims Cathedral: 'It was too beautiful not to share a photo,' she said

## 'Kindnappers' helping Geraldine get to Rome

The kindness of strangers is making 54-year-old Geraldine McFaul's arduous trek from Glasgow to Rome so much easier as they 'kindnap' her as she travels. Find out more on pg 5

### Inside

12



#### Priest leads Omagh tribute

Fr Eugene Hasson tells service, "Love will overcome hate."

- pg 4

#### Christ's story still matters

Star of hit TV show The Chosen says Jesus is still the example to follow, 2,000 years on - pg 12

#### Hawaii hell

Priest tells dramatic story of how wildfires destroyed Maui town

- pg 17

#### Medjugorje's healing power

Prayer and a visit to Bosnian shrine helped dad's recovery

- pg 21



**Save your soil -  
with dead leaves!**

- pg 32



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# Police Guild demands answers over PSNI data

The leadership of the Police Service of Northern Ireland has been urged by the Catholic Police Guild to give a “full response” following a major data blunder.

After details of more than 10,000 officers and staff were published online for a number of hours, the Catholic Police Guild, the body which represents a significant number of Catholic members of the PSNI, said it is concerned the issue will impact recruitment into the service.

As part of the Good Friday Agreement, in 2001 the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which was overwhelmingly Protestant, was renamed the PSNI, with one of the aims to build broader community support and increase the number of Catholic staff.

Guild chairman Superintendent Gerry Murray is now seeking an urgent meeting with Chief Constable Simon Byrne.

“Our guild was formed to provide a support service within the PSNI for Catholic members, and to

raise issues which impact on their work within the PSNI,” he said.

“It is hard to think of a more pressing issue for Catholic officers and staff than the data breaches which have come to light this week. Everyone understands the particular difficulties faced by Catho-

**Chief Constable Simon Byrne has promised a full investigation into the data breach**



lic members of the PSNI and the implications of this for potential new recruits from the Catholic community.

“Our members have expressed genuinely held concerns over the release of this information; they are worried for themselves and for their family members. As chairman of the Guild, I am also concerned about the impact on future recruitment of young Catholics into the police service.

“We are seeking an urgent meeting with the Chief Constable and senior colleagues and we want to be assured that the data breach will be fully and quickly investigated and procedures put in place to ensure it cannot happen again.”

“Catholic officers and staff who feel vulnerable need to be supported in protecting themselves, their families and their homes.

“The Police Service must acknowledge and take account of the particular sensitivities of the Catholic members of the force.

A PSNI spokesperson said the Chief Constable “listened to any issues or concerns and reiterated his priority is the welfare and safety of all officers and staff”.

He also “reassured the guild that he was committed to supporting everyone affected by the recent data breach”.

**Concern over PSNI data breach highlights the fragile nature of peace in Northern Ireland – see pg 6**

## Channel deaths avoidable says JRS amid new calls for safe routes

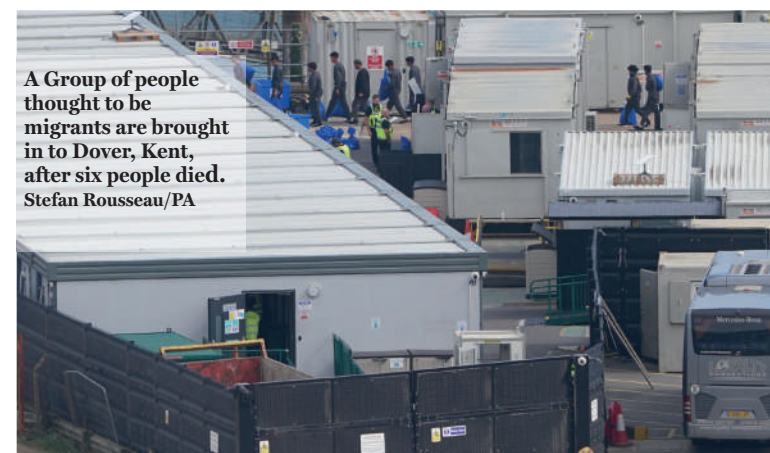
**Andy Drozdziak**

Catholic refugee charity JRS UK say the death of six people when a boat carrying migrants sank off the coast of France was “a wholly avoidable tragedy.”

Although the Government defended its immigration strategy amid renewed pressure over its “stop the boats” pledge following the fatal incident on 12th August, JRS UK tweeted: “This is a wholly avoidable tragedy. Safe & accessible routes are needed for people to seek sanctuary & be protected.”

58 migrants – many of them Afghans – were rescued after a boat got into difficulty off the coast of Sangatte on Saturday. According to the accounts of survivors, around 65 people had originally boarded the overloaded vessel before a passing ship saw it sinking and raised the alarm at around 4.20am.

Care4Calais said the incident was an “appalling and preventable tragedy”, while the Refugee Council warned “more people will die” unless safe routes to the UK are created.



Home Secretary Suella Braverman described the incident as a “tragic loss of life”. A vigil was held in Folkestone on Tuesday to commemorate the tragedy, with people gathering at Sunny Sands Beach.

It comes after the Government was accused of allowing its “small boats week” of linked announcements on immigration to descend into farce following the removal of dozens of asylum seekers from the

Bibby Stockholm barge.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak defended the Government's decision to accommodate migrants on the Bibby Stockholm barge, but senior Conservative backbencher David Davis said the “startling incompetence” of the Home Office had been laid bare after all 39 people on board the 500-capacity vessel were disembarked due to the discovery of Legionella bacteria.

## Time to end ‘disaster’ of pills-by-post abortions

**Continued from page 1**

Right To Life UK also criticised abortion providers BPAS and MSI Reproductive Choices.

“After extensive lobbying from abortion providers, medical abortions using abortion pills were made available from abortion providers such as BPAS and MSI Reproduc-

tive Choices without an in-person appointment during the pandemic,” Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said.

“This appears to be yet another case that would not have happened had the gestation of the baby been accurately identified by ultrasound or a physical examination during an

in-person appointment.”

“We are again calling for the reinstatement of in-person appointments before abortions take place to ensure that the gestation of babies can accurately be assessed”.

Bethany Cox will face a seven-day trial which is scheduled to start on 15th January, 2024.



# Clinic 'thought crime' victim charged with praying in memory of aborted son

Army veteran and father Adam Smith-Connor has said he is "not guilty" of breaking a local 'buffer zone' regulation by praying silently in his mind.

After a hearing at Poole magistrates court appealing against a fine issued by the local authority he said: "We are standing in the nation of the Magna Carta, the nation which has championed democracy and freedom. We have a history of upholding human rights we can be proud of, and a respect for freedom that I fought to uphold when I served this country for 20 years in the army reserves, including in Afghanistan.

"Yet here I stand before you being prosecuted – for a thought crime," Smith-Connor said.

Smith-Connor was issued with a fine after he was caught praying silently near an abortion facility on Orphir Road, Bournemouth, with enforcement officials questioning him as to "the nature of his prayer".

Smith-Connor's legal team contend that freedom of thought is protected through the Human Rights Act and the local council has no



Adam Smith-Connor with supporters outside the court

power to introduce a prohibition on silent prayer.

"The facts are clear," Smith-Connor said. "I am accused of breaching an abortion clinic buffer zone by praying for my son Jacob and other victims of abortion, for their families and for abortion clinic staff.

"I did not approach anyone, I did not speak to anyone, I did not breach any one's privacy. I simply stood silently. I am being tried for the prayerful thoughts in my head."

The case has now been fixed for legal argumentation followed by a trial on 2nd and 16th November respectively.

Jeremiah Igunnubole, Legal Counsel for ADF UK, was present at court with Adam Smith-Connor.

"This marks the third time this year that we at ADF UK have come to the defence of a citizen facing charges simply for their thoughts, exercised in a public space," Mr Igunnubole said.

"If Adam had been thinking about an issue other than abortion – say, climate change – then there would be no hearing today.

"Citizens should be equally free to hold thoughts about the important social issue of abortion, and how it has impacted their lives and the lives of their loved ones."

Outside the court, supporters of Adam Smith-Connor gathered with 1984-inspired signs, bearing slogans such as 'thoughtpolice' and 'looks like you've had a little too much to think'.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, who was arrested for praying in her head in similar circumstances earlier this year, also attended the hearing to support Adam.

"Pro-lifers like myself and Adam have dedicated years of service to supporting vulnerable women in crisis pregnancies," Ms Vaughan-Spruce said. "We absolutely condemn harassment. What we are doing is the furthest thing from harassment... we pray peacefully within our minds. These are good, helpful and lawful activities in the UK."

## Anger as comedy show cancelled over star's views on gender issues

Graham Linehan, co-creator of the *Father Ted* series, has had his show at the Edinburgh Fringe cancelled after public complaints about his gender critical views.

The comic was due to appear with others at a 'Comedy Unleashed' event at Leith Arches. However, the club cancelled the show, stating: 'We DO NOT support this comedian, or his views and he WILL NOT be allowed to perform at our venue and is CANCELLED from Thursday's comedy show with immediate effect.

'An outside organiser was responsible for the line-up and we were unaware as to who was performing until now. We are an inclusive venue and will not allow such views to violate our space.'

Mr Linehan, who has criticised the idea that children can be "born in the wrong body", and defended women-only spaces, has urged the venue to apologise and reconsider, or face legal action.

He has been supported by a number of high-profile figures including Joanna Cherry MP KC who tweeted: 'More petulant cancellation. Someone in a position of political or cultural leadership needs to call this out or Edinburgh, the home of the enlightenment, is in danger of becoming an unlawful discrimination



[and] anti-free speech hotspot'.

Andrew Doyle, one of the Comedy Unleashed organisers, agreed, saying: "It is astonishing that a comedy night at the largest arts festival in the world should be prevented from going ahead, simply because activists are offended.

"The comedy industry is in a dire state. It's about time that promoters, venues, comedy critics and comedians made a concerted effort to support free expression in the arts."

Universe columnist Caroline Farrow has previously spoke of her support of Linehan, saying that "there's absolutely no balance" and "having a particular point of view like Graham Linehan...when it comes to the safeguarding of children doesn't mean you're full of hate."



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## IN BRIEF

**Grooming worry during bill delay**

Cases of online grooming are at a record high against the backdrop of a delay in updating online safety laws. The NPSCC said 34,000 online grooming crimes had been recorded by UK police since it first called for tougher laws in 2017, and campaigners now want tech companies and MPs to back the Online Safety Bill before Parliament. The bill has faced repeated delays and amendments amid claims by the tech giants that they will quit the UK altogether rather than comply with the new law's requirements.

**Parents warned on TikTok trends**

A policing leader has told parents to "get a grip" and stop their children joining dangerous TikTok crazes. Donna Jones, chairman of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, spoke out after teenagers in Southampton took paracetamol over the weekend in a social media challenge to see who could stay in hospital the longest.

Last week also saw flash-mob looting in London's Oxford Street, sparked by a trend on the social network that encouraged youngsters to rob JD Sports and other stores.

**UK 'obliged to help Afghans'**

Britain has an obligation to Afghan refugees who helped its forces over two decades, said the UK's former ambassador to the country. In his first newspaper since the fall of Kabul, Laurie Bristow told The Telegraph that helping vulnerable Afghan refugees who worked alongside British soldiers and doing so is no act of "generosity". Only 54 of 5,000 Afghan refugees who stood by the British have been resettled under one scheme.

# Priest leads tributes as Omagh vows to choose love over hate

**Andy Drozdziak**

A Catholic priest has led tributes to the Omagh bombing to mark the 25th anniversary, giving the message that "love is the only thing that will overcome hate."

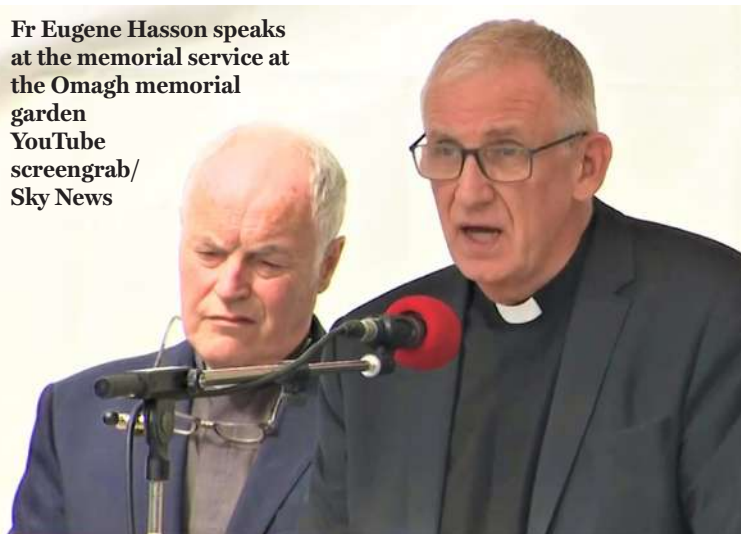
The Omagh bombing on 15th August 1998 remains Northern Ireland's worst ever single terrorist atrocity.

Twenty-nine people, including a woman pregnant with twins, were killed when a large car bomb exploded in the centre of Omagh. It was planted by the Real IRA and caused the worst loss of life in a single incident in Northern Ireland's history.

Co-chair of Omagh Churches' Forum Fr Eugene Hasson was speaking at a memorial service at the Omagh memorial garden on Sunday. "Love is the only thing that will overcome hate. Today we remember the past and we stand in solidarity, but we are also a people of hope, looking forward to better days ahead always," he said.

"Let us take a moment to commit

**Fr Eugene Hasson speaks at the memorial service at the Omagh memorial garden**  
YouTube screengrab/Sky News



ourselves to building a future, a future that is defined by peace and understanding, where we can create an environment of empathy, of dialogue and compassion, and where we can foster those values so that hatred and violence will not continue to threaten us."

During the service, which was attended by British and Irish Govern-

ment ministers, the names and ages of those who lost their lives were read out.

Fr Hasson also said they held a prayer service with the families in the library before the laying of flowers.

"These people want to deal with a terrible difficulty, they want move forward and they need the support



A young girl lays flowers at the memorial

Photo: Liam McBurney/PA

of people around them in order to do that," he said.

Rev Canon Robert Clarke said the event was about solidarity and healing, adding: "We suffer in silence, but it is good to share that suffering and I think we've hopefully done that today."

Having been in the town on the day of the bombing, Rev Clarke and Fr Hasson have shared the journey of the victims' families over the years.

Fr Hasson said: "We were here in Omagh 25 years ago. I find it very hard to believe that 25 years have passed.

"We feel that we are very much with the people here. I certainly feel that they are with me."

In a statement marking the 25th anniversary of the bombing, Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris said lessons must be learnt from the devastation caused by the atrocity.

"The Omagh atrocity, just like other acts of terrorism before or since, had absolutely no justification, and never will," he said.

**Left, people at the service in the Omagh memorial garden**



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# 'Kindnappers' helping Geraldine get to Rome

**Andy Drozdziak**

A fundraiser for Mary's Meals has been helped by 'kindnappers' who are helping her on her journey 'from home to Rome.'

54-year-old Geraldine McFaul has embarked on a one-of-a-kind walk which will see her travel from her home in Glasgow to Rome on foot. She will be raising funds for Mary's Meals and Dementia UK.

Having started in May, Geraldine has already reached the continent and estimates she will arrive in the Italian capital in November.

The adventurer, who averages 12 miles a day while pulling a trailer, recently reached a major milestone by setting foot in France and said she has been amazed by the generosity of strangers, who she has dubbed 'kindnappers', offering her food and a place to stay.

Geraldine said the journey was going well: "There's been no big disasters. Everything just seems to have happened and worked."

Having first considered the trip seven years ago, Geraldine, who works as a freelance risk management consultant,

said she finally decided to get her walking shoes on this spring after friends told her to "just get on with it."

Geraldine said: "I just had the thought: 'I've never been to Rome. I'm going to walk there one day'. And that was it."

"My parents had been there and I've just always wanted to go. I've been many places, travelled a lot, but for some reason I've never been to Rome."

Gemma Love, supporter engagement officer at Catholic charity Mary's Meals, congratulated Geraldine on her "one of a kind" challenge.

"We are constantly amazed by all the ways our supporters manage to raise funds, and Geraldine's walk to Rome is certainly one-of-a-kind," Gemma told the *Universe*. "We are delighted the money raised will help our mission."

"We wish Geraldine a safe and enjoyable journey and give our heartfelt thanks for her support. We also hope Geraldine's incredible efforts inspire others to support Mary's Meals."

When asked how she plans to celebrate when she arrives in Rome, the Glaswegian said: "I want to get some sleep! I want to see Rome. You don't

walk there very often so I might as well get to see the place. Although I'm not doing this as a religious pilgrimage, I'm aiming to finish up the journey at the Vatican."

"But after that, I'll be flying home, I'm not walking back. I'm stupid, but I'm not daft!"

Geraldine's decision to fundraise for Mary's Meals and Dementia UK was inspired by her late parents.

She explained: "My dad died in 1999, but Mary's Meals is the kind of charity he would have supported."

"Dementia UK's Admiral Nurses were an incredible support to me when my mum was first diagnosed and again when she moved into her care home."

Michelle McGowan, Admiral Nurse at Dementia UK, said: "We're hugely grateful for Geraldine's fundraising efforts, and very impressed by the trip she's taking on."

• To support Geraldine, her fundraiser page can be found [HERE](#)

You can follow her progress via her Instagram account [HERE](#)



Geraldine with her trailer. 'I'll make it to Rome with others' help,' she says

## Engaged couple's love lights up Lourdes

A young couple who first met in Lourdes marked the recent Liverpool centenary pilgrimage to Lourdes by getting engaged.

Stephen O'Driscoll and Emily Crompton first met at the shrine six years ago, when they were both on the youth pilgrimage, and have been going to Lourdes together ever since.

As it was such a special place for them, Stephen could think of no better place to pop the question.

"I came up with the idea to propose in Lourdes because it was the place that really changed me as a person spiritually and emotionally," he said. "From the first sight of the domain and the grotto to the atmosphere, I was hooked. I loved the place from first sight, and I always knew something special would happen there."

The fact that it was the archdiocese of Liverpool's centenary year was the icing on the cake for Stephen.

"Since the start, it has been a very special place for the two of us," he said. "So, I thought why not propose in a place that means so much to us, so it will be something we can cherish forever."

"It honestly feels amazing to say we got engaged in such a special place. Also, with it being the centenary pilgrimage, I feel like we've made history."



Emily and Stephen met while on Lourdes youth pilgrimage

"It was even crazy to have Archbishop Malcolm shout our names out at the anointing Mass. We felt like royalty for a couple of days."

"I'm so happy Emily said yes. I don't know what I would do without her. She's my world."

Stephen proposed while they were lighting the candles in the grotto.

Reacting to what had happened, Emily said: "As we were lighting our candle at the grotto, I was already emotional, as it's one of the most important parts of the week in Lourdes."

"After praying, I turned to see him on one knee, which made me cry even more. I just hugged him while he was still on his knee, leading him to ask me if I'd let him stand up."

"I cried happy tears and did my happy dance."

JIM CAVIEZEL

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## COMMENT

## Covid-19 inquiry has to hear the children's story

The public inquiry into the UK's response to the Covid-19 pandemic is currently on a break but remains in the headlines after a number of charities this week publicly shared their fears that the investigation was in danger of ignoring the impact of the pandemic on children.

Save the Children UK and the NSPCC are among more than 40 groups and experts to have signed a letter to the inquiry chairman Baroness Hallett demanding an explanation into what they called "unacceptable delays" in examining this aspect of the pandemic.

Their intervention follows a recent study suggesting that restrictions on education and social interaction damaged the emotional development of almost half of children. The charities say the inquiry has not put in place adequate mechanisms for hearing the stories of children's experiences while allowing adults to tell theirs.

It does beg the question, though, do we really need an enquiry to tell us how children were affected – not by the virus, which would hardly have troubled the vast majority of them – but by the lockdowns, which closed schools and kept children away from their friends.

Even now the 'Covid generation' is struggling, with exams and university entrance. Many school leavers are deferring further education and heading out on gap year travels, perhaps because they feel they have missed out on socialising or have been put off by online teaching and marking boycotts.

In many of the key decisions to lock down the country, the impact on children was never properly considered, otherwise the schools would have remained open, certainly after it became clear that young people were, mercifully, left largely unscathed by the virus itself.

What has harmed them was the response, and it goes well beyond the closing of schools. The rules meant that, in practice, children were prevented from seeing others their own age even when adults were allowed to meet friends from other households.

It proved a hammer blow to the development of vital social, personal and academic skills, and we are now seeing the price that has to be paid for that.

# Concern over PSNI data breach highlights the fragile nature of peace in Northern Ireland

POLITICS

**Kevin Hearty**


**News that the personal details of Northern Ireland's main police force have been leaked is worrying and could have dangerous ramifications**

Data breaches are not a good look for any institution or organisation. But depending on the nature of the data leaked and the organisation, some breaches can be more serious and have greater consequences than others.

This is certainly true of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), which has accidentally published information about all its police officers and civilian personnel in response to a freedom of information (FoI) request.

This included a spreadsheet containing their names, their roles and where they were based.

The document was available online for several hours on the FoI website *What Do They Know* before being taken down. The PSNI is conducting an investigation into how this happened.

It has been reported that the spreadsheet contained approximately 345,000 pieces of data relating to every police officer. In confirming the breach, the PSNI attributed it to "human error" and stated that they were taking the matter "extremely seriously".

PSNI chief constable Simon Byrne said in a press conference that dissident republicans claim to have some of the information and that the force is considering whether officers need to be moved from their places of work for their safety.

The data breach is said to encompass all serving staff including specialist firearms units, the tactical support group (which is responsible for public order and riot control) and those assigned to the specialist operations branch who command and assist in complex investigations.

A remarkable wealth of information about PSNI personnel has been leaked, by any stretch of the imagination. Of the many reasons why this is so serious, three



PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne

stick out in particular.

## 1. Risking violence

A data breach of this nature is likely to leave any police force red-faced, yet for the PSNI the consequences extend far beyond public embarrassment. The long and contested history of problems with policing in Northern Ireland means that there are both practical dangers and specific sensitivities that even the most well-crafted apology won't be able to assuage.

The most immediate problem is that the personal information of serving police officers is now potentially in the public domain. This raises the question of who might have accessed this information and what they might do with it.

Today's levels of violence in the north of Ireland are incomparable to the past but the threat of violence against serving police officers remains. This threat comes mainly from armed Irish republican groups who have rejected the peace process and Good Friday agreement.

To them, PSNI officers represent 'legitimate targets' because they uphold the constitutional status quo of post-Good Friday agreement

Northern Ireland. Unlike other nationalists and more moderate republicans who have come to accept reformed policing, for these armed groups the PSNI remains a 'British' police force tasked with enforcing partition on the island of Ireland.

The live nature of the threat to PSNI officers was brutally reiterated this year when PSNI detective chief inspector John Caldwell was shot in County Tyrone in February. Several of the people due to be tried for his attempted murder are also accused of being involved with the IRA.

Crucially, Caldwell was targeted while he was off duty and packing up after leading a youth football training session. The people who attacked him appear to have known where to find him outside of work, clearly illustrating how personal information about PSNI officers could be used to devastating effect.

To make matters worse, it has been reported that the details of 40 PSNI staff based at MI5 are included in the breach. Personnel of this nature would surely represent prize targets to Irish republicans.

Any attack on these people that resulted in injury or death would be

seen as a huge propaganda coup at a time when the armed campaigns of these groups are sporadic and stuttering.

## 2. Stoking community tensions

At the same time, the data breach speaks to a more difficult question around just how accepted the PSNI are in certain working-class communities. The struggle to recruit officers from working-class Catholic, nationalist, republican backgrounds is well documented.

Anyone from this background within the PSNI is unlikely to tell anyone beyond their closest family and friends what their job is. This is partly because of the security threat but also because of the problematic relationship their community had with the PSNI's predecessor force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Yet the PSNI is also experiencing difficulty recruiting from working-class Protestant, unionist, loyalist areas too. Ongoing political tensions, including Brexit, disputes about which flags should fly over public buildings in Northern Ireland and the policing of Orange Order parades, have put these communities at a remove from the PSNI. It is unlikely, then, that officers from within these communities would make their jobs publicly known either.

## 3. Reviving unresolved grievances

Some will also have been reminded of the past by this data breach, which has echoes of the deliberate intelligence leaks that used to come out of the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the years of conflict. The force passed the personal details of nationalists to state agents within loyalist groups, who are accused of then murdering them.

This remains at the core of grievances over state collusion during the Troubles. While this latest data breach is different in nature, it nonetheless rubs at a sore spot for victims still waiting for truth and justice.

The leaking of personal details about every serving PSNI officer is without doubt an unmitigated disaster for the PSNI, politically and organisationally. While the force has apparently set up a 'Gold group' – the highest internal emergency response – significant damage has already been done.

**Kevin Hearty is a Lecturer, Queen's University Belfast**



# 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](http://www.spuc.org.uk/complicit-petition)



Society for the **Protection**  
of Unborn Children



[www.spuc.org.uk](http://www.spuc.org.uk)



## SVP's gift of hope

**Sir John Battle**



Helen Farrar, our shop manager of St Vincent's (SVP) Community Support Centre in Leeds, recently gave a presentation to other staff and committee members on what her experience of working at the centre meant to her.

She began: "The only word I need to describe what I believe St Vincent's is about is HOPE.

"I would like to give you all something, please hold out your hands (*she delved into her in pocket and handed each person a pinch of 'air'*). "This," she said, "is 'hope'. You can't see hope. It's a small word, not very interesting. It's nothing without belief behind it. You have to believe something can be better in order for hope to work. We, at St Vincent's, have that belief and we draw on our skills, expertise and experience to make hope tangible.

"But hope may not be the word that propels someone in our direction. In some cases hope is lost and is replaced by desperation and a feeling there is no reason to live. So how do we make hope something you can touch and start to believe in? Well, we mix it with actions."

"Hope is a food parcel (*at this point she handed each of us a tin of beans to represent a food parcel*) when there is no money to buy more. Hope is an appointment with the debt team to keep a roof over your head. Hope is a cup of coffee in a warm café when your house is cold; Hope is being given a bed instead of sleeping on the floor, or it is enjoying a game of bingo (*she gave us each a bingo dabber*) to forget for a moment being lonely.

She stressed "Our hope is compassionate and is what makes St Vincent's a stepping stone back into life outside our doors.

"Hope is also what we give through volunteering – we are a stepping stone back to work, from asylum to citizenship, from debt to budgeting and from crisis to coping. Giving hope demonstrates we are Christ-centred in everything that we do."

Pope Benedict XVI, in *Spe Salve*, stressed that the crisis of our times is primarily a lack of hope, not faith, and theologian Professor JB Metz emphasised that Christian hope was not so much about worrying about our own long-term survival as engaging in the daily task of giving Christ's hope to others. "For us, hope is hope for others," he says.

Helen's presentation provides a practical exposition of how the SVP's work is "daily hope in action".

Find out more at <https://svp.org.uk>

# Time to make the abortion pill providers pay the price

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Caroline Farrow**



A few weeks ago Carla Foster, the 45-year-old woman who was jailed for 28 months after she procured a late term abortion at 32-34 weeks, was released from prison as her sentence was cut in half and suspended.

This was entirely the right decision because, as I wrote at the time of her imprisonment, jailing women for illegal abortions is a counter-productive move which gives momentum to campaigners looking to further liberalise the already extremely liberal laws governing abortion in the UK.

Jailing mothers does not only punish the women directly, it has a secondary impact upon their children who are over three times more likely to suffer from behavioural and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Carla Foster's incarceration felt particularly unkind and unnecessary because she had expressed deep regret and remorse over her actions, stating that she was haunted every day by visions of her baby's face, and secondly, Foster is mother to three children, including one who is diagnosed with autism and desperately needed their mother at home. Putting Foster in prison served no useful purpose other than deterrent.

Now, as you will have read on the front page, a second woman, Bethany Cox, aged 22 from Stockon-on-Tees, is set to face a similar trial to Foster, charged with taking a drug to destroy the life of a child that would be capable of being born alive, and with administering poison with intent to cause a miscarriage.

As Cox's trial will not take place until January 15, it is not right to speculate about the case, but Cox is alleged to have taken the drugs just as the first lockdown period ended. From the information that is available it seems as though Cox performed her own abortions using abortion pills.

I cannot help but think that the decision to prosecute is a political one by the Crown Prosecution Service, who are obviously looking to test our 55-year-old abortion laws and bring about change via public outrage.

The pro-abortion lobby are already seeking to make enormous



capital out of these prosecutions, claiming that they prove that our laws are out of date and that abortion should be totally decriminalised, meaning that anyone should be able to end a pregnancy at any stage up until birth and for any reason.

There is a very fine line to be trodden; clearly the law needs to be upheld and those who transgress it punished. However, we should bear in mind that both Foster and Cox's cases occurred during lockdown – an unprecedented event of mass confusion and uncertainty in society. These women (remembering that Cox is innocent until proven guilty) were taking decisions during a time when we were all running scared of a potentially killer virus. When lockdown was first lifted in July 2020, the first vaccines were another six months away.

Lockdown affected everyone's mental health and wellbeing as normal life was suspended. We couldn't go out to work, we were separated from our friends and families, even something as trivial as popping next door for a cup of tea with our neighbour was forbidden and we were all anxious as to whether or not normal life would ever resume. Hundreds of thousands of people lost not only their relatives, but also their jobs. We don't know what Bethany Cox's circumstances were, but three years

ago she would have been 19 and extremely scared as to what the future may have held. Add an unplanned pregnancy into the mix and it's easy to understand why she chose to take drastic action.

Lockdown does not justify taking the life of an unborn child, but it is nonetheless easy to understand why women may have been panicked into taking such terrible action, especially when abortion providers do their best to persuade women that they have a right to unfettered choice.

We have to remember that decisions are rarely made in a vacuum and a 19-year-old woman is still very young and may not have been fully aware of the consequences of her actions, her stage in pregnancy and/or, thanks to the isolation brought on by lockdown, she may have felt unable to confide in a close friend or family member.

The cases of Foster and Cox demonstrate a need for the law to change to reflect the reality of the abortion pill. Instead of criminalising women, it should instead pose swingeing fines and punishments on abortion providers who facilitate late-term abortions, irrespective of whether or not the pills were obtained under false pretences.

If abortion campaigners are serious about women's safety and want to stop the criminalisation of

women, they will campaign for in-person appointments and ultrasounds to be a mandatory part of the abortion process.

It has been interesting to note the public reaction to cases such as these. Instead of the wide-scale public sympathy anticipated by BPAS and Marie Stopes, most of the comments sections on news articles and on social media have expressed horror, disgust and contempt over the premature death of full-term, fully-formed babies. Commentators have professed themselves to be 'pro choice' but also said that they believe that the abortion time limit ought to be reduced to take into account advances in medicine that allow for babies to be saved at an earlier stage and to take into account that pregnancies can now be detected very early with a pregnancy test that costs just a couple of pounds from the local supermarket.

If the law were to change to reflect public opinion, it would drastically cut the abortion time limit.

As Catholics we cannot advocate for anything that accepts or validates abortion at an early stage, because this is still the wilful and wanton destruction of innocent human life.

What is clear, however, is that simply jailing the end user of the abortion pill will not stamp out its use.



*The cases of Foster and Cox demonstrate a need for the law to change to reflect the reality of the abortion pill. Instead of criminalising women, it should instead pose swingeing fines and punishments on abortion providers who facilitate late-term abortions ...*





## BBC radio special hears Mark 10's call for youth to 'rise up'

**Andy Drozdziak**

Greg Finn from popular UK charity Mark 10 mission challenged young people to "rise up" as he led a reflection on World Youth Day on BBC Radio 4.

Recorded on location in Lisbon, Greg told listeners how young Catholics from the UK had joined other young pilgrims from around the world for World Youth Day.

"The Holy Father is encouraging young people to look at their life and to think: what do I rise up for? What do I stand up for in my life?" Greg said, referring to the theme, 'Rise Up'. This is taken from Mary's visitation to Elizabeth when she had learnt she was pregnant with Jesus and 'rose up' to visit her cousin.

He outlined how the young people explored what faith means to them, attended catechesis services and celebrated Mass with Pope Francis. He also reflected on how they might take their experience back home and share it with family and friends.

In the programme, which aired on Sunday, 13th August, Fr Columba Jordan from the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal said World Youth Day was "so different to anything he

had ever been to," pinpointing the freedom and joy he saw amongst the young pilgrims.

Fr Paschal Uche from Brentwood, who welcomed Pope Benedict XVI to the UK during the 2010 papal visit, preached during the pro-

gramme of how the young people were looking to "give their whole selves to Christ."

"Pope Francis calls us to rise up and respond to a particular challenge," he said, referencing to Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth to share joy.

"That scene of joy is what we are being called to relive. Pope Francis reminded us that God calls us literally by name and summons us to live for Him."

Young pilgrims were heard during the programme praying the rosary, with Plymouth diocese leading intercessions.

Greg Finn told the *Universe* that he spent "a wonderful World Youth Day week" in Lisbon, and that "it was uplifting to gather in such huge numbers, to pray as one and to listen to the words of Pope Francis."

An estimated 1.5 million attending the final Mass in Lisbon with Pope Francis.

• Visit BBC Sounds to listen to the programme. It can be accessed **HERE**:

It is available to listen to for around 25 days.



Greg prepares to board his flight to Lisbon; 'WYD was a joyous occasion'

## St John's launches appeal to restore cathedral window

**Andy Drozdziak**

Portsmouth Catholic Cathedral is appealing for financial help after storms in 2022 led to the near collapse of a key window.

Due to deterioration in the lead-work and the effect of storms, the West Window of St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth, began to collapse early in 2023. Scaffolding was required to hold it in place.

With the total cost of restoring the window estimated at £100,000, the community of St John's Cathedral is now appealing for help, as Cathedral Dean Fr James McAuley explained. "The total cost of the restoration project is expected to be more than £100,000, which is far beyond the means of the cathedral parish, situated in one of the poorest parts of the diocese.

"Restoring the image of each saint is about £5,000; for each of the 9,700 pieces, the cost is just over £10," Fr McAuley said.

The West Window was designed by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake and it is made up of six lights (vertical sections) and three large tracery cinquefoils plus associated eyelets.

The window was first installed in

1906 and covers a total area of 228 square feet and contains approximately 9,700 panes of glass. It depicts six Catholic saints: St Swithun, St John the Evangelist, St Mary Immaculate, St Edmund, St John the Baptist, and St Wilfred.

Now Fr James McAuley is urging worshippers and visitors to show their support by helping fund the restoration. "If you would like to donate any amount, perhaps in memory of a loved one, to help defray the cost of the restoration, please send your donation either by cheque to the cathedral or directly to the cathedral parish bank account.

"The names of donors will be recorded in a special commemorative book."

**To support St John's Cathedral with restoring the window, send a cheque direct to the cathedral. To make a donation digitally, contact the cathedral staff via <https://www.portsmouthcatholiccathedral.org.uk> for bank details and a sort code.**

**Alternatively, text WINDOW to 70560 to donate £10.**

## OUR LADY, QUEEN OF PEACE PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM

(at the Catholic National Shrine)

**Led by Fr Zvonimir Pavičić OFM**  
Parish Priest of St James, Medjugorje

**Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

### Itinerary:

- 1.15pm** Gathering, Rosary & Litany of Our Lady followed by: Talk by Fr Zvonimir.  
**Break (Sacrament of Reconciliation).**
- 3.45pm** Holy Mass, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.
- 5.30pm** Depart.



*"Dear children! I am calling all of you to be carriers of the peace and joy of the risen Jesus for all those who are far from prayer; that the love of Jesus, through your lives, may transform them to a new life of conversion and holiness. Thank you for having responded to my call."*  
(25 April 2023)

Please give advance notice of coach parties and concelebrating priests to 07710567183 or pilgrimsofmary@hotmail.com.



## IN BRIEF

**XR founder criticises Ulez**

A co-founder of Extinction Rebellion (XR) has condemned Sadiq Khan's ultra-low emissions zone (Ulez) as "intrusive" and "regressive" for the lowest-paid Londoners. Writing on social media site X, Roger Hallam said supporters of the schemes had a "total lack of sensitivity and self-awareness", as well as a "myopic privilege".

He wrote: "What is needed are citizens' assemblies to give popular democratic legitimacy to the transition, and to make sure the rich pay their way."

**Cigarette card scheme considered**

Positive messages urging smokers to give up will be inserted in packets of cigarettes under plans being considered by the government. Influenced by schemes in Canada and Israel, ministers hope they can make an extra 30,000 smokers give up, saving £1.6 billion in health costs.

Colourful cigarette cards featuring Hollywood stars, decorated war heroes or sports star were once a sought-after prize for smokers, but the new cards would include such messages as "never quit trying to quit".

**Concern over cancer plan**

The Government has proposed scrapping two-thirds of NHS cancer waiting time target in England in a move that critics say will fudge the figures.

Health chiefs want to reduce the number of targets, most of which have been routinely missed in recent years, from nine to three. They say leading cancer experts are backing the plan, which they insist will simplify the "outdated" standards.

However, the head of the Radiotherapy UK charity said she is "deeply worried" and Labour accused the Conservatives of creating a cancer care crisis.

**'Clashes' ahead of boat tragedy**

Eyewitnesses said that gunfire and clashes involving migrants broke out in Dunkirk in the hours before a small boat sank in the Channel. Chaos spread through the camp as migrants prepared to board boats laid on by smuggling gangs "despite choppy waters and high winds", said The Times. An Afghan teenager told the paper there were clashes as Afghans sought places on boats. Six people died and another five were taken to hospital in Kent.

*Michael Winterbottom, Managing Editorial Director, writes:* Peter Frost, a solicitor, acted for the Church of England, who intervened in the case of *Higgs v Farmor's School*, which was a case arising from a woman's dismissal from the school in connection with her social media posts about sex education. The Church of England had proposed guidelines for how to resolve cases such as these, when religious beliefs clash with employment, and those guidelines were endorsed by the Court. Peter kindly offered to write this article for the Universe, explaining in layman's terms what this means for Catholics and others where issues of freedom of expression and religious belief arise in the workplace.

LEGAL COMMENT

**Peter Frost**

Do Catholics have the right to express their faith in the workplace, or 'to bring their whole selves to work', in the modern idiom?

At first sight this seems an odd question given that religion and belief is a protected characteristic under the UK Equality Act 2010, and that Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the 'Convention') gives the freedom to everyone to hold a religion or belief and to manifest it (subject to certain restrictions).

And yet there is a widespread perception that Catholics get a raw deal despite these protections. In a recent survey by the Catholic Union, nearly half felt that they could not discuss their faith openly.

Fortunately, a recent decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal ('EAT'), *Higgs v Farmor's School*, has provided important clarification on this issue.

**Background to the case**

Mrs Higgs is an evangelical Christian who was employed as a pastoral assistant and work experience manager at Farmor's School. She expressed her biblically based concerns at the nature of the sex education taught at the school by sharing on her private Facebook account some posts in what was later found by an Employment Tribunal to be "florid and provocative language".

These were seen by a parent at the school who complained to the school that Mrs Higgs was clearly homophobic and transphobic, and a potential threat to pupils at the school who might either be gay or trans or questioning their sexuality.

A disciplinary process swiftly followed. Mrs Higgs denied that she was homophobic or transphobic and that she loved all, irrespective of their sexuality, but this cut no ice with the school who dismissed her.

Mrs Higgs sought compensation for religious discrimination in the Employment Tribunal. She lost her claim on the basis that she was not dismissed for being a Christian but because she was perceived to be homophobic and transphobic. She appealed to the EAT. The Church of England was given permission to make submissions to the EAT as to how it should interpret the law when deciding what restrictions an employer could lawfully place on an employee wishing to express their faith or belief, and to propose practical guidance for employers and employees.

# Appeal Court ruling offers hope Catholics can take 'their whole selves to work'



**Mrs Higgs' case offers clarity and come consolation for Catholics**

The EAT endorsed the Church's interpretation of the law. Importantly, it recognised that the freedom to hold and manifest a religion, and the freedom of expression provided under the Convention, were key 'foundational' rights; and that, while expressions of faith or belief could be subject to valid restrictions by employers when these impacted on the rights of others, any restrictions had to be proportionate – a 'one size fits all approach' would not be appropriate. The EAT also endorsed the guidance proposed by the Church. It recognised that the lack of clarity on the ability to express a faith or belief had a "chilling effect" on those wishing to do so; and that employers, too, needed to know what action they could safely take.

Indeed, Farmor's School informed the EAT that it would welcome such guidance.

The guidance recognises that, when deciding whether to impose restrictions on the expression of faith or belief, an employer should take account of various factors which in turn are underpinned by the concepts of plurality, tolerance

faith or belief by an employee, so Catholics should consider the potential impact of that expression, particularly when it touches on areas which relate to other protected characteristics and are known to be particularly emotive.

How should Catholics respond to this decision? Firstly, by being more open about their faith. All of us have a duty to 'spread the Good News' and yet many stay in the "locked Upper Room", instead of witnessing – for example by joining, or even forming, Christian networks. Catholics senior in their organisations should act as role models to show that it is perfectly possible to be a Catholic and progress one's career.

Secondly, Catholics should be strategic in how they do this. There are many ways of witnessing without antagonising colleagues. The great majority have no objection to Catholicism as such – what can cause angst is 'shouty, aggressive' Catholicism where every Catholic is seen as a victim entitled to retribution against perceived persecution.

Of course, the Church contains many examples where saints have taken a stand at great personal cost, and there may be occasions where Catholics feel they have to take a stand. But they should pick the battles to fight, and when they do so, they should do it in a measured way which helps them capture the moral high ground. Cases where Christians have lost their claims in the courts tend to occur when they have immediately gone onto the defensive, been aggressive, given no ground and made it very difficult for the employer to compromise.

Instead, they should espouse the need for patient listening and dialogue urged by Pope Francis in his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*. **Peter Frost is a consultant solicitor at Herbert Smith Freehills LLP, which acted for the Church of England in the Higgs proceedings. He is a practising Catholic and a trustee of the Thomas More Legal Centre, a charity which provides assistance in cases involving religious freedom.**

and dialogue. These include the tone and content of that expression, the size of the audience, whether the audience would be likely to agree with what was said or be offended by it, whether the employee made clear that the views were purely their own and not that of the employer; and whether there were less intrusive restrictions available than those contemplated by the employer.

The EAT's decision has been widely recognised – including by the Equality and Human Rights Commission – as a key decision on the scope of the right to express faith or belief. Perhaps for the first time an appeal court has clearly recognised the fact that the freedom to hold a religion or belief has little value if one is not entitled to express it. Catholics can therefore take heart from this decision. But it does not give them *carte blanche* to say what they want irrespective of the effect on others; they, too, have rights which should be respected.

Instead, just as employers must now pause for thought before deciding how to respond to a complaint about the expression of



# Parishes urged to back Pact and make difference for prisoners

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pact, the Catholic prison charity supported by Liaison Bishop for Prisons Richard Moth, is inviting parishes across England and Wales to support prisoners and their families on Prisoners Sunday.

Pact said: “The support of Catholic parishes has been and continues to be invaluable in our work.”

Prisoners Sunday will take place this year on 8th October. With more than 85,000 people in prison across England and Wales today, an estimated 97,000 children will spend their summer holidays with a parent in prison. This Prisoners’ Sunday, Pact is urging every parish to consider how they can make a difference.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said: “On my visits to prisons, I hear first-hand that for many prisoners, access to training, regular visits from family, mental health and spiritual support are limited by staff



shortages. These are elements of the prison regime that help people cope with life inside and prepare for making that fresh start when they leave.

“We appreciate that these are challenging times financially for many families, especially those who have a loved one in prison. Any sup-



port you can offer this Prisoners’ Sunday will make a huge difference to some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society.”

In September, every Catholic parish will receive a Prisoners’ Sunday pack, which will include a poster, bidding prayers, and a message from Pact President Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

Pact is also encouraging parishes across England and Wales to hold a second collection on 8th October. Pact said that the funds collected

“will help to do more in the year ahead to support women and men in prison and their children and families.”

Andy Keen-Downs explained how Pact is helping prisoners to “start life again.”

“This year – with your help – Pact will enable hundreds of men and women to start life again after a custodial sentence. And during a sentence, when things get very dark, and people lose hope, we are there inside the prisons, alongside

hard-working prison officers, nurses, chaplains, providing hope and practical support to enable people to cope,” he said.

Pact is the national Catholic charity supporting prisoners, people with convictions, and their families. Pact works in more than 60 prisons across England and Wales.



**Support: Bishop Moth**



## World Villages for Children throws biggest birthday party

World Villages for Children, a Catholic charity whose mission is to end poverty through education, held its biggest birthday celebration yet, as nearly 20,000 children celebrated a ‘birthday’ on 15th August.

World Villages for Children supports the humanitarian programme of the Sisters of Mary, and gives 20,000 children a year quality education and technical training to help lift them out of poverty for good.

At its ‘Every Child’s Birthday’ event on 15th August, the children received a modest personal gift containing school supplies, clothing, shoes, and a small treat. Many of the children do not know their birthday or even their age and so, this could

be the first time they will receive a birthday gift just for themselves.

The celebration was marked with a day off from lessons with games, cake, singing, and dancing.

Nicola Lawson, UK manager and trustee of the charity, said: “The celebration is a vital chance to nurture the poorest children in our care and give them joy-filled memories.

“At the Sisters of Mary Schools, with their basic needs met, children are free to enjoy a childhood, learning and growing towards a brighter future.

“Every Child’s Birthday is a chance to empower children and give them a proper childhood, nurturing their development into adulthood.”

## Do you want there to be a strong Catholic voice in our society?



The Catholic Union is the voice of the laity in society. For over 150 years, we have educated and informed Parliament, the Government, the Media and the Public about the Catholic viewpoint on the issues of the day.

### We need your help so please join the Catholic Union today!

As a Member you can

- participate in our work
- attend talks and other social events
- receive regular news and events briefings

For details about how to join (free for students and Under 25s) please click on our website:

[www.catholicunion.org.uk](http://www.catholicunion.org.uk)



Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good



# Star hails *The Chosen* for telling stories from the past that still resonate today

Andy Drozdziak

A leading actress from *The Chosen* believes that the hit TV series is perfect for young people because the story of Jesus is being told “in a way that none of us have ever seen before.”

Amber Shana Williams, who plays the role of Tamar in the popular TV programme about the life of Jesus – the first of its kind – shared how the “raw and deep topics” addressed on *The Chosen* will enable young people to encounter faith in authentic ways.

“I believe young people can relate to it because not only are they seeing very real stories being told, but they’re also being told in a way that none of us have ever seen before. Jesus is laughing, brushing his tooth, building things, having a joke,” she told the *Universe*.

“The stories haven’t changed in 2,000 years. It’s the same struggles we face today; those who suffer loss, miscarriage, the things young people now are starting to experience. This show is still addressing raw and deep topics but you see the triumph at the end – it’s not an easily won or gratuitous triumph.”

The character of Tamar, played by Amber Shana Williams, is introduced at a moment of high

Amber Shana Williams (centre) as Tamar



drama in *The Chosen*, when her character asks Jesus to help her brother, a paralytic, and heal him. Amber pointed to the realistic nature of the programme and its portrayal of suffering.

“*The Chosen* shows how realistic it really is once you make the decision to follow Jesus and the trials and tribulations that came

when you make that decision,” she said. “I believe young people are open and hungry for something like this because what we consume is so traumatic and this is so healing.”

The first three series of *The Chosen* have become something of a cult classic, accumulating more than 450 million views in more than 140 countries and seen in 56

languages. A much anticipated fourth season will air in early 2024, with a key theme being the difficulties and struggles of keeping faith.

“It’s allowed me to re-evaluate my own faith and how I approach it,” Amber said. “To inspire me to have that faith when it’s really difficult to do so – which we also

see in season 4 – and how hard it is to keep the faith (are key themes). I feel like we’ve all been there.”

Amber also shared how playing a woman of colour elicits positive response from those who often feel underrepresented.

“I have a lot of people contact me telling me how they have been affected or changed by the character, in many different ways,” she said.

“Black women, people of colour, who are really happy to see another represented in stories that they don’t get to see themselves reflected in very often. Also, from people who have had a difficult time when it comes to faith and from people who need healing.”

“It’s a really beautiful thing, a humbling thing. It’s something I really have to pay respect to – people are looking at you, watching you, and there’s a responsibility to that, so I try to hold it as well as I can it with as much grace as I can.”

Directed by Dallas Jenkins and distributed by Angel Studios, *The Chosen* became the No. 1 crowdfunded media project in history in 2019.

*The Chosen* is available to view on Amazon Prime, Netflix, Peacock and on The Chosen mobile and TV apps.

## IN BRIEF

### River pollution ‘utter disgrace’

More than 90 per cent of freshwater habitats on England’s “most precious rivers” are blighted by farming pollution, raw sewage and water abstraction, said *The Observer*. None of the dozens of rivers with protected habitats in England were rated as in overall good health, according to an analysis of government reports.

“It is an utter disgrace,” said Charles Watson, founder and chair of the charity River Action. He added that “these should be the most protected river catchments in the country”.

### Footage shows level crossing danger

“Shocking” footage shows parents letting their toddlers play on live railway lines, young people doing one-armed press-ups, and dog walkers sitting their pets on the tracks for photos.

The compilation of CCTV video released by Network Rail shows people risking their lives at footpath level crossings in Worcestershire. The rail company said it found instances of “incredibly dangerous behaviour” at crossings.

“No matter how well you think you know a crossing, all users must obey the rules around using level crossings every time they use it,” said Alexandra France, level crossing safety manager.

### Hot temperatures due next week

High pressure caused by tropical air could make parts of the UK hotter than California at the end of next week, with temperatures forecast to possibly rise above 30C.

Although heavy and persistent rain is predicted for most of the country on Sunday evening and Monday, temperatures in south-east England could reach 32C on Friday, said the Met Office.

This would be significantly higher than the 26C predicted for Los Angeles and would be, the Met Office said, a welcome break from what has been an unseasonably wet and cool summer so far, after a very warm start in June.

## Graduate feedback helps St Mary’s soar up the university rankings

Catholic university St Mary’s, Twickenham (SMU), has received outstanding feedback from graduating students in the 2023 National Student Survey (NSS).

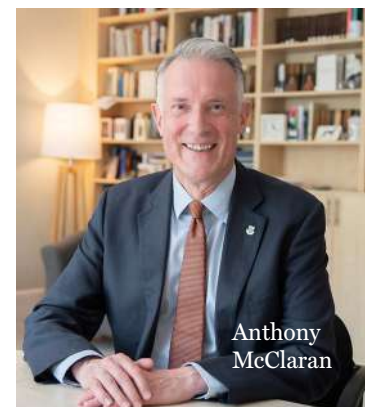
It was rated in the top five in London in six key themes among higher education providers with university status (excluding specialist providers).

SMU was rated top in London for Academic Support, with a rating of 89 per cent, and second in London for ‘teaching on my course’, with a rating of 88 per cent, almost three percent above the sector average.

The survey also found 94 per cent of students said that staff were good at explaining things, the top score in London, and made their subjects engaging (87 per cent).

The university was also rated in the top ten nationally and second in London for ‘Learning Opportunities’, and in the top five in London for ‘Organisation and Management’ (second), ‘Assessment and Feedback’ and ‘Student Voice’ (both fifth).

St Mary’s Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran said: “These are fantastic results. At St Mary’s we place



Anthony McClaran

the experience of our students at the heart of all we do, and I am delighted to see that this has been recognised in the National Student Survey.

“The findings are a great endorsement of the work of our brilliant academic and professional service teams, who deliver a top-rate experience for St Mary’s students.

“I am particularly pleased to see the high response rate to the survey, which, at 11 per cent higher than the sector average, has ensured we’re hearing the voice of as many students as possible.”

St Mary’s has seen a number of successes in recent months amongst sector rankings, climbing 25 places over the past two years in the Complete University Guide. It was also ranked in the top ten in the country on the league table for student satisfaction.

In the 2023 Sunday Times Good University Guide, the St Mary’s was rated in the top five nationally for teaching quality and the top ten for student experience. It also saw its highest ever ranking on the league table, sitting in 51st place.

The university was the highest riser in the Times Higher Education Research Excellence Rankings, climbing 32 places since the previous edition.

In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework, the majority of research submitted by St Mary’s was 4\* World Leading or 3\* Internationally Excellent in its originality, significance, and rigour.

The University more than doubled its research rated by the REF in the top two three- and four-star classifications as compared to the previous research exercise in 2014.



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## IN BRIEF

### Archbishop steps in to soothe Indian row over priests' position

The Vatican has confirmed that Slovak Archbishop Cyril Vasil of Košice has been asked to solve an escalating row in India over the direction the priest faces during the celebration of the liturgy.

However, his arrival has prompted more disquiet after a large group of Indian priests and laypeople challenged his appointment.

The row stems from a decision made by the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church in 1999 over the way priests face during a service. Before 1999, some priests faced the altar during the entire celebration of the eucharist, while others faced the congregation. The bishops' decision was to have the priest face the altar during the eucharistic prayer but face the congregation during the Liturgy of the Word and at Communion.

Priests in most Syro-Malabar dioceses quickly complied with the bishops' decision, although dispensations were issued. However, these were ended in November 2021, since when the row has rumbled on.

The Archdiocesan Movement for Transparency, a group of priests, religious and laity in Ernakulam-Angamaly, has insisted on continuing to celebrate the entire liturgy with the priest facing the congregation.

Riju Kanjookaran, a spokesperson for the group, said "Archbishop Vasil is not ready to listen to us, instead, he wants us to simply comply with the uniform Mass adopted by the synod. It leaves no scope for any further discussion or dialogue."

### Prayers for Maui after wildfires

After leading the recitation of the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis assured the people of Hawaii of his prayers after the devastating wildfires that ripped across the island (see page 17).

The pope said he was praying "for the victims of the fires that have devastated the Hawaiian island of Maui."

In his public prayers and appeals after reciting the Angelus, Pope Francis also made a strong appeal for serious efforts at immigration reform after 41 migrants were reported to have drowned in the Mediterranean in early August. "Another tragic shipwreck happened a few days ago in the Mediterranean – 41 people lost their lives," the pope said. "I have prayed for them."

Four migrants from Africa were rescued by a merchant ship and brought to the Italian island of Lampedusa. They said they were on a boat carrying 45 people that capsized off the coast of Tunisia.



Young people and priests from El Salvador attend Pope Francis' recitation of the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. The pope gave a shout out to the group, acknowledging their cheers; "they're so loud," he said. Photo: Vatican Media

# Pope's peace day message to focus on AI concerns

Signalling the Church's growing engagement in efforts to ensure the ethical development of new technologies, the Vatican has announced that 'Artificial Intelligence and Peace' will be the theme for the next World Day of Peace, which is always marked on New Year's Day.

Explaining the decision, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said: "The remarkable advances made in the field of artificial intelligence are having a rapidly increasing impact on human activity, personal and social life, politics and the economy."

It added: "Pope Francis calls for an open dialogue on the meaning of these new technologies, endowed with disruptive possibilities and ambivalent effects," the statement said.

The pope, it continued, "recalls the need to be vigilant and to work so that a logic of violence and discrimination does not take root in the production and use of such devices, at the expense of the most fragile and excluded; injustice and

inequalities fuel conflicts and antagonisms."

The World Day of Peace was inaugurated by St. Paul VI in 1968 and is celebrated every 1st January, the feast of Mary, Mother of God. In recent years the pope has used the world day to call for inclusive ways of overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic, creating dialogue between generations, promoting a culture of care and ecological conversion.

In March, the pope met with tech industry leaders, ethicists and theologians at the Vatican to consider the ethical development of AI, and in January he addressed industry leaders from companies such as Microsoft and IBM as well as members of the Jewish and Muslim communities during a Vatican conference on ethics in AI.

At the end of the conference, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim representatives signed a declaration calling on AI researchers to engage with ethicists and religious leaders to develop a framework for the ethical use of AI.

The Vatican's statement underscored that "the urgent need to orient the concept and use of artificial intelligence in a responsible way, so that it may be at the service of humanity and the protection of our common home, requires that ethical reflection be extended to the sphere of education and law."

It added that human dignity and a concern for fraternity are "indispensable conditions for technological development to help contribute to the promotion of justice and peace in the world."

In an interview with the Spanish magazine *Vida Nueva*, the pope said, "All these issues of Artificial Intelligence go over my head because of the complexity they are reaching," but said he is being "guided" by officials and experts working with the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

Yet, he added that "new technologies have great potential; they are a gift from God and can give good fruits, but they need to have heart, they need to be humanised."

## Faith is our liferaft for challenges

Having faith does not mean there will be no difficulties in life, either for individuals or for the Church as a whole, Pope Francis said, but it does mean knowing that Jesus is there to give courage and to defeat evil.

"The Lord knows that the boat of our life, as well as the boat of the Church, is threatened by headwinds, and that the sea on which we sail is often turbulent," the pope said, commenting on the Gospel story about Jesus walking on the water toward the disciples whose boat was being tossed about by the wind.

Jesus "does not spare us the hard work of sailing," the pope told an estimated 15,000 people gathered in the square for the midday recitation of the Angelus. Instead, "he invites us to face difficulties so they too might become salvific places, so Jesus can conquer them, so they become opportunities to meet him."

"In our moments of darkness, he comes to meet us, asking to be welcomed like that night on the lake" when the disciples were afraid until Jesus reassured them, Pope Francis added.

# WYD showed the world there is another way

In a world suffering from "diseases of the soul," like pride, hatred and violence, the young people in Portugal for World Youth Day showed that another way of living and interacting is possible, Pope Francis said.

World Youth Day was not a vacation, but "an encounter with the living Christ in the Church. The young people went to encounter Christ," the pope told his weekly audience.

In addition to the large events with young people from around the world, the pope said he had an opportunity for smaller, more intimate

meetings, including with a group of young people from Ukraine, "who shared stories that were painful" about their lives and the losses they have endured since Russia launched a full-scale war on their country.

"While in Ukraine and other places in the world there is fighting, and while in certain hidden halls war is planned – this is awful, isn't it, wars are planned," he said, "World Youth Day showed everyone that another world is possible: a world of brothers and sisters, where the flags of all peoples fly together, next to each

other, without hatred, without fear, without closing up, without weapons!"

"The message of the young people was clear: will the 'great of the earth' listen to it, I wonder, to this youthful enthusiasm that wants peace?" the pope asked. "It is a parable for our time, and even today Jesus says: 'He who has ears, let him hear! He who has eyes, let him look!' We hope the whole world listens to this World Youth Day and sees the beauty of these youth moving forward."

Pope Francis, who did not read a

planned prayer for peace in Ukraine while at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, told people at the audience, "I prayed that God would heal the world of the diseases of the soul: pride, lies, enmity, violence – these are diseases of the soul, and the world is sick with these diseases."

And, he said, while at the shrine, "we renewed the consecration of ourselves, of Europe, of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," he said. "I prayed for peace because there are many wars in many parts of the world."



# Opus Dei accepts changes pope made to canon law, prelate says

**Cindy Wooden**

The prelate of Opus Dei said members "accept with sincere filial obedience" the slight modifications Pope Francis made to the section of the Code of Canon Law dealing with personal prelatures.

"We follow the spirit with which St. Josemaría (Escrivá) and his successors accepted any provision of the pope related to Opus Dei. Since the work belongs to both God and the Church, the Holy Spirit is guiding us at all times," Mgr Fernando Ocáriz, the prelate, said.

The Vatican had announced that Pope Francis had promulgated slight changes to three articles in

canon law dealing with personal prelatures in the Church. Currently the only personal prelate is Opus Dei.

The changes, the pope said, were necessary after his 2022 constitution on the Roman Curia gave the Dicastery for Clergy responsibility for relations with personal prelatures; previously Opus Dei worked with and answered to the then-Congregation for Bishops.

The revised Canon 295 states that personal prelatures are "similar to public clerical associations of pontifical right with the ability to incar-

minate clerics" and are "governed by statutes approved or emanated by the Apostolic See." It says the prelate has "the faculties of an ordinary," including the right to establish seminaries and incardinate priests.

The pope's changes to canon law will need to be "taken into account in adapting and updating the statutes of the work, which has been underway for a year," Mgr Ocáriz added. In April Opus Dei held an extraordinary general congress to complete the revision of its statutes and present them to the Dicastery for Clergy for approval.

The prelate asked members to



**Opus Dei's work is now under the Dicastery for Clergy, says Mgr Ocáriz**



## Wedding day gift

Pope Francis accepts a bouquet of flowers from a newlywed couple at the end of his weekly general audience in the Vatican audience hall. Couples who recently married often attend the audience in their wedding clothes and receive a special blessing from the pope.

pray "so that this work may come to fruition."

Pope Francis formally placed Opus Dei under the Dicastery for Clergy in July 2022 and, at the same time, said the head of the personal prelate of Opus Dei "will not be made, nor will he be able to be made" a bishop.

At the time, Mgr Ocáriz said that while the first two prelates of Opus

Dei were bishops, "the episcopal ordination of the prelate was not and is not necessary for the guidance of Opus Dei."

Pope Francis said his decision was meant "to strengthen the conviction that, for the protection of the particular gift of the Spirit, a form of government based more on charisma than on hierarchical authority is needed."

Unlike a diocese or territorial prelate, a personal prelate unites clergy and laity committed to the same missionary or apostolic work.

It can have its own seminaries and priests, as Opus Dei does.

Opus Dei counts about 93,000 members, of whom more than 2,000 are priests incardinated in the prelate.



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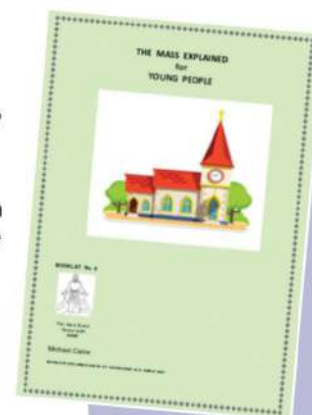
- Why do we bless ourselves?
- Why do we say Amen?
- What's God's Grace?
- Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
- What's Communion about?

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## IN BRIEF

**Archbishop rallies Ohio to stop law**

The Archbishop of Cincinnati, Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr, has urged Catholics to reject a ballot initiative in November on abortion, which he said would enshrine the 'right' to take the lives of innocent children in the womb while harming women and families in the process.

If carried, the vote would make it a constitutional right in Ohio to have access to abortion, defeating pro-lifers plans to reduce abortion access across the United States.

"As Catholics, we are morally obliged to uphold the dignity of life of all vulnerable humans – immigrants, the poor, preborn children," he said. "We cannot remain silent on a direct ballot question like the one in November."

Beyond voting "no" on the measure and praying for its defeat, "we must continue our commitment to caring for women, children and families," he said.

**Nicaragua in new attack on Church**

Nicaragua has frozen the bank accounts of the country's Jesuit university – marking yet another attack on the Catholic Church and its educational and charitable projects.

The Central American University sent an email to students on 9th August stating, "By means beyond our control we are not receiving payments corresponding to fees or services."

A government source said the university's accounts had been frozen but the Central American University had not been offered an explanation for its problems in receiving payments.

Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez described the action as "an outrage against higher education, intellectual freedom, culture and the whole society."

**President vows to protect Christians**

Israeli President Isaac Herzog has denounced the increasing violence against Christians in Israel during a visit to the Stella Maris Carmelite Monastery in Haifa.

Herzog emphasised Israel's commitment to the full protection of freedom of religion and worship during a meeting with patriarchs and Church leaders. The visit comes after attacks against the monastery by fringe members of the Breslov ultra-orthodox sect, who claim it was built on a Jewish holy site, and increasing attacks against churches and Christian clergy in general across the country.

# Bishops appeal for calm as Ecuador faces vote in shadow of candidate's assassination

The bishops' conference in Ecuador has appealed for calm this weekend after the murder of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio on 9th August, expressing solidarity with Villavicencio's family and condemning growing rates of violence.

The bishops said that they will "join initiatives to recover security" in Ecuador, where violence waged by drug cartels has pushed up murder rates, forced thousands of people to migrate and has now jeopardised the credibility of the presidential elections, to be held on Sunday.

"We pray and work for peace based on liberty, justice and truth," the bishops added.

Villavicencio was murdered as he left a campaign rally at a school in the capital city of Quito, and entered a vehicle that was not bullet-proof. Police said the car was shot at 40 times by men on motorcycles.

The candidate had spoken out repeatedly about the growing influence of drug cartels in the South American country, whose ports on the Pacific Ocean have become an important transit point for cocaine shipments headed to Asia and the United States. He also campaigned against corruption.

In the week prior to his assassination, Villavicencio said he had received death threats from a mafia boss with links to Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel.

Villavicencio, a married father of five and formerly an investigative journalist, was the centrist candi-



Fernando Villavicencio died in a hail of bullets just two weeks before the vote

date and had 7.5 per cent support in polls, placing him fifth out of eight candidates. He still had a chance for the second-place outcome, which would have enabled him to participate in the October run-off vote.

Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso declared three days of national mourning as well as a state of emergency, which will enable police to search the homes of suspects without warrants. However Lasso said that the first round of the elections will take place as planned. He has asked the FBI to send officials to join the investigation.

Located between Colombia and Peru, Ecuador had long evaded the drug-related violence that affected

its neighbors, but that started to change in 2020, with the arrival of Mexican drug cartels.

Last year Ecuador's National Police said there were 4,500 homicides in the nation of 18 million people, up from 990 homicides in 2018. The homicide rate in the country quadrupled from 5.8 per 100,000 people in 2018 to 26.7 in 2022, according to data from the Igarape Institute, a public security think tank in Rio de Janeiro.

To escape the violence, as well as taxes imposed on small businesses by local gangs, many Ecuadorians have been migrating to the United States. So far this year 35,000 Ecuadorians have been encountered at

the US southern border after entering without permission, according to the Department for Homeland Security.

Ecuador's capital city of Quito is expected to hold the 2024 International Eucharistic Congress. After an audience with Pope Francis in May, where preparations for the congress and a potential papal visit in 2024 were discussed, the Archbishop Alfredo José Espinoza Mateus of Quito spoke about his country's situation.

"We are worried because we are seeing that politics is simply understood as a way to go after private interests, or ideological interests, and not as a way to seek the common good," Archbishop Espinoza Mateus said.

"The people are very hopeful that (the pope) will come to Quito and that he will bless us and bless the country," he added. "We know that he is praying for Ecuador."

Ecuador's president dissolved the nation's congress in May as he faced an impeachment vote, forcing the country to hold a special election for a new president and Congress in August.

In several statements the bishops' conference also has expressed its concern over the country's political crisis.

"We have been left exposed to the dealings of mafias and criminal bands," the bishops' conference said in a statement published May 10, adding that the nation's politics had become a "spectacle that is making nobody laugh."

## No war for Niger plead bishops as tensions rise

Catholic leaders in Africa have urged neighbouring countries to step back from a proposed military intervention in Niger.

Abdourahamane Tchiani, the general commander of the presidential guard and a former UN peacekeeper, overthrew the elected government of President Mohamed Bazoum at the end of July, proclaiming himself the leader of a new military junta. Bazoum is still being held at an unknown location amid concern for his safety.

The Economic Community of West African States has called on Bazoum to be returned to power, and Nigeria is said to be readying a military force to intervene in the country, which is now going through its fifth military coup since gaining independence from France in 1960.

In Niamey, the capital, reports indicated that citizens were storing food and other basics, in anticipa-

tion of a military intervention.

According to Fr Innocent Maganya of Tangaza University in Nairobi, military intervention in Niger would bring even more chaos. "Only peaceful negotiations must be allowed, so that a peaceful solution is found. All diplomatic channels should be exhausted and the place of religious leaders be considered," Fr Maganya said. "War does not solve the problem, but it worsens the situation. We need to send this message strongly," he said.

Church leaders, diplomats and analysts fear that any foreign military intervention in Niger would turn bloody and result in the deaths of thousands, if not more, due to direct impact of the fighting or other consequences such as food shortages.

As he urged the African states to abandon the idea of using military force against the junta in Niger,

Archbishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji of Owerri, the president of the bishops' conference of Nigeria, warned that using force would result in the shedding of innocent blood.

"We are begging President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to dissuade ECOWAS Heads of States to resist the temptation of going to war against the coup plotters," Archbishop Ugorji said. "We beg them to stop the imminent bloodshed that will trail the military intervention."

"We have wasted a lot of human blood in Africa."

Concerns that the military intervention could easily get out of hand and destabilise the whole of Sahel also have emerged. The region was already pressed by armed groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State. Ordinary citizens in the region also are struggling with the devastating climate change and inflation that has led to rising costs of

stable food.

"On one side, we condemn taking power by the military," Fr Maganya said, "but using force to restore constitutional order is not the best solution. Burkina Faso has said no, Mali has said no and Chad has said no. (Therefore), Niger risks becoming a battlefield where foreign powers test their (military) muscles. On one side you have Russia and on the other you have the West," he said.

Niger's new leader has close links with the Russian Wagner Group, and there are growing fears Niger could be the site of a 'proxy war' between the West and Russia.

Bishop Jonas Demele of Kayes said the bishops' conferences in West Africa had come together to address the crises, while emphasising that evil should not add to evil.

"We are carrying the message of peace as the Church. We are urging the states to do the same."



# Hawaii fire hell leaves Church in shock

**Patrick Downes**

Catholic charities have appealed for donations to help meet housing, food and other needs of what could be thousands of displaced victims after wildfires raged across the Hawaiian island of Maui.

In apocalyptic scenes, an entire town was wiped out and thousands of residents were forced to flee to the sea to escape the flames.

More than 11,000 people were evacuated as wildfires burned the historic town of Lahaina “to the ground.” By Wednesday the death toll still stood at 93 but Maui County officials said numerous people remained unaccounted for, amid fears the final death toll will be significantly higher.

Then Pacific Disaster Center and Federal Emergency Management Agency reported 2,170 acres burned and more than 2,200 structures were damaged or destroyed.

Various news outlets have reported on survivors supporting one another and receiving aid from local volunteer relief efforts. Hawaii Governor Josh Green said that a Temporary Housing Task Force has been formed to work with federal partners, and has already secured 1,000 rooms to house those displaced by the fire with longer-term housing plans in the works.

“We can only imagine the distress and heartache that many are currently experiencing from the destructive wildfires on Maui, and our thoughts and prayers are with everyone impacted,” said a statement on the website of Catholic Charities Hawaii, which urged people to make a donation to the Maui relief effort at [catholiccharitieshawaii.org/maui-relief](http://catholiccharitieshawaii.org/maui-relief).

“As a community of hope we can help those in need to overcome this tragedy and rebuild their lives through recovery efforts. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support as we navigate through this challenging time together,” the agency said.

Pope Francis offered his prayers, his encouragement to firefighters and rescue workers, and invoked “upon all the people of Maui Almighty God’s blessings of strength and peace,” according to a telegram sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, to Cardinal-designate Christoph Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States.



**The historic town of Lahaina was severely damaged, with whole neighbourhoods reduced to ash by the ferocity of the flames**

The devastation was made worse after wildfires – which often hit Hawaiian islands in August – were fanned by extremely strong winds from Hurricane Dora, passing hundreds of miles to the southwest of the Hawaiian Islands.

“This is a tragic day for everyone in Hawaii and the nation. Our hearts go out to the families of the victims and the survivors suffering through the deadliest natural disaster the state has seen in generations,” Green said.

Lahaina’s Maria Lanakila Catho-

lic Church miraculously survived the blaze.

Fr Robert Ni Ni, a Missionaries of Faith priest who recently had been assigned to Maria Lanakila as parochial vicar, said it was “a miracle” that the church survived.

The Lahaina fire ripped down Front Street, leaving the famous waterfront home to visitors’ shops and restaurants a smouldering pile of ashes. The church is a block from Front Street.

Its partner school was heavily damaged by the fire.

Fr Ni Ni reported that the pastor, Fr Kuriakose Nadooparambil, and a visiting priest are safe as are three sisters of the Missionaries of Faith who work for the parish, and all the school and parish lay employees. At least five lost their homes, however.

When the fire struck, Honolulu Bishop Larry Silva was on vacation in California as he returned from World Youth Day. His office quickly organised a Zoom virtual rosary to pray for the victims.

“What is needed is prayer for those who have lost their homes and

businesses, prayers for our firefighters and first responders and police, and all those you are trying to protect the community, prayer for our social service agencies which are gearing up to help those who are most in need in this time of crisis and trial,” he said.

“We pray to our Blessed Mother for victory over all these tragedies,” he said, noting that Maria Lanakila translates into ‘Our Lady of Victory.’

“We ask the Lord to quench those fires immediately, so that they will no longer do any damage, so that they will be a memory of the past so we can begin the work of recovery and rebuilding,” he said.

According to the National Park Service, Lahaina holds deep cultural significance for Hawaiians as the district “was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom.” The Lahaina Historic District, which encompassed downtown Lahaina, Front Street and its vicinity, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962.

Maria Lanakila Church was established in 1846.

## Bishops left angry as Biden slips abortion clause into employment law they backed

President Joe Biden has been criticised after his administration included abortion in a proposed rule for a bipartisan law guaranteeing protections for pregnant workers that had the support of the Church, pro-lifers and Republican leaders.

The bipartisan Pregnant Workers Fairness Act was signed

into law by President Joe Biden at the end of 2022, and went into effect in June. It prohibits employment practices that discriminate against making reasonable accommodations for qualified employees due to their pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions.

However, a rule proposed by

the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on 7th August governing the law includes abortion among ‘related medical conditions’ that it covers, and adds circumstances for which employers may have to grant workplace accommodations, which can include time off or additional rest breaks.

In a statement, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said the bishops had supported the bipartisan Pregnant Workers Fairness Act “because it enhanced the protection of pregnant mothers and their unborn

children, which is something that we have encouraged Congress to prioritise,” but opposed the new regulations, “as it means we are now supporting a law that legitimises abortion.”

The proposed rule has been published in the Federal Register, opening a 60-day period for public comment at regulations.



# Archbishop accuses Russia's Church of leading efforts to destroy Ukraine

**Gina Christian**

The Russian Orthodox Church is playing a "leading role" in efforts to destroy Ukraine and Ukrainians, a Ukrainian Catholic archbishop has said.

Led by Moscow Patriarch Kirill, the ROC "has been happy to provide ideological justification" for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which was launched in February 2022, said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the US.

Archbishop Gudziak, who also serves as the worldwide Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church's chief of external relations, shared his thoughts with Atlantic Council, a Washington-based nonpartisan think tank.

In an article headed 'Russian Orthodox leader Patriarch Kirill's unholy war against Ukraine,' Archbishop Gudziak outlines how the ROC has cast the war – which continues attacks initiated in 2014 – as "a metaphysical battle" against the West, blessed by Patriarch Kirill and endorsed by most Russians.

The archbishop said the ROC "has been instrumental in promoting (Russian President) Vladimir Putin's dream of restoring the Russian Empire," with Patriarch Kirill lauding Putin's ascent to power as a "miracle of God."

Patriarch Kirill has become "one of the war's most prominent promoters" through "thinly veiled attempts to blame the war on the Western world while denying Ukraine's right to an independent national identity," said Archbishop Gudziak.

Since February 2022, more than 9,360 Ukrainian civilians have been killed by the Russians, and some 16,650 injured, while committing close to 102,300 documented war crimes.

Currently, there are an estimated



5.1 million individuals internally displaced within Ukraine, according to the International Organization for Migration, part of the United Nations network. More than 6.2 million Ukrainians have sought safety abroad since the start of the full-scale invasion. Ukraine claims at least 2.5 million Ukrainians have been deported to the Russian Federation, and that close to 19,600 children are being held in Russian camps.

Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion, some 14,400 Ukrainians were killed and 39,000 injured between 2014 to 2021 in conflict with separatists militarily assisted by Russia, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Russia's war has resulted in profound environmental damage to Ukraine due to air, soil and water

contamination from munitions and from the destruction of the Kakhovka dam. Ukraine estimates more than six million domestic animals have perished due to Russia's aggression.

"Patriarch Kirill has continued to defend the invasion despite mounting evidence of Russian war crimes committed in Ukraine," said Archbishop Gudziak. "He has remained unmoved by the atrocities uncovered in liberated towns such as Bucha, or the seemingly endless accounts of mass killings, sexual violence, torture chambers, child abductions, and forced deportations throughout Russian-occupied Ukraine."

In addition, the patriarch is "silent regarding the constant missile and drone assaults against civilian targets including homes, apartment buildings, shopping

centers, churches, hospitals, schools, and grain storage facilities," Archbishop Gudziak said.

Rather, said the archbishop, Patriarch Kirill has moved to absolve Russian troops of crimes preaching in a September 2022 sermon that any Russian soldier who dies in Ukraine offers a sacrifice that "washes away all the sins that a person has committed."

The patriarch's "stance is far from exceptional," and instead "appears to be broadly representative of the mood in today's Russia," said Archbishop Gudziak.

While reliable statistics in Russia are elusive due to the Kremlin's repression of free speech, "the available data indicates that Russian public support for the invasion of Ukraine has remained consistently higher than 70% for the past 18

months, according to Russia's only internationally respected independent pollster, the Levada Center," said Archbishop Gudziak.

He noted that while 300 ROC clergy members signed a March 2022 joint statement criticising the war, "not one of the approximately 400 Russian Orthodox Church bishops in Russia has spoken out" against the invasion.

Along with Patriarch Kirill, a number of Russian Orthodox clerics have enthusiastically celebrated the war with religious fervor. Archpriest Andrei Tkachev has used his widely followed Telegram account to liken Russia to "the new Israel" that is "hated by God's enemies."

Appearing recently on the ROC television channel Spas, Yevgeny Nikiforov, director of Orthodox Radio and head of the Radonezh Orthodox Fraternity, said Ukrainians "need to be burned" en masse with flamethrower systems.

Such views "seeking to eliminate Ukrainian identity, church life, and the very right of Ukrainians to exist" have a long historical precedent, said Archbishop Gudziak.

"The Russian Orthodox Church has traditionally been a strong supporter of the secular authorities in Russia. This was true for centuries during the era of the Russian Empire," he said. "It was also the case after (Soviet Union dictator Joseph) Stalin revived and reorganised the Russian Orthodox Church in 1943 following 25 years of brutal Soviet persecution."

"Ukrainians are demonstrating their own spiritual values through solidarity," Archbishop Gudziak said. "Despite the horrors of the Russian invasion, Ukrainians of all faiths and walks of life remain united. They are driven by a commitment to freedom that is the opposite of the intolerance preached by (Patriarch) Kirill."

## Cardinal believes Vatican could still hold the key to finding peace

**Russell Shaw**

Unless the Ukrainian army's counteroffensive ends in a clear-cut victory for either Ukraine or Russia – which at the moment seems unlikely – conditions could be ripe for a ceasefire and peace talks, once both sides are convinced it has nothing to gain from further fighting.

Perhaps that's why there has been a flurry of Vatican diplomatic activity, including last month's White House meeting between President Biden and Pope Francis's envoy Cardinal Matteo Zuppi of Bologna.

Cardinal Zuppi has met with

government and religious officials in Russia and Ukraine, and will next meet with Chinese Government officials in Beijing.

According to Cardinal-designate Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio in the US who was present at the two-hour meeting with Biden, Cardinal Zuppi delivered a letter from Pope Francis in which he repeated his willingness to help mediate a settlement.

At the same time the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, quoted Pope Francis to the UN, urging them to

all diplomatic means, "even those that may not have been used so far," to end the war.

So what could a settlement look like? The general lines are clear. Each side would remain where it is when the shooting stops. The ceasefire could be followed by UN-supervised voting in which the people of disputed territories could say whether they wanted to be part of Ukraine or Russia. Establishment of an agreed-upon frontier supervised by a UN peacekeeping force would follow, along with security guarantees (to which the US/Nato/EU would be a party) to ensure each side it

had nothing to fear from the other.

Whether Russia would agree to such terms is impossible to say, but a struggling economic outlook could be the issue that forces Putin to the negotiating table, albeit in a position of strength because of territory held. How free voting would be held is also a moot point.

Sketching the terms is easy, but actually getting an agreement will be a daunting task, given the mutually reciprocated enmity and distrust between the Ukrainians and the Russians after months of barbaric

violence. Given that reality, the services of an honest broker such as the Holy See could help a lot.

For President Biden, the question is whether he wants to fight an election campaign next year still supporting Ukraine, or whether isolationist sentiments in the USA will press him to support a settlement in Ukraine on the best terms available.

In short, Biden could push President Zelensky to the negotiating table by refusing to sit idly by and continuing to prop up Ukraine, despite the merits of the country's case in the face of aggression from Russia.



# Catholic agencies warn of a new crisis after blockade stops supplies to disputed enclave in the Caucasus

**Olivia Poust**  
Deep in the Caucasus – at the crossroads of Asia and Europe – lies the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave surrounded by Azerbaijan, which launched a military assault in September 2020 to regain control of the land. Once a lush, bucolic area, populated for centuries by Christian Armenians and later Shiite Muslims, it has become an elusive point of contention between the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples since the decline and fall of the Soviet Union.

The enclave's isolation had been mitigated by the Lachin corridor, through which runs a road that has connected the region to Armenia proper. Since December 2022, however, Azerbaijani activists have blockaded the route, in effect severing Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian residents from the outside world, with the exception of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Russian peacekeepers, who the combatants agreed could provide humanitarian support to the region.

This blockade tightened on 15th June when all traffic on the lifeline, including the ICRC and Russian peacekeepers, was blocked. The ICRC carried out transportation of medical patients and a very small amount of medicine several times, after this ban, but on 11th July, Azerbaijan accused the ICRC of "smuggling" through the corridor and restricted its movement entirely, according to Siranush Sargsyan, a reporter based in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh. The result is that today, the shortage of supplies for the region's population of 120,000 is acute.

Those blocking access are preventing approximately 400 tons



of humanitarian aid from Armenia to enter Nagorno-Karabakh, reported Lusine Stepanyan, project manager for Caritas Armenia. The agency is a Catholic Near East Welfare Association partner that has supported refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh with food, medical supplies, education, psychosocial support and funds for

housing. CNEWA has provided aid for those displaced and cared for by Caritas and the Armenian Catholic Ordinariate. Sargsyan noted in an interview with CNEWA that in her city of 60,000 people, "it's like hunting for food, for basic things." "Usually, you go back (home)

empty-handed," she said. While supermarkets are practically empty, food products such as eggs and bread can be purchased from smaller shops and bakeries, but there is no guarantee that standing in the long lines will prove fruitful, she explained. For eggs, which are available to purchase every other day, people begin lining up around 5 am, but they are not distributed until 3 pm, said Sargsyan. Even then, it is common for them to run out. "It's already, I think, months that I can't find eggs, because I'm not ready to stand in a line and because ... it's better that mothers buy for their children," she said. Sargsyan said this is the worst the humanitarian situation has been since the blockade began. She noted that winter posed its own set of challenges due to the cold, but the current shortage of food, medication and fuel has created a dire situation.

Although supplies before the blockade tightened in June were still limited, and prices were not ideal, "at least it was possible" to find these items, she said. The Artsakh Information Center reports the electricity supply has been completely disrupted for 200 days, and there has been a complete or partial interruption of the gas supply for 162 days. Ms. Sargsyan says this shortage has contributed to a spike in unemployment for those whose jobs are reliant on this supply, like taxi drivers; the Information Center estimates that 14,600 people have lost their jobs or source of income since the blockade began in December and the economy has "suffered a loss of around \$435 US. Recent television interviews with the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia highlight separate discussions on the path to peace, and what that would require for their respective nations. For Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, this includes Armenia relinquishing "all aspirations to contest our territorial integrity." Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said, "There must be peace," and that it is "important for the international community to be aware of important nuances," Reuters reported. While their propositions for peace leave much uncertainty, the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh remains a humanitarian crisis for those on the ground. "We can say there always is a light at the end of the tunnel, but we don't see. It's like endless, this tunnel," said Sargsyan. "And every day it's getting darker and darker."

**Olivia Poust is communications assistant for Catholic Near East Welfare Association and writes for ONE, CNEWA's publication.**

## The disputed region: why Azerbaijan is tightening the noose

Nagorno-Karabakh is classed as a disputed territory. It is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but most of it is governed by the unrecognised Republic of Artsakh (also known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR)) since the first Nagorno-Karabakh War. Since the end of the war in 1994, representatives of the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been holding peace talks on the

region's disputed status. Nagorno-Karabakh sits entirely within Azerbaijan and until the recent blockade was supplied from Armenia along the Lachin corridor. A new war erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2020. Azerbaijan made significant gains during the war, regaining all of the occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh and capturing one-third of Nagorno-Karabakh

itself. The war ended on 10th November 2020, when a trilateral ceasefire agreement was signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia, which forced Armenia to return all the remaining occupied territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan believes that by effectively blockading the territory it will be forced back under its control.





# Archbishops take message of peace to sites of world's only atomic horrors

To mark the 78th anniversary of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, US Archbishops Paul D. Etienne of Seattle and John C. Wester of Santa Fe led a Pilgrimage of Peace delegation to the site of the blast and participated in a moving interfaith prayer and peace memorial ceremony.

"It was hard to fathom that with just one bomb, this entire city along with some 140,000 people died as a result, far more than the tens of thousands gathered this morning to remember them," Archbishop Etienne said later, thinking back to the interfaith ceremony at the Atomic Bomb Memorial Mound that was led by the Hiroshima Prefecture Federation of Religions.

Since the bombing on 6th August 1945, many more people have died from radiation poisoning and other illness because of the bomb, and survivors (known as the *hibakusha*) still carry physical and psychological wounds, the archbishop said.

"All of this was on my heart as we prayed together in this site of so much devastation, suffering and death," he said.

During the service, several Shinto priests approached the altar with branches and reeds and bowed, followed by dozens of other dignitaries and religious leaders. Archbishops Etienne and Wester read the Prayer of St Francis of Assisi as a reminder for all to be instruments of peace.

The Pilgrimage of Peace seeks to establish relationships with the bishops of Japan to work toward abolition of nuclear weapons, while "expressing our heartfelt sorrow for the devastating experiences endured by their nation," according to the official pilgrimage site.

After the interfaith service, the US delegation walked to Hiroshima Peace Park for the annual Peace Memorial Ceremony, attended by more than 5,000 people from more than 110 nations. Speakers included the mayor and governor of Hiroshima and Japan's prime minister. A representative shared words from the secretary general of the United Nations, and two young children read the Children's Commitment to Peace.

The children, Archbishop Etienne said, "reminded us of simple and necessary things all of us can do to build a better world."

The Peace Bell rang at 8:15 am to mark the moment the bomb dropped on the city, followed by a moment of silence.

At nearby Gion Catholic Church,



parishioners welcomed the delegation for a homemade lunch and played a short documentary about the Jesuit priests serving in Hiroshima on the day of the bombing. Their diaries detailed the experience of the blast, the indescribable heat, the black rain and the countless people trapped in buildings that went up in flames.

Led by Jesuit Father Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit novitiate at Nagatsuka – located about three miles from the blast site – was immediately turned into a clinic housing more than 70 people that day. It was soon overwhelmed with injured people, many with horrendous burns and bleeding, who made their way up the hill to the novitiate.

The delegation toured the building, now used as a retreat centre. They saw the room where Fr Arrupe lived and where many of the victims were laid and cared for, and learned more about his efforts.

Late in the day of the bombing, Fr Arrupe took his four priests into the devastation of Hiroshima to assist victims and search for companions who lived in the valley

and bring them back to the novitiate; a two-hour trip turned into 12 hours. Early the next morning, Fr Arrupe celebrated Mass with the wounded crowded all over the chapel and the rest of the novitiate, the archbishop wrote.

"A significantly high percentage of those who received treatment at Nagatsuka survived," Archbishop Etienne said. "Miraculously, the priests in the house were mostly unharmed, and none of them ever tested positive at any time all the years later for radiation poisoning."

Fr Arrupe's cause for canonisation was opened in 2019.

"The stories of devastation, suffering and death are as heart-wrenching as the story of Father Arrupe and his Jesuit companions is inspiring," the archbishop said.

The human family, he said, must "learn the lesson of this dreadful day in history, and never again resort to the threat or use of nuclear weapons. It is simply not morally justifiable," and deterrence provides a false sense of security. "The mere existence of the thousands of nuclear weapons in our world today is a potential

threat of the annihilation of the world as we know it," Archbishop Etienne said. "Let us help build relationships of care and concern," the archbishop added. "Let us strive to heal broken relationships. Let us work to advance not only the cause of peace, but achieve this necessary gift of peace for ourselves and the future."

A private Mass in the basement chapel of the World Peace Memorial Cathedral in Hiroshima brought the Pilgrimage of Peace delegation's visit to that city to a close, and the group embarked on a five-and-a-half-hour bus ride to Nagasaki for activities around the anniversary of its own atomic bombing, three days after Hiroshima's.

Accompanying the group were several Japanese archbishops and bishops and the apostolic nuncio to Japan, Archbishop Leo Boccardi.

"The countryside was captivating and sprinkled with rain – the early warnings of the impending typhoon," Archbishop Etienne said.

The delegation met with Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki, and Archbishop Wester presented Suzuki with an executive order from Mayor Tim Keller of Albuquerque, New Mexico, dated 9th August 2023, 'In Honor of The Japanese Innocent Lives Lost'.

New Mexico was the birthplace of the nuclear bomb, with the world's first nuclear explosion held in the state on 16th July 1945, when a plutonium implosion device was tested in a remote section of the

state's Alamogordo Air Base.

In Nagasaki, a planned public memorial to mark the atomic bombing had to be cancelled as Typhoon Khanun headed to the region.

Earlier in the delegation's visit to Japan, Archbishop Wester delivered an address on nuclear disarmament at Hiroshima's World Peace Memorial Cathedral – a place where he said he felt humbled to be "because it was built upon the ashes of the Noboricho parish church" (destroyed in the atomic bombing) and constructed with bricks "made from earth containing ashes from the atomic bomb."

The prelate opened his address by expressing "profound regret and sorrow for the atomic bombings that destroyed your beautiful cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

"Sadly, those atomic bombs were developed and built within my archdiocese. I stand before you today, humbly assuring you that while we can never know the full extent of your pain, we do wish to join our hearts with yours in a compassionate embrace of mutual regret," Archbishop Wester said. "But even more so, I plead that we join together to make certain that these weapons will never be used again."

To that end, he called for ongoing dialogue on nuclear disarmament, emphasising this dialogue must be "respectful, rooted in prayer, based on nonviolence, and centred in the hope and belief that nuclear disarmament is achievable."

He urged the *hibakusha* to "continue to provide the world with their painful testament for the needed abolition of nuclear weapons." He called on the Japanese public to "press their national political leadership to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as the Vatican has done."

"It is not enough that we become instruments of peace, as important as that is," Archbishop Wester said. "No, we must take up the cause of worldwide nuclear disarmament with an urgency that befits the seriousness of this cause and the dangerous threat that looms over all of humanity and the planet."

"I call upon all of us to take up the challenge of nuclear disarmament by engaging in the vital discussion and work that will lead to concrete action steps toward this noble goal."

**This article was originally produced for the US Catholic magazine, Northwest Catholic**



*I plead that we join together to make certain that these weapons will never be used again ... this dialogue must be respectful, rooted in prayer, based on nonviolence, and centred in the hope and belief that nuclear disarmament is achievable."*



# The healing powers of Medjugorje

**Victoria Aitken shares with the Universe how prayers from a faithful intercessor in Medjugorje helped her father Jonathan overcome illness.**

This is a story of the powers of healing of Medjugorje in Bosnia that I believe saved my father's life.

I was with my mother when I heard the terrible news that my father was ill. My sister alerted me three days before this, saying she was worried about him and how she had never heard him like this.

Yet my father is so English and, during Covid, he had a heart attack. When they asked him how he got to the hospital, he said he walked. The doctor sounded alarmed and said: "That's impossible – you've had a heart attack."

My sister is so strong – she is a warrior, fast and sharp-thinking. My brother, being the man of the family, rose to the challenge and was first in command at the ICU talking to the doctors and relaying all news to the family via Jesse, my stepmother's nurse, via the family WhatsApp group. Jesse was also beyond amazing and nursed him back to health.

I heard the news that, after an operation, he had survived two heart attacks during emergency surgery on his gut, which left him in an induced coma. I managed to reach him in time before the emergency surgery. I reminded him how very, very strong he is – and to keep fighting and that he will survive, and I loved him. He was drowsy, so couldn't say anything back.

Unable to visit my father in ICU, I was in my other home, in Serbia – my mother is Serb – and she suggested I go to Medjugorje, the holy shrine in the former Yugoslavia which my mother has been visiting, since 1982.

Being powerless and unable to

help from the outside, I remembered a woman I knew called Donna who has a company called Paddy Travel (*find them at [www.paddy-travel.info](http://www.paddy-travel.info)*) who helped arrange my pilgrimage.

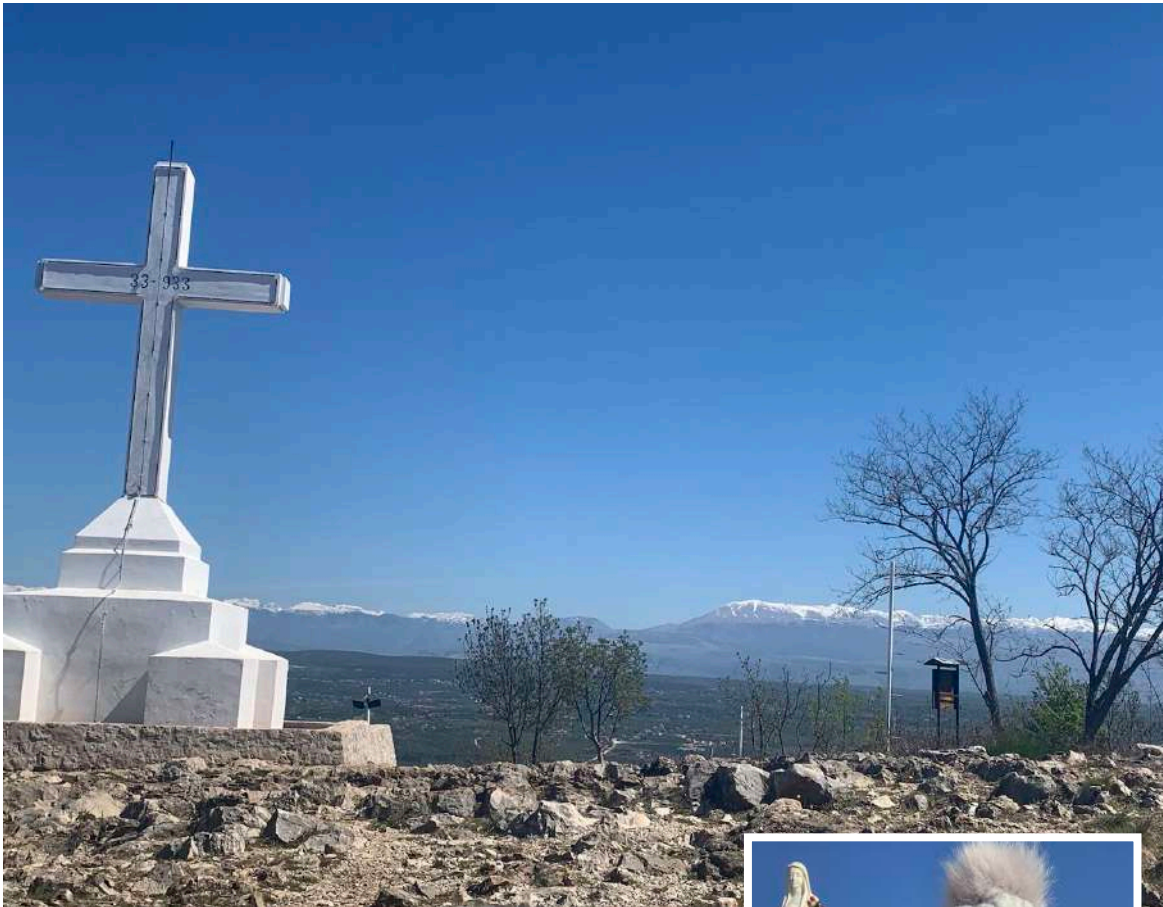
She was a total Medjugorje warrior and helped arrange everything, including the drive across the border and the transfer. She took me for lunch and gave me advice and guidance about Medjugorje and introduced me to priests to talk to. It was amazing – through the power of prayer, everything came together.

I emailed a few pilgrimage companies and I got a message from Philip Ryan from the Joe Walsh tours – who else could have arranged this but God. He works closely with one of the visionaries, Ivan, who prays for priests as his calling and arranged a special prayer for my father.

Medjugorje was so beautiful: the beauty in the mountains, the organic vineyard and red rocky ground under a cloudless sky where most stars were visible at night away from the pollution of cities.

Every day I walked barefoot up the hill, the way my mother used to do when we were children. I was lighting candles; as well as for my father, I was also praying for my enemies, for all my issues to be sorted, and for guidance.

It's a very holy place – in my view the holiest of all places in the world. I even told my father, since he's not Catholic, that being closer to God here is best for him – the fact the visionary who prays for priests had him in his prayers with the Virgin Mary at the apparition confirms this.



However, Medjugorje suffered during lockdown, with hardly any pilgrims visiting and a lack of flights and tours being arranged. Yet one guest house was open – I was pretty much the only guest along with a family from Los Angeles. It was called Villa Flowers, who grow their own food and vegetables. It was very comfortable with an amazing breakfast of eggs, and salad. The hosts were unbelievably kind to me, and even now send me photos and videos from Medjugorje. They were so kind and happy to help me in any way they could, such as driving me to the bus station sometimes.

Thankfully the prayers worked and my father is now much better. My father said that his

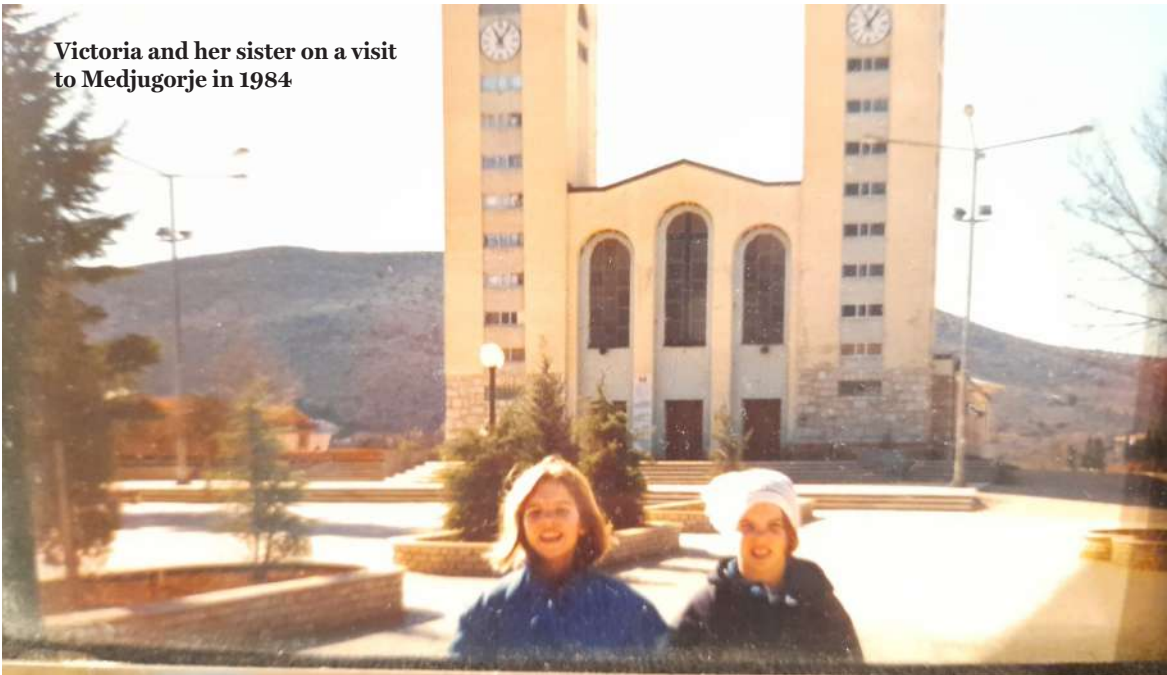
physiotherapy is an ordeal equivalent to climbing up Mount Everest in bare feet. Reading his book, *Prayers for People under Pressure* has helped him cope.

Last Sunday he was well enough to attend St Peter's Belsize Park, an Anglo-Catholic church, as celebrant and preacher.

**The book referred to, *Prayers for People under Pressure* can be found on Amazon, by clicking [HERE](#):**



Victoria Aitken





## JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



# Br Roger of Taize, a beacon in the darkness

## Brother Roger of Taize

Eighteen years ago, on 16th August, 2005, the founder of the Taize ecumenical community was attacked and killed during evening prayer. He was stabbed several times in the neck and died shortly after being carried from the church by some of his brothers.

Brother Roger Shutz is a Christian of huge significance for his foundation at Taize, a small town some 250 miles south-east of Paris, begun in the dark days of World War in the 40s. Taize was situated in country just south of occupied France. There he bought an empty house and together with his sister Genevieve, he hid and cared for refugees, both Christian and Jewish. He was forced to leave for a short period when the Gestapo were informed of his presence, only to return after the Liberation.

It was at Taize that this Swiss Protestant set about giving sustenance to the community that has, all these years later, become a beacon for ecumenical life in a Christian Europe that has suffered such immense decline.

It has become a place of huge attraction to young Christians, men and women on journeys of personal exploration, brought together through the simplicity of meditative prayer and contemplative song.

Many of us are now familiar with the chants of Taize, whose words are rooted in scripture and whose rhythms are both simple and melodic. These chants, interlaced with readings and periods of silence, have introduced us to a



whole new way of experiencing our relationship with the God who made us. The accompaniment is simple, a guitar or a keyboard instrument sustain the harmony, the repetitive phrases enable focus to be maintained.

Many hundreds of young people simply sit together in front of a bank of flickering candle lights, singing, listening, praying.

So what has this spark of faith situated in a small town in the south of France got tell us? How are we influenced and affected by such gatherings, week by week, month by month, year by year?

The first and most obvious way is through the marvellous prayer of

music that it has been our privilege to share. And second, through example. Brothers from Taize have established similar communities in many parts of the world, bringing the spirit of their life to others, sharing their experience of life in God. Others have made short visits, gifting their presence and leaving seeds of faith to grow and thrive long after their departure.

Addressing such a gathering of over 100,000 young people in Paris in 1995, Roger said this: "We have come here to search or to go on searching through silence and prayer, to get in touch with our inner life. Christ always said, 'Do not worry, give yourself'"

His witness to ecumenism will remain a lasting tribute to his life.

Although never formally received into the Roman Catholic Church, he frequently attended Mass at Taize, receiving the Eucharist alongside others. He did on occasion receive from both John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Maybe there is a simple lesson for all of us to learn, that the Christ of the Eucharist is not defined by the label of who we are but of what we need, sustenance for our journey.

Speaking in St Peter's in Rome in 1980, Roger said; "I have found my own identity as a Christian by reconciling within myself the faith of my origins with the mystery of

the Catholic faith, without breaking fellowship with anyone".

His life was truly a life of reconciliation.

His funeral at Taize took place with a gathering of many thousands. It was presided over by Cardinal Walter Kasper, who celebrated Mass together with four of Taize's priest-brothers.

In his sermon, the Cardinal remarked that "... the springtime of Ecumenism has flowered on the hill of Taizé." He went on to say that "Every form of injustice or neglect made him very sad."

Given the harsh and difficult times that we now experience in our Church, with so much evidently inhibiting true growth and witness, it is people such as Roger Shutz who are beacons in our darkness. It is not sufficient to be critical of where we find ourselves; that only tells us what is wrong, where the cracks and uncertainty lie, that is the easy bit. The real challenge comes in finding new ways forward, in recognising new directions and un-walked paths. Where we have come from has fashioned and formed us, where we are headed is still beyond us.

*Poetry in prayer is sought in the solitude of silence, when words are not easily found and emptiness has a bitter taste. Soft rain spills gently on hard ground a quiet, damp wash from thin grey cloud.*

Our Christian faith gives us the confidence to continue the journey.

## Pope sees a way to accompany transgender people

The latest in the Pope's series of podcasts – his 'Popecast' – was released ahead of World Youth Day. It made headlines because one of the young people featured was transgender. Giona, a 20-year-old homosexual and disabled Italian, described the feeling of being "torn by the dichotomy between (Catholic) faith and transgender identity."

In his response to Giona, Pope Francis recalled that people are often stubborn. The pope continued, saying, "the Lord always walks with us". Even if we are sinners, he draws near to help us. "The Lord loves us as we are, this is God's crazy love."

The blur of global headlines captured just part of the Holy Father's reply. 'The Lord loves us as we are' echoed around the world, without including the full context of the pope's statement.

At the heart of his message lies

the call for dialogue and understanding. "People must be accompanied like Jesus would accompany them," Pope Francis said in 2016. "When a person who has this situation arrives before Jesus, Jesus will not say 'Go away because you are homosexual.' No." Similarly, Pope Francis has emphasised the importance of listening to the experiences and struggles of those who identify as transgender, seeking to accompany them amid the challenges of life.

This approach encourages us to extend a hand of compassion, walking alongside those who are grappling with questions of gender identity. But the critical point of accompaniment is movement. Throughout the Popecast episode the pope encourages young people to 'strive forward.' For Pope Francis, accompaniment does not mean

uncritical affirmation of one's current state. The pope has said that, even as pope, he has "accompanied people with homosexual tendencies and even homosexual activity. I accompanied them; I helped them draw closer to the Lord, although some couldn't. But I never abandoned them."

Pope Francis has consistently and repeatedly denounced gender ideology, which is used to justify identifying as transgender. He told the Argentine newspaper *La Nación* that it was 'one of the most dangerous ideological colonisations.'

During a speech in April the pope called gender ideology a "baneful path" warning that it would "cancel differences."

Central to Pope Francis' teaching – which is the teaching of the Catholic Church – on transgenderism is the understanding that every human is created in the likeness of

God. In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis wrote, 'The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation.'

Those who identify as transgender have an inviolable dignity; every human person does. But we are not the masters of our own destiny. We were created in love by God who, in his providence, made both our bodies and souls to bear his image and likeness.

Pope Francis emphasises that the Church's teachings on sexuality and the sacredness of marriage remain integral components of our faith. "There is a strong need in the Church and in the world to

rediscover the meaning and value of the conjugal union between a man and a woman on which the family is founded." But the pope also underscores the importance of approaching these teachings with humility and sensitivity, recognising the complexity of personal struggles. His call for compassionate accompaniment echoes the ministry of Our Lord, who reached out to those on the margins of society with love.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to believe the pope has affirmed a person's identification as transgender on the 'Popecast.' Pope Francis' vision of accompaniment is not blind endorsement. Instead, the Holy Father continues to model for believers a vision of engagement by which he calls ailing souls to conversion and communion with Jesus Christ and his Church.



## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

# Temporal punishment and clearing a path for the faithful to ascend to Heaven

When we offend God by disobeying his commandments, we call it sinning. The problem with sinning is that it can affect the state of our spiritual souls so that they are no longer in favour with God, but what does this mean?

It's all to do with what happens to our individual spiritual soul for all eternity after our mortal body dies. As Catholics we believe that if our souls are in favour with God when our mortal bodies die, they will live with God in Heaven for all eternity. If they are not in favour with God, that is we have sinned grievously against God, then our souls will perish in Hell for all eternity when we die.

This is what we are taught during our Catholic education. We are also taught something else, which many people tend to forget. When we offend God, our sins must go through two phases to gain His complete pardon. These are:

## Forgiveness. Punishment.

Only God can forgive the offences against Him. When we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God will only forgive us our sins if the priest absolves us from them. When this happens, many Catholics believe that this is the end of the matter, but what they tend to forget, is that they must endure the punishment associated with their sins.

A great example of why there is punishment as well as forgiveness



is what happened to King David in the Old Testament of the Bible. He organised the death of one of his generals called Uriah, so that he could then have Uriah's wife, Bethsheba.

When this happened, the prophet Nathan told David about a wrong done by a rich man to a poor one. David said that the crime was punishable by death. Nathan then pointed out that David's crime

against Uriah was the same.

David realised that what he had done was a great sin against God. He was truly repentant and begged God for forgiveness.

God saw that he was truly sorry and did forgive him, but David's sin was a very grave one, and the punishment God gave, was that David's first-born son of Bethsheba would die. This happened soon after the baby's birth.

It is the punishment due to our sins that we tend to forget. If we die and our sins have been forgiven, then before our soul can get into Heaven, we must undergo the due punishment. If we have not endured the necessary punishment, our soul will reside in what is the state of purgatory until it has been; only then can it be with God in Heaven.

If we die and have not endured

**'When we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God will only forgive us our sins if the priest absolves us from them.'**

our punishment, and our soul resides in Purgatory, then not being able to see God in Heaven is itself a punishment. Over time this will clear the punishment which is due. Only then will our soul leave Purgatory and enter Heaven to live with God.

The Catholic Church has created ways for us to reduce and even get rid of any due punishment while we're alive. The Church calls it temporal punishment. What the Catholic Church has created to allow us to do this has been organised into two types, called: Plenary indulgences, which gets rid of ALL the punishment; and Partial indulgences, which gets rid of SOME of the punishment.

The Catholic Church states that: *An indulgence is the remission in the sight of God of the Temporal Punishment due for sins, the guilt of which has already been forgiven.*

There are many ways to gain Plenary and Partial Indulgences, too many to mention here, but they can be found on the internet or in books.

Research indulgences yourself and find out which ones you can use effectively so that you can prepare your soul to avoid staying in Purgatory for any length of time.

## Message from the cockpit that could have come from the pulpit

### Father Patrick Briscoe

A recent video of an American Airlines pilot delivering a stern but compassionate pre-flight message to his passengers, in the wake of an increase in incidents on flights, has sparked a wide variety of reactions online. The pilot's speech, which set ground rules for passenger conduct, didn't mince words. While some deemed it patronising, others praised his strong leadership.

A colleague pointed out the article and got me thinking: This happens to priests, too.

Like the pilot, priests stand as leaders in their parishes, guiding and shepherding the flock. The pilot's speech, a 'little bit of fatherhood' as he called it, exemplifies a direct and authoritative approach to ensure the safety and comfort of all passengers. Similarly, priests are called upon to speak firmly when

addressing behaviors or trends that contradict the teachings of the faith. The pilot is entrusted with safety, but priests are entrusted with souls.

As our culture diverges in more striking ways from Christianity, priests will have to speak with courage and clarity about those things that are foreign to the Gospel. Our promises to God demand that we challenge parishioners to be better versions of themselves, to encourage them in holiness. On the Last Day, we will be held accountable to God for what we've said, and failed to say. Parishioners may have their feathers ruffled, but sometimes a conscience must be unsettled to inspire change.

A friar recently shared with me a story about correcting an altar boy. The friar threatened the young man

to pay closer attention at Mass, saying that if he continued to make mistakes he'd be fired from serving. Later that day, the friar received a phone call from the boy's mother. Terrified that the woman was going to be angry, he cautiously engaged. In fact, she was calling to thank the priest for teaching her son a life lesson. The boy had learned to be proud to have a job so important that he could be fired from it. The stern correction inspired in him diligence and zeal.

When it comes to air travel, unruly passenger incidents have surged, leading to concerns for the safety and well-being of all onboard. Similarly, we may witness challenges and conflicts within our parishes. Radically different experiences of the Church have led to generational conflicts, which often reveal themselves in

discussions of doctrine and liturgy. A priest's zeal for orthodoxy can chafe established parishioners, particularly if it demands conversion.

But a challenging word is not the same as a cruel word. Like the pilot, we priests should approach these conversations with genuine humility, doing our best to understand the struggles faced by our parishioners. It is crucial to strike the right balance between authority and compassion.

Both pilot and priest aim to cultivate a sense of unity. The pilot emphasised the importance of treating fellow travelers with respect and kindness, urging them to co-operate for a pleasant journey. Likewise, priests must emphasize the value of Christian virtues such as humility, patience and charity to build a vibrant and supportive faith community.

The video showcased the pilot's genuine concern for the safety and comfort of his passengers. His words were akin to a firm but loving father setting boundaries for his children. In the same way, a priest's chiding is an act of spiritual fatherhood, urging parishioners to stay true to their faith and continue to reform their lives after the pattern of Christ's Gospel.

Just as the pilot thought it wouldn't suffice to continue making the same announcement on that flight, priests must bravely call their parishioners' attention to challenges and temptations at hand. And just as passengers owe it to the pilot to comply with his requests, parishioners owe it to their priest to give him a fair hearing. In fact, if father has made you upset, it's quite possible you deserved it.



# We love, because he first loved us

**‘The woman caught in adultery in John’s Gospel, chapter eight, broke the details of the law; and according to the law she was to be stoned to death. But, Jesus offered another law and that was the law of love.’ – 1 John 4:19**

A woman was married to a man who was a walking rule. To make sure that his wife fulfilled all her obligations the man drew up for her a set of rules. His list of do’s and don’ts included when she should get up in the morning, when to serve his breakfast and what household chores she should do before he came back from work.

Many years later this man died. With time this woman met another man who was not controlling. Soon they were married. Her new husband did not give her a list of do’s and don’ts. He simply showered her with gestures of love and words of praise and compliments for everything she did. One day while cleaning the house, the woman found the old list of do’s and don’ts that her former husband had made for her. Going through the list, she discovered that she has been doing those things and more for her new husband even though he did not give her any rules. More importantly, she had been doing them happily and without stress.

This goes to show there are two ways of meeting our obligations to one another. One is by following the details of the law; the other is by love. The woman caught in adultery in John’s Gospel, chapter eight, broke the details of the law; and according to the law she was to be stoned to death. But, Jesus offered another law and that was the law of love. He forgave the woman and simply told her: “Go and sin no more.”



According to the Mosaic law, the best way to secure justice was by the law. Jesus, on the other hand, gives a different answer. The best way to fulfil justice is by love and not by the law. The only debt we owe one another is to love one another, says St. Paul, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8).

Many Christians see love as an option rather than a debt they owe to each other. But it is not something we may choose to do or

not to do. Of course, we are free to love anyone we choose as far as intimate relationships are concerned. But that is a different kind of love; it is the love between the sexes and among family members. The love of the Christian (*agape*) is something we owe to God and to one another, and Jesus is the example of this kind of love.

How often people make excuses for their actions when they feel they don’t owe somebody anything. We hear this, for example, when a

beggar or someone in need asks for help, or when a needy person is dismissed with the angry remark, “Stop bugging me.” Of course, we do not owe them in the legal sense, but we do indeed owe them in the way that Jesus shows us.

Many of today’s Christians suffer from a serious lack of awareness and sensitivity to their fellow man. When they hear that a country is devastated by drought and famine, do they feel they owe them? When they hear that HIV-AIDS is wiping

out generations of young people in certain countries, do they feel they owe them? The legally minded will say, “No, we don’t.” Jesus says, “Yes, we do,” and wants us to show our love towards all our brothers and sisters the way He has loved us.

Jesus entered our world on that first holy night to show us this kind of love. May you have the kind of Christmas that fills your heart with the joy of giving, and with the joy of seeing Christ in the least of your brothers and sisters.

## Set time aside each day to commune with the Lord

There’s a lot to be said for a quiet and restful life.

We are bombarded by so much overkill in the daily news that its challenging to maintain a sense of balance amidst all the confusion. You might be inclined to think you will lose your mind from all of these cares and worries.

But, it is not all that bad if you don’t over-react. There is a silver lining in all of this, and that is to turn your life over to God.

Jesus says, “Come to me all you who labour and are

burdened, and I will refresh you” (Matthew 11:28). God will not fail you if you surrender to Him, in humility. Prayer is your best defensive strategy at a time like this for, once you surrender you life to God, you cannot lose.

Set a little time aside each day to commune with the Lord. A field that is rested produces a good harvest. Rest is as essential to the soul as oxygen is to the body. And, the thoughts we have when we are rested are totally different to the thoughts we have when we are exhausted and anxious.

So, rest in the Lord’s presence a little each day. Return to Him and He will renew you. You don’t have to worry about what to say when you pray, and you don’t have to use a lot of words either. God already knows your needs, and He provides the answers to your needs in the scriptures.

Meditate on His word in scripture. Let it sink in and let it renew you, day by day, when you are at ease. The gospels are full of wonderful thoughts and stories that, not only inspire, but have the power to elevate thinking and change behaviour.

These words are still as fresh and creative today as they were when they were uttered two thousand years ago.

Remember too that God has given you the gift of life, and He wants you to make the best of it. So, take care of your own life as best you can. You don’t have to be a star.

There is a precious little maxim that Voltaire coined in a brilliant, little book, called *Candide*. The hero, *Candide*, is a symbol for that part of us that is anxious and burdened by the problems of life. *Candide* tried

everything, but nothing seemed to work. Finally, he gets it.

The only thing you can do is take care of your own garden as best you can, your own precious life God gave you. If everybody did this, the world would be a better place for all to live.

If you are feeling anxious during these anxious times, remember this: If God has brought you to this point, He will get you through it. He always does, and His people, the remnant, always survives.

So, cast your worries aside and turn your life over to him.



SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done as you wish’

20th August 2023 – 20th Sunday, (A)

**Isaiah 56:1. 6-7**  
**The Lord will bring foreigners to worship in Jerusalem**

Thus says the Lord: Have a care for justice, act with integrity, for soon my salvation will come and my integrity be manifest.

Foreigners who have attached themselves to Yahweh to serve him and to love his name and be his servants — all who observe the sabbath, not profaning it, and cling to my covenant — these I will bring to my holy mountain. I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

**Responsorial: Psalm 66:2-3, 5-6, 8**

*R./: O God, let all the nations praise you!*

*O God, be gracious and bless us  
and let your face shed its light  
upon us.  
So will your ways be known  
upon earth  
and all nations learn your  
saving help. (R./)*

*Let the nations be glad and exult  
for you rule the world with  
justice.  
With fairness you rule the  
peoples,  
you guide the nations on earth.  
(R./)*

*Let the peoples praise you, O  
God;  
let all the peoples praise you.  
May God still give us his  
blessing  
till the ends of the earth revere  
him. (R./)*

**Romans 11:13ff**  
**Paul trusts that eventually his fellow – Jews also will come to Christ**

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead! for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient so that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy.



For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

**Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28**  
**Jesus answers the prayer of a persistent woman and praises her faith**

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, “Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.”

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” He answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”

She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

**Is God’s welcome only for the few?**

We are not a church of pigeon-holes: For office filing purposes, pigeon-holes are splendid.

Bureaucrats love tidy compartments where accounts, applications, drafts etc. can be systematically stored — everything in its proper place. A good office motto might be: No surprises and no disorder!

There’s a temptation to think of God’s grace as parcelled out in a similarly neat, orderly way — as something reserved for the God-fearing elect, the People of God. Historically, many of our Jewish forebears adopted this view, and they (and we!) require the universalist message of Isaiah: God wants a house of prayer open to all the nations. Christians need to remember it too: God wills ALL human beings to be saved; in the Father’s house there are many mansions.

**2. Blessings of Loss:**

Our heavenly Father draws people towards Himself in strange, unpredictable ways. Just as in a family the misfortune of one member can serve to unite the others in a new, protective loyalty; or as in business the failure of one concern can direct energy into a new, more productive line, so the rejection of Our Saviour by the Jews resulted in His more rapid acceptance throughout the Gentile world. It’s an ill wind blows good to nobody! Even the lapses and sins of mankind can be turned to good account, says Paul in a profound

but difficult section of his letter to the Romans: “God has imprisoned all men in disobedience only to show mercy on all.” Our own past sins will not bar us from Christ—they only show us how much we need him (“To seek and save what was lost.”)

**3. Crumbs in the Kitchen:**

Why does Jesus want to limit himself to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel?” Was he not concerned for people of other nations, like that foreign woman with the loud voice, who pleaded for his help? She didn’t give up; that’s the first thing.

Second, she found the perfect answer: “Even the pups get the crumbs that fall from the master’s table!”

Third, her prayer was answered, and her faith warmly praised. But still, what do we make of the initial remark?

A popular idiom in Israel, used by Jesus to convey that his primary mission was the conversion of his own Jewish people? Historically, that was his way; first to revive the Chosen People, so that these in turn would furnish a “house of prayer for all nations.”

However, even during his lifetime He was willing to receive those pagans who came to him; and he predicted that in future “many will come from East and

West, and will sit down at table in the Kingdom of God.” Notice too the world-wide mission of the disciples, after the Resurrection (Mat. 28:18.)

**4. Expanding circles:**

That’s how Christian faith should spread, like the rippling circles expanding on the surface when a stone drops into a still pond. First to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Always handed on by direct contact, the sharing of trust, the witness of peaceful conviction, the bearing of one another’s burdens. But will our path of faith be smooth?

Or will there be setbacks and obstacles, objections from people more clever than ourselves, a contrary wind of current opinion hostile to religious belief? In such circumstances, the Canaanite woman offers inspiration, with her iron resolve coupled with good humour and ready wit.

**Published by kind permission of the Association of Catholic Priests, an association for priests who wish to have a forum and a voice to reflect, discuss and comment on issues affecting the Church and society today.**

See [www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie](http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie)



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

# Catholics' practice of lighting candles is a throwback to the pre-Christian times

**Q. I have asked several people this, but no one seems to know: Why do Catholics light candles in church? When did this tradition start, and what was the reason?**

A. The custom of lighting candles as a mark of respect and prayer actually predates Christianity. In Judaism, the Talmud prescribed that there be a perpetual lighted candle at the Ark of the Covenant where the writings of the sacred Scriptures were kept – as a sign of respect for the word of God.

This may well have contributed to the current practice of Catholic churches in keeping a lighted sanctuary lamp near the tabernacle to mark the presence of the Eucharist and to call believers to special reverence and veneration.

Today, many Catholic churches contain racks where vigil candles are lighted by parishioners in honour of particular saints or in memory of someone who is dead.

The word “vigil” refers to keeping watch, and the symbolism is that the one who lights the candle desires to remain present to the Lord in prayer even while leaving to attend to other daily obligations. This Christian practice can be traced back as far as the 200s, when lighted candles were kept burning in the catacombs at the tombs of martyrs by Christians honouring them and praying for their intercession.

**Q. I am thankful that Pope John Paul II established the luminous mysteries of the rosary in 2002. The joyful mysteries highlight Jesus' early life, while the sorrowful mysteries focus on his suffering and death. The luminous mysteries highlight Christ's public ministry as an adult, which I always felt was missing in the rosary. Would it not be more logical to pray the luminous mysteries on Tuesdays, in between the joyful and the sorrowful, instead of pushing them to Thursdays after the glorious mysteries?**

A. The mysteries of light, or the ‘luminous mysteries’, were proposed by Pope John Paul II in 2002 in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. The reason these mysteries were added was exactly as you indicate: The rosary as it traditionally evolved, with the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries, was silent about the public ministry of Jesus.

The luminous mysteries are enumerated as follows: Christ's baptism in the Jordan, the miracle



at Cana, the proclamation of the kingdom of God, the transfiguration, the institution of the Eucharist. True, the pope did suggest that the faithful might use these new mysteries when praying the rosary on Thursdays. But if it seems more helpful to you, and more logical, to pray these mysteries instead on Tuesdays, by all means do that – and I believe that you would have John Paul's backing.

In proposing the new schedule, he said: “This indication is not intended to limit a rightful freedom in personal and community prayer, where account needs to be taken of spiritual and pastoral needs. ... What is really important is that the rosary should always be seen and experienced as a path of contemplation”

**Q. A few years ago, to mark the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis allowed all priests to absolve from the sin of abortion. Why isn't that true already? If I had had an abortion, then went to**

**confession and found that the priest couldn't forgive me, that would turn me off from the Catholic faith. Pope Francis said that absolution from the sin of abortion is 'a power usually reserved for bishops.' Are there other sins that are reserved to a bishop to forgive, and what are some examples?**

A. Pope Francis' announcement did prompt some questions. A key point is that Catholic priests anywhere in the world already have the power to forgive the sin of abortion. The penitent walks out of the confessional forgiven and reunited to God's grace. The issue here is not the sin itself but the excommunication, and who can lift it. In the Code of Canon Law, that power is reserved to a bishop – unless, as in the UK, he has chosen to extend this authority to his priests.

In parts of the world where that power had not been granted, the priest would have forgiven the repentant sinner immediately and



then asked the penitent to return at a later time; during that interval the confessor would have secured his bishop's permission to lift the canonical penalty. Anonymity, of course, would have been honoured, with the identity of the penitent never disclosed.

In order to incur the excommunication, the penitent must have known prior to the offence that such a canonical penalty was attached to the sin – which would seem to be true only in a minority of cases.

You asked whether there are other sins for which lifting the canonical sanction is reserved to the bishop, and there are. Among such grave offenses are: desecrating the sacred species of the Eucharist, absolving an accomplice in a sexual sin or violating the seal of confession.

Finally, the pope's announcement was not intended in any way to minimise the gravity of abortion, which takes a human life, but to highlight the wideness of God's mercy and his willingness to forgive anyone who is genuinely sorry.

**Q. I lost a close friend of mine in an accident. He was an Anglican; I don't know his views about the Catholic teaching on purgatory, but I've been praying for him. I want to offer a Mass for him, just in case he is not yet in Heaven. Will he benefit from that?**

A. Yes, he will certainly benefit – and if he's already in Heaven, the limitless fruits of the Mass will be applied to someone else who needs it. So you are right, and generous, to request a Mass for his intentions.

The Church's Code of Canon Law says that ‘a priest is free to apply the Mass for anyone, living or dead’ (Canon 901). That means a Mass can be requested for a person of any religion or none at all. My own experience has been that people of many faiths are grateful when a

Mass is celebrated for a deceased member of their family.

Anglicans, along with most Protestants, generally do not believe in purgatory as a place of waiting and punishment for our sins. They feel this would mean that the sacrifice of Jesus was insufficient and inadequate for salvation. But many Anglicans do believe in a continuing process of growth and development after death.

**Q. Does it count as true forgiveness if you don't hate the person, if you pray for their well-being, yet purposely avoid them because you've seen enough to know that they won't change their ways (gossiping, etc.)?**

A. Forgiveness is essential to the Christian way of life. We have only to think of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stoned outside the city of Jerusalem, he died praying for his executioners. He took his example, of course, from Jesus, who said from the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Earlier, after giving us the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said: “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you” (Mt. 6:14). So, a willingness to forgive those who have offended us is a Christian imperative.

At the same time, though, the Church does not dictate whom you have to spend time with. In your own case, I believe that you have done everything you are obligated to do: You do not hate the one who offended you, and you continue to pray for his or her well-being.

To continue to fraternise with that person may not only be unpleasant for you; it could also “pull you down” into the world of gossiping. You are justified, I would think, in keeping your distance. **Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers**



## SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



# If you stop striving, you start sliding

I had just bought myself a new jacket in a clothing store and was halfway down the escalator when I realised I'd left my credit card with the assistant.

On impulse I turned and began to run up the moving staircase, only to find I was forced to stop to catch my breath a meter or two before I reached the top. By the time I recovered sufficiently to start again I was more than halfway to the bottom. I tried again and again before I finally threw in the towel and used the lift.

The shock of experiencing the decline of my physical powers was compounded by the shock of experiencing the decline in my mental powers when the assistant correctly assured me that I had put the card into my breast pocket.

However, the whole incident turned out to be what my driving instructor would have called a 'learning experience'. The moment you stop going forwards is the moment when you start going backwards. You can't stand still on the spiritual journey. No matter whether you are a beginner or whether you've been travelling for half a lifetime or more, the moment you stop striving is the moment when you start sliding.

I remember reading an old-fashioned meditation book when I was in my first enthusiasm. It told the story of a young novice who was so lost in prayer that he rose from the choir stalls and kissed the feet of Our Lady's statue that stood by the cross on the rood screen. But when he died he descended into the very depths of hell where he burned for eternity for the lust that led him to leave the monastery to which he was called.

Of course, like so many stories common to that particular literary genre, it was way over the top, but the point it wanted to make was, and still is, valid. It does not matter to what height you may rise in the spiritual ascent; the moment you stop striving is the moment you start sliding. If you do nothing to stop yourself, you will end up in a far worse state than when you started.

We used to have a special prize at school donated by the Bishop and presented on speech day to the boy in each class who had tried his best. I remember the headmaster saying in his address to the parents that he considered it to be the most important of all the prizes, because nothing mattered more than how well a person tried.

I never won that prize, but I've never forgotten those words and I found them echoed in later life



when I read Simone Weil, the Jewish philosopher, who said that "A person is no more than the quality of his or her endeavour".

That more than anything defines what a person is before God, or before anyone else for that matter. As long as we are trying we are going forward, but the moment we stop trying is the moment when we start going backwards, like that middle-aged man on the escalator.

Nevertheless, all the trying in the world put together and multiplied by ten would not get anyone anywhere had "someone" not succeeded. It is his success that we celebrate at Easter. He arrived at where we all want to go because he never stopped trying to open himself to the love that finally raised him into the fullness of life that he came to give everyone who is ready to receive it. That is the life that overflowed from him on the first Pentecost day and onto and into all who continually try to receive it.

Perhaps the profoundest of all proverbs is, 'God helps those who help themselves'. The trouble is, like so many proverbs it has become a cliché and nobody values

it any more. Yet this cliché sums up so simply one of the most profound and complex truths of the spiritual life. Tome after theological tome has been written in an attempt to explain the mystery of what God does and what we have to do to co-operate with him as the spiritual life unfolds. But that little cliché tells us all we practically need to know for the journey ahead. The only mistake we can make is to stop trying, or to try too hard. Trying too hard always means failure because it is the expression of an arrogant self-belief that makes a person act as if everything depended on themselves and not on God. "If you must try, try gently", as Oliver Hardy said to Stan Laurel.

If we have resolved to start trying again, there are two things necessary for prayer to grow beyond the stage of set formulas and petitions to the stage when it becomes a personal encounter with the most lovable man ever to walk on this earth. The first thing is to find some space and time in which to stop being 'busy about many things' so there can be time to come to terms with Christ's death, and to celebrate his life and love, and his continuing life and love.

The second thing needed is to read and reread every word that has been written about him in the gospels and to read everything that he said, because what he said is addressed to us personally, just as every word in my mother's letters was addressed to me personally. These sacred words are precious so they should be read slowly and prayerfully as you would pore over poetry to penetrate its meaning and

**'The first thing is to find some space and time in which to stop being 'busy about many things' so there can be time to come to terms with Christ's death, and to celebrate his life and love, and his continuing life and love.'**

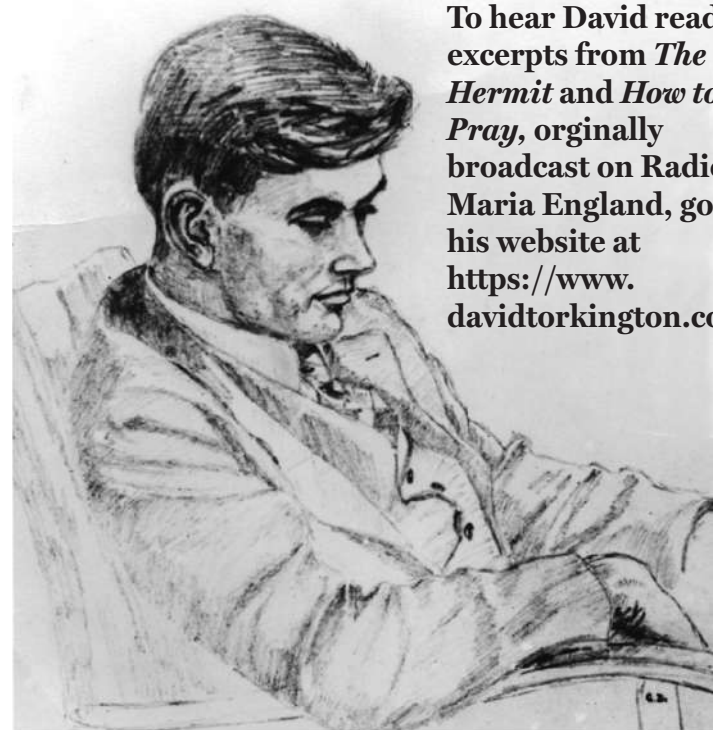
develop and deepen, as in any other loving relationship. It expresses itself in the language of love as it responds to the One who now seems to rise out of the sacred texts, out of history, and to enter into the heart and mind of the person who has persevered in prayer beyond first beginnings.

As love grows and deepens into union, words finally fade away as they give way to a profound and pregnant silence. Meditation gives way to contemplation — the still, silent, and loving gaze upon the One whose life we now celebrate within us because we have finally come to terms not only with his death, but with his Resurrection.

The consistent but gentle way in which we try daily to journey on in the spiritual life not only reveals an inner humility of heart that knows that without God we can do nothing, but at the same times keeps that heart open at all times to receive the grace he never refuses.

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

## David Torkington reads from The Hermit



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

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*Remember, a person is no more than the quality of his or her endeavour...*

**Simone Weil, Jewish philosopher**





# AROUND THE PARISHES WYD SPECIAL

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

Dozens of diocese across the United Kingdom and Ireland sent pilgrims over to World Youth Day in Lisbon. In this week's Around the Parishes, we look at just a few of those who have got in contact to describe their experiences

## An extraordinary journey: our pilgrimage to World Youth Day

### The Southwark WYD 2023 Communication Team reports on a 'transformative event'

Amidst the bustling crowds of Lisbon, over 50 young Catholics from the archdiocese of Southwark embarked on an extraordinary pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2023. Their communal desire was to experience the love and mercy of Christ more profoundly in Word and Sacrament, through listening to the words of Pope Francis and meeting young Catholics from across the globe.

Guided by the theme 'Mary arose and went with haste,' chosen by Pope Francis, the journey was filled with prayer, joy and a profound sense of being called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*Here, our pilgrims summarise their journey:*

From the outset, Archbishop Wilson set the tone. On the first day he encouraged our group to deepen their friendship with Christ, reminding us that God's 'big idea' is to speak into our hearts and draw us closer to Christ through the example of the Virgin Mary.

Inspired by this call, we eagerly participated in various spiritual activities, attending a Vocational Fair, spending time in Eucharistic Adoration and engaging in a conference on 'Theology of the Body' by Christopher West. The day culminated in an Opening Mass celebrated by Cardinal Manuel Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon.

On Day 2 our journey continued with a visit to Fatima, the sacred site where Our Lady appeared to three shepherd children - Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto and their cousin, the Venerable Lucia dos Santos - over the course of five months in 1917. We prayed the rosary on the coach, were

introduced to an examination of conscience, and Archbishop Wilson provided us with some beautiful insights on the history and spiritual significance of events at Fatima.

As we walked the Way of the Cross (Caminho dos Pastorinhos) along the paths the children once trod, we felt a profound connection to their experience.

The International Mass in Fatima that evening served as a powerful testament to the global nature of the Church, reminding us that despite our differences, we are united in our faith and commitment to Christ, truly present in the Eucharist.

Day 3 was an extraordinary day, as Pope Francis made his entrance into Lisbon and we took part in the Welcome Ceremony at Edward VII Park. The excitement was palpable as we, alongside several hundred thousand young people from across the world, cheered and chanted 'Esta es la juventud del Papa!' - 'This is the youth of the Pope!'

Later that evening, with the sun beginning to set and light up faces and buildings in a warm glow, we were thrilled to hear Archbishop Wilson's Address at the 'Mercy Vigil' in Alameda Park, 'the invitation of the Emmanuel Community. He spoke about the



Left, the 50-strong party from Southwark proudly fly the flag

Below, Archbishop Wilson delivers his address at the Mercy Vigil.

Bottom, the archbishop with pilgrims from around the world



need not to live life on the surface, but to go deeper in our relationship with Christ, through listening to the "silent language of His love" in Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

*(You can listen to this yourself, as [https://youtu.be/ZsDdV\\_Q5F8U](https://youtu.be/ZsDdV_Q5F8U))*

Friday, 4th August brought us to the 'Rise Up' encounter and Mass in Odivelas. On this particular day we considered the subject of 'Mercy', and we were delighted to hear Bishop Robert Barron speak to us and help us embark on a journey of self-reflection, dialogue,

and reconciliation, again with the opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration and confession, followed by Mass.

The next day brought excitement tempered with challenges, as we persevered through 37-degree heat to the Vigil. Many braved the elements, donning hats, umbrellas, and sunscreen, while others watched on a big screen at the hotel. Pope Francis, speaking to over a million pilgrims, reminded us that joy is missionary and should be shared with others. He encouraged us not to be afraid and to 'Rise Up' whenever setbacks come our way.

Drones forming the words 'Rise Up' and 'Follow Me' formed in the sky, in multiple languages, and served as a powerful visual reminder of our call to embrace our faith and follow Christ.

On the final day, after camping overnight, the Southwark pilgrims gathered for the closing Mass as part of a congregation of 1.5 million people in Tejo Park. Pope Francis urged us to shine forth and not be afraid, just as in the Gospel story of the Transfiguration. His words resonated deeply within us as he described young people as 'the hope of a different future.'

As we return home from this life-changing pilgrimage, we carry the memories of a transformative journey. A renewed sense of faith, hope, and love has been kindled in our hearts and minds, that we might discern our individual vocations and the definite service to which Christ has called each of us.





Archbishop John Wilson of Southwark writes exclusively for the *Universe* as he relates his experiences at World Youth Day

# WYD's energy will help the world's youth to keep the flame of faith alive

World Youth Day 2023 was a marvellous witness to the love of the Lord Jesus in our world today: an image of the Universal Church, beautiful in its diversity, and united in its faithfulness to Christ. As the Holy Father reminded us in Lisbon, without exception, there is a place for everyone, with each person having a unique place in the journey of discipleship.

The passage from sacred scripture chosen by the Holy Father as the 'motto' for this year's WYD was, 'Mary arose and went with haste' (Lk 1:39). Those words remind us of the loving commitment shown by Our Lady to bring encouragement and greetings to her cousin, Elizabeth. Our Lady, bearing the Word of God in her womb, rises up and goes in haste to greet Elizabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Not only does she rise up out of love for Elizabeth, but she rises up as a true missionary disciple to bring the Good News to the woman whose son would go on to proclaim to the



world, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (Jn 1:29b). Our Lady has set us an example to follow: to be proactive in bringing the Lord

Jesus to the world, so that the world may give witness to the One who takes away its sins.

Throughout the week, through the liturgies, the catechesis, the

**Archbishop John greets pilgrims at World Youth Day. 'The message of WYD reminds us that this faith must now be handed on to that next generation of disciples, to equip them to proclaim boldly the Good News of the Lord Jesus'.**

Sacrament of Reconciliation, and through the fellowship of over 1.6 million young people gathered together, the voice of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the World, was heard. It called the young people to meet him; to know him; to love him; and, to serve him.

The young people came not only from different lands, but found themselves at different stages on their pilgrimage. Some would have known what it means to live in friendship with the Lord Jesus as the foundation for their lives; some knew something about the Lord Jesus, and his love, but were a little unsure; some may not have had a strong sense of the Lord Jesus in their lives, but felt an attraction to

know and love him more.

But, whatever their journey of faith, at this year's WYD, the Lord Jesus invited them to go deeper: to draw closer, to take a new step, a next step, or a first step. Having returned now to their parishes and home communities, it is the task of our pastors and committed laity to help them move forward in faith, by teaching them the authentic Catholic faith, handed down by Christ to his apostles. The message of WYD reminds us, this faith must now be handed on to that next generation of disciples, to equip them to proclaim boldly the Good News of the Lord Jesus.

Cardinal St John Henry Newman taught that we each have been created for "some definite service." We have not been created for nothing. We each have a mission. Our life of faith, is also a life of ongoing conversion. Faith takes us deeper into the meaning of our existence, because our very lives only make sense in relationship with Christ.

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# AROUND THE PARISHES WYD SPECIAL

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

## Birmingham youth felt 'privileged' to take part

**Andy Drozdziak**

Pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Birmingham saw their faith multiplied at World Youth Day in Lisbon as they joined Catholics from around the world in Lisbon.

Youth leader Immy Horton, 20, from the Archdiocese of Birmingham's Kenelm Youth Trust, led a group of 85 pilgrims and saw the group 'fully engaged in Mass.'

"I accompanied five 16-year-old girls for the two weeks, encouraging them to dive deeper and deeper into their faith and ask the Lord to reveal Himself to them in a new way.

"And I saw their faith multiplied," she told the *Universe*.

Immy said that the heat and tiredness meant it was a slow start for the young people, but the large crowds helped them become excited by the global faith gathering.

"It was very hot in the sun and they were tired from so much walking. But as the time went on and the universality of the Church dawned on them, they were fully engaged in Mass, excited to get to large gatherings and see millions of



people all there for one reason: the God who sees us, knows us and loves us," she said.

"What a joy and a privilege to be a part of such a huge celebration of the diversity and internationality of our faith."

Key events the group attended included Stations of the Cross, catechesis sessions and Mass with

Pope Francis.

"World Youth Day Lisbon 2023 didn't fail to meet my high expectations," Immy said.

"I knew the Spirit would be moving in a powerful way, and I had been praying hard for months and months that God would really be working in me and through me on our pilgrimage."

## Catholic band Ooberfuse blown away by crowd's exuberance

**Andy Drozdziak**

London Catholic band Ooberfuse, who helped launch this year's World Youth Day event, have hailed the 'spontaneous joy' they witnessed in Lisbon.

Ooberfuse performed a 30-minute

set of reflective and upbeat festive anthems in Lisbon's main public square Terreiro do Paço at the beginning of the youth festival. Guitarist Hal St John told the *Universe*: "We were the only UK band playing in World Youth Day.

The wonderful thing about WYD is is that deep lived faith erupts into spontaneous joy. It is a rare opportunity to loudly proclaim from the rooftops the exuberance of our faith. It is impossible not to be swept up by this irrepressible tide."

Lead singer Cherrie Anderson paid tribute to the "amazing crowd of festive pilgrims."

"It was a beautiful occasion celebrating our faith with people from literally every country in the world," she said. "I heard it said that the only country not represented was the Maldives! We were able to play songs we had written for other World Youth Day gatherings to an amazing crowd of festive pilgrims."

Ooberfuse, who recently wrote the song *Show Me Love* in support of World Refugee Day and penned an anthem for WYD 2019, played two other concerts in Lisbon at the Coreto da Graca and Castelo S. Jorge.



## Sum up WYD in a word? It would be 'Joy'

**by James Somerville-Meikle,  
Catholic Union**

Since returning from Lisbon, people have been asking me what World Youth Day was like. The word that keeps coming into my mind is joyful. This was my first time at the global gathering of young Catholics, which this year saw over 1.5 million people head to Portugal.

I was as prepared as I could be for the crowds, long days, and hot weather (which reached 37 degrees at one point) but I had not appreciated how joyful the atmosphere would be. As CS Lewis would say: I was surprised by joy!

The kind of joy that allows you to start up conversations with complete strangers, to go down the street singing hymns, and in one case to see a boy in a wheelchair lifted high to see the Pope in an image that made the front cover of last week's *Universe*.

World Youth Day had taken over the entire city of Lisbon. As I got off my stop at the Metro on Monday morning, I was greeted by the Portuguese sunshine, but also the sound of worship music blaring out of the speakers and on big screens in the Marquis de Pombal square.

Young people in two or three or large groups were going around draped in their national flags singing songs and chanting. Feeling like we were letting the side down, the group I was with managed to track down some Union Jack flags, which were well worth the premium price we paid from a Lisbon market trader.

It's fair to say that British flags were in the minority, certainly

compared to the number of Spanish and French flags – and the size of some of the German and USA flags. People would come up to us and ask what we thought about Brexit, if we had met the King, and if there are many Catholics in Britain.

There would then be the inevitable question about if we had anything to swap. One seasoned World Youth Day pilgrim had come prepared with a stash of miniature London buses as wrist bands, pin badges and medals became the unofficial currency that week.

The flags proved to be a powerful witness for the faith back home, as well as a useful way of spotting fellow British pilgrims. It made me think about whether such a gathering could ever take place on UK soil. We are the only G7 nation apart from Japan not to have hosted World Youth Day. Perhaps it is time for that to change.

The gathering culminated in an evening vigil and Mass the following day. The warm wind of the night air in Lisbon was met with the stillness of the crowd as the blessing was given after Benediction. An incredibly special moment.

CS Lewis said there was nothing more astonishing than "the discovery of people very, very like himself."

Certainly for British Catholics, World Youth Day provided such a moment. If some measure of the joy we found in Lisbon can be taken home with us, it will have been worth the trip and maybe inspire us to host it one day ourselves.





# East Anglian youth revel in the joy of WYD

**Keith Morris**

A 57-strong group of mostly young diocese of East Anglia pilgrims spent almost two weeks at World Youth Day in Portugal, having a fun, joyful and life-enriching time.

Before leaving the UK, the group had a Sending Mass at Our Lady Immaculate and St Etheldreda in Newmarket, where Bishop Peter Collins said: "It is the duty of the young to show enthusiasm, to be filled with vigour, physically and spiritually."

The group started off in the most northerly Portuguese diocese of Viana do Castelo where they were assisted by local priest Fr Pablo da Lima, who is currently studying at a Cambridge college, and was a genuine godsend for the whole trip.

Days of cultural visits, salt-carpet making and traditional Portuguese dancing workshops and moments of praise and prayer followed, as well as huge queues for meals.

The finale was a trip to the historic Ponte de Lima where the group were welcomed by traditional drummers and a 4,000-strong flag-waving Mass inside a huge exhibition centre, followed by rave led by a Catholic priest Padre Guilherme playing loud, thumping techno music, complete with stage lights, lasers and dry ice.

A final East Anglia-only Mass was held with an enclosed order of Carmelite nuns, in the Convent of St Thérèse of Lisieux in Viana. The nuns joined the Mass sitting behind a wooden grille which separates them from the outside world. The East Anglia group then had the

unique privilege of speaking to the nuns themselves, through a grille and could see the joy in the nuns faces at the opportunity.

On their way to Lisbon for the main World Youth Day events, the East Anglia group stopped off at the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima and took part in an international Mass in the 9,000-seat Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, before having the chance to visit the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and light candles outside the Apparitions Chapel.

Some of the young people in the group chose to walk on their knees on a path between the two basilicas on the site as an act of penance and devotion, which is a traditional part of a visit to Fatima.

Once in Lisbon, the first main event was the Opening Mass at the Parque Eduardo VII. The East

Anglia pilgrims joined 400,000 others at Mass, celebrated by Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, D Manuel Clemente.

The mornings in Lisbon were spent in large outdoor English-speaking Rise Up catechesis sessions. The group heard first from American Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, from Boston who spoke about St Paul writing that the 10 commandments are written in our hearts and that to live a fully human life we need to follow them.

In the second Rise Up catechesis session, the group heard from Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, who taught that we need to become great lovers and really live in communion with each other.

Then it was off to the King Edward VII park again to watch the welcome for Pope Francis. A vibrant spectacle of colour, flags and sound from half-a-million pilgrims greeted the Pope, and the highlight for many was a close encounter with Pope Francis during his popemobile drive about.

Kirsten Taylor said: "The highlight was watching Pope Francis pass close by us in his open-top car. He was welcomed with elation by everyone. It was a beautiful experience that will definitely stay with me forever."

Well-known American Bishop Robert Barron spoke at the final catechesis session and delivered an inspiring talk on prayer and how God desires and chooses us.

An estimated 800,000 people, including Pope Francis, later witnessed a dramatic portrayal of the Way of the Cross in the Edward VII Park. Pope Francis said: "Jesus is the Way. In the Gospels, we most often find him on the road. He never stays put, but goes to the public squares, to the shores of the lake, to the mountains, to the temple... He has nowhere to lay his head. Jesus' public life is one of constant journeying; indeed, his whole life is a journey."

Some of the East Anglia group managed to get tickets to an evening concert with the likes of well-known



**Bishop Barron at the private Mass**

Christian musicians Matt Maher and Israel Houghton in a Lisbon football stadium with thousands of other Christians.

An estimated 1.5 million people attended the final Mass of World Youth Day and the overnight Vigil before it with Pope Francis at the Field of Grace in Lisbon, to bring the event to a close. The East Anglia group, along with many, many others made their way by foot and metro in scorching temperatures.

Jess McCall said: "In his final homily, the Pope gave advice on what to do once we are back home after World Youth Day, after we have come down from the mountain. He gave us three verbs to help us; to shine, to listen and to be unafraid. He said we should shine with the light of Christ, listen to him so that we too may become the light of the world and to be unafraid for the Lord loves us and is always at our side."

On the day of their return flight home, the East Anglia group had a final private Mass in a Lisbon convent at which Bishop Peter said: "You will spend a lifetime searching for answers and we need to be exposed to the thoughts of others to help us in our great journey. I hope that you have engaged with many people from around the world at this exciting event."

**Photos: Keith Morris**







## GARDENING

Last week, Companion looked at why leaves turn brown, and asked whether this year's unusual weather patterns were forcing a change in trees' behaviour. This week we look at how those dying leaves can benefit your garden, as autumn nears

# Put fallen autumn leaves to work and improve any soil in three simple steps



I think it's fairly safe to assume most people dread the mess and work involved in cleaning up all those autumn leaves that blanket their yards each year.

But call me weird, but dealing with autumn leaves in my garden is one of the highlights of the year for me. While I don't relish the investment of time in relocating them from the lawn to the beds, I do see it for exactly that – an investment.

For many years, I've been gathering, blowing and raking leaves onto a flat area of my lawn where I can grind them up with my mulching mower and then rake them back into my beds as a shredded layer of organic mulch. Even if you don't have enough leaves to collect from your own garden, you don't have to look very far to find neighbours or friends who are happy to let you take them off their hands.

It's money in the bank with

long-term benefits. The shredded leaves will immediately go to work keeping soil and roots warmer, retaining moisture, and preventing many weeds from germinating. Over time, those leaves will break down into rich, organic compost that will do wonders for improving the quality of any soil.

While it's not an overnight transformation, in a few years, even hard-packed clay will improve to an impressive mix of rich loamy soil several inches deep. Moreover, plants and trees love the constant addition of organic matter and nutrients. You'll love how easy it becomes to dig into that soil when installing new plants, thanks to the work of those decaying leaves becoming a permanent part of what lies beneath your feet.

The steps involved in converting leaves into rich, loamy organic matter that adds

life to any garden soil is a simple process.

First, gather all the leaves you intend to shred onto an area where you can mow over them with your mulching mower or bagging attachment. Be sure not to create a layer of leaves that may be so thick that it bogs your mower down. I find that a layer of a few inches works well. I also find that wet leaves may this process a lot less efficient, so try to avoid doing this when they are wet. Mow over your leaves once or twice. Smaller pieces bind together better in the beds and break down faster to improve your soil more quickly.

Once the leaves have been chopped into many smaller pieces, rake, blow or transfer the shredded leaves directly into your adjacent beds or into a container for redistribution to desired locations. Apply enough leaf mulch to cover the surface, ideally about 2" thick. While it's fine to leave a thin layer of leaves on the lawn, avoid leaving any amount that may significantly cover much of your grass.

While the first two steps are sufficient to benefit from the leaf mulch, an optional third step is to apply an additional layer of mulch on top of the leaves. While it sounds

excessive, instances where this may be desirable is if you want to make sure the leaves are weighed down sufficiently to reduce the chance of any blowing away. Or, you may want the look of a more consistent mulch cover, such as pine straw or hardwood mulch throughout your beds. Either way, the extra mulch (assuming it's not too thick (more than 4")) will provide another layer of organic matter that will eventually break down, adding even more valuable organic matter to your soil).

That's all there is to it. In my garden beds, I'm happy to say my former hard, red clay is a rich, loamy, easy to work with soil after about 4 – 5 years of repeated annual deposits. While that may not seem very fast, keep in mind, it's effortless once the leaves are in place. And once they do break down, it only gets better after that.

“ The shredded leaves will immediately go to work keeping soil and roots warmer, retaining moisture, and preventing many weeds from germinating.



HEALTH

# Stretch those muscles... why exercising during a hospital stay will lead to a faster recovery

**Borja del Pozo Cruz & Sebastien Chastin**

When a person is admitted to hospital for any reason – whether due to illness or to undergo surgery – it’s expected they will spend the duration of their stay resting in bed while they recover.

While rest is important, too much sitting or bed rest can actually make matters worse, with research showing it can slow recovery and lead to more health problems.

Our latest study shows that physical activity may help to counteract the effects of bed rest. We found that even just 25 minutes a day of walking while in hospital can significantly speed up recovery for older adults – and it may also prevent new hospital stays in the future.

To conduct our study, we analysed data from 19 clinical trials that looked at the effect of staying active in the hospital on a participant’s physical function, their risk of subsequent health problems (such as falls), and also risk of readmission.

In total, we looked at data from 3,000 older adults aged 55 to 78, who were admitted to a hospital intensive care unit or general medicine ward for seven to 42 days because of an acute illness (such as respiratory failure) or for surgery. We also looked at different types and amounts of physical activity, from simple bedside stretching exercises to walking programmes, as well as daily strength and aerobic exercises.

Our analysis revealed that older adults who did light physical activity (such as walking) while staying in hospital had better physical function by the end of their hospital stay, and a 10 per cent



lower risk of being readmitted to hospital within 30 days of discharge, compared with those who did not. The more activity a person did – and the more intense that activity was – the better their physical function and the lower their risk of being readmitted.

Overall, we found the optimal amount of activity was around 40 minutes per day of walking at moderate intensity – that is, walking at a speed that makes you slightly out of breath.

Importantly, older adults who remained active in the hospital were also 10 per cent less likely to experience falls, disability or death after discharge, compared with those who remained inactive. This suggests physical activity may protect against the harmful effect of too much bed rest

during hospital stays. Other studies have also shown the benefits of physical activity during a hospital stay. For instance, research shows that early mobility therapy for critically ill and unconscious patients staying in intensive care units have faster recovery, better physical function, and more ventilator-free days.

Our study adds to this evidence by identifying optimal exercise types, as well as the amount of activity needed to see benefits.

**The importance of movement**  
The idea that we should rest in bed while in hospital – and that activity could hamper recuperation – has long been a misconception. In fact, we have known since the 1940s about the negative effects of bed rest.

Since then, a lot of bed rest research has been conducted – mainly to understand what effect space exploration may have on the body, since astronauts spend long periods in a weightless environment. Surprisingly, within hours of bed rest, we start to lose muscle and bone mass. This leads to deconditioning, loss of strength, and ultimately a reduced ability to do daily tasks independently.

Prolonged bed rest also decreases blood flow and lung capacity and increases the risk of deep vein thrombosis. It can also lead to pressure sores and constipation and incontinence.

But physical activity helps to prevent deconditioning and preserve the muscle strength needed for mobility and daily tasks. It also keeps the

cardiovascular system working as it should, and helps prevent deep vein thrombosis and gastro-intestinal problems.

And the benefits of movement aren’t only physical. Exercise is shown to relieve boredom and improve mood. It also connects patients with staff and care-givers, improving mental health.

Importantly, being active while in the hospital will help patients remain active in their daily lives, which is one of the most effective ways to stay healthy once back at home. This may explain why our study found that those who were active during a hospital stay had lower readmission rates.

So, next time you need to go to the hospital, pack your walking shoes. There’s no ‘one size fits all’ solution, but every movement counts. The key is to make sure you’re doing activities suited to your abilities. If you’re recovering from surgery or have a heart condition, be sure to start slowly with exercise and then increase it gradually.

Even small things – such as getting out of bed and moving to a nearby chair to rest, or going for a short stroll to the toilet or cafeteria – are a good start. If you aren’t sure where to begin, be sure to talk to your GP, nurse or even a physiotherapist who can recommend a tailored routine.

**Borja del Pozo Cruz is an Investigador principal en Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad de Cádiz**

**Sebastien Chastin is a Professor of Health Behaviour Dynamics of People, Places and Systems, Glasgow Caledonian University**



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## FOOD

# NORTH AFRICAN DELIGHT: SLOW COOKER CHICKEN AND APRICOT

This Moroccan inspired dish is full of flavour which gets mopped up with the couscous, ideal for soaking up the sauce.

## INGREDIENTS

- 785g skinless, boneless chicken breast fillets, cut into 2.5cm chunks
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 65g dried apricots, coarsely chopped
- 50g raisins
- 300ml low salt chicken stock
- 2 tbsps tomato puree
- 2 tbsps lemon juice
- 2 tbsps plain flour
- 1½ tsps ground ginger
- 1½ tsps ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 tsp curry powder
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
- 175g couscous
- 250ml boiling water

## METHOD

- Place the chicken, onions, apricots and raisins into a slow cooker.
- In a bowl, whisk together the chicken stock, tomato puree, lemon juice, flour, ginger, cumin, cinnamon, black pepper, curry powder and cayenne.
- Pour the mixture over the chicken in the cooker. Cover, set the cooker to High and cook for 2½ hours, or set the cooker to Low and cook for 5 hours.
- Place the couscous into a saucepan, stir in the boiling water, cover and let stand until the water is absorbed and the couscous is tender, about 5 minutes.
- Fluff the couscous with a fork. Scoop onto plates and serve with chicken tagine.



## CHOCOLATE AND RAISIN MERINGUES

Meringues are a light but indulgent treat for any time of year, and these chocolate versions are very decadent without taking too much time.

## INGREDIENTS

- 150g egg whites
- 300g sugar
- 300g milk chocolate
- 150g double cream
- 5g vanilla essence
- 120g raisins
- 100g melted chocolate to coat the base of the meringue

## METHOD

- Heat the oven to 125°C
- Whisk the egg whites to stiff snow peaks. Add 200g of sugar while still whisking – until the meringue is stiff.
- Gently stir in the remaining 100g of sugar.
- Place the mixture in a piping bag and pipe out 30 meringues before placing in the oven for approx. 30 mins (with the door slightly open to allow moisture to escape) then turn oven off and leave the meringues inside.
- Once dry and light brown in colour take them out of the oven and allow to cool.
- To make the ganache, heat the cream and vanilla to 72°C and hold for two minutes before adding the milk chocolate and mixing well.
- Add the raisins and allow to cool.
- Take a meringue and brush on melted chocolate to the base. Once the chocolate has set, pipe a disc of ganache on to the meringue and place another on top to form a sandwich and then repeat until done.


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## FILMS

# Dracula's back - but this blood-tinged monster is missing his suave alter ego

Few literary sources have been adapted for the screen more often, or in more diverse ways, than Bram Stoker's classic 1897 novel *Dracula*. From the days of silent pictures to Bela Lugosi's 1931 personification of the vampire and on to Christopher Lee's repeated turns in the role, Stoker's count has maintained his fascination.

Does he continue to do so in the gory chiller *The Last Voyage of the Demeter* (Universal)? Not really. Instead, the film registers as competent but uneven, with its evident artistic intent barely justifying the quarts of blood spilt as its plot unfolds.

What is interesting is the fresh approach to the subject, which is based on a single chapter of Stoker's book. The passage partly takes the ostensible form of a ship's log kept by the commander of the titular vessel, Capt. Eliot (Liam Cunningham), in the year *Dracula* was published.

Before the *Demeter* sets sail from Carpathia to London, Dr. Henry Clemens (Corey Hawkins)

joins its crew as a simple sailor. Even in this capacity – and regardless of the advanced education he received, so the dialogue informs us, at Cambridge University – the Afro-British physician is the object of racial animus.

That soon becomes the least of his worries, however, once he, along with everyone else on board, discovers why it's a bad idea to transport cargo shipped anonymously from Transylvania. There's an incredibly strong, super-speedy fiend packed in the hold, it seems, and he has no intention of staying put.

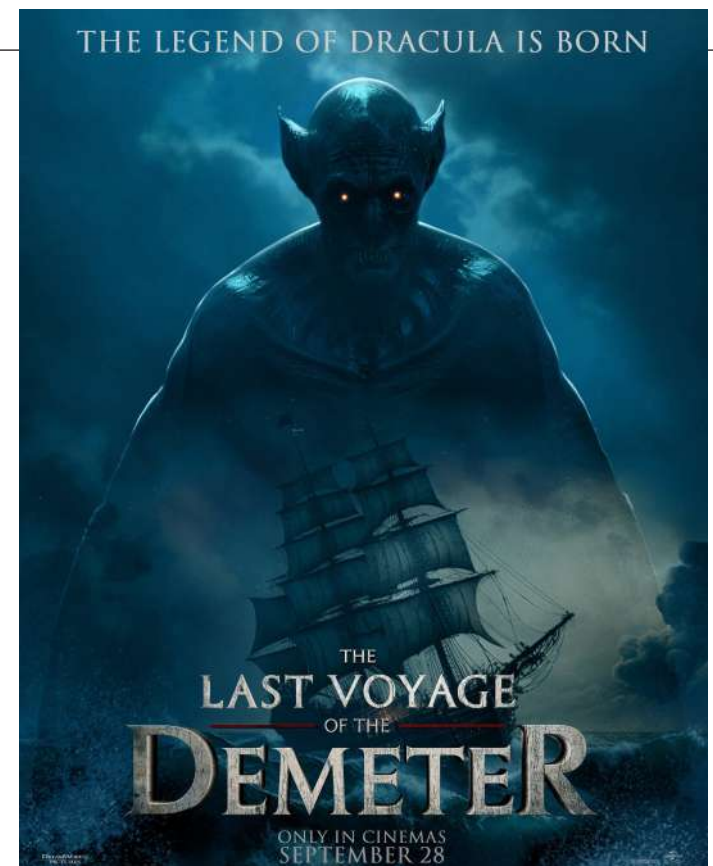
As macabre and grisly events begin to overtake the craft, Eliot and Clemens are helped to interpret them by Anna (Aisling Franciosi), a young woman from bloodsucker territory they initially take for a stowaway. In fact, Anna was packed into one of Dracula's dozens of crates as a potential source of plasma for the veteran vein-drainer.

There's no hint here of Lugosi's suave, if sinister, nobleman – or

Lee's chilly elegance in the role. This inhuman Dracula more closely resembles the eponymous predator of F. W. Murnau's acclaimed 1922 production *Nosferatu* – in other words, a brutal and frightening monster. Nor is Ovredal shy about showing his audience the results of its many-fanged attacks. Indeed, the unsparing depiction of the massive wounds Dracula inflicts is one reason this is not a cruise on which casual film lovers should embark. Another is the script's ambiguous treatment of faith.

On the one hand, traditional vampire lore is ignored when it comes to the effect of crosses or crucifixes on the undead. And the *Demeter*'s Philippine cook, Joseph (Jon Jon Briones), is a Bible-thumping zealot.

Yet one of the picture's few really effective scenes features Anna praying at the informal funeral organised for one of Dracula's victims. This somewhat offsets Eliot's despairing belief that God has abandoned his doomed ship.



Director André Ovredal said the 'look of Dracula' and the balance of how much to reveal – and how much not to show – was a key part of his depiction. "The mystery of the look of Dracula is obviously a huge thing that, when you're sitting watching the movie, you're supposed to feel evolution," he said. "I'm very much about working with the dramatic effect of discovery and therefore, the creature, which you are discovering in this movie, the evolution of the creature, is the biggest one. So, in the beginning, you need to kind of keep him in the shadows. You kind of need to

keep him in the shadows, and as he evolves, as the creature evolves, you can bring him more and more out. You gotta just go by a gut feeling, but at the same time, you're also breaking down the script."

Ovredal and his collaborators succeed in delivering the occasional jolt and build up a sense of the claustrophobia gripping the trapped mariners. But their project founders when it attempts to turn serious and establish some larger context of a cosmic struggle between good and evil. Its challenging content, moreover, makes their film suitable for few.

## Racing lines dull edge of otherwise intriguing film

In the early 1990s, video game designer Kazunori Yamauchi, along with several colleagues, set out to develop a car racing simulation that would be realistic down to the smallest detail. How well they succeeded may be judged by fact-based drama that takes its name from the title of the franchise they created, *Gran Turismo* (Sony).

Director Neill Blomkamp's lively against-the-odds tale recounts the unlikely career of working-class Welsh lad Jann Mardenborough (Archie Madekwe). Having mastered Yamauchi's game, Jann is offered the opportunity to prove his skills in real life via a competition among his GT-playing peers, the winner of which will get to join Nismo, Nissan's motorsports team.

Danny Moore (Orlando Bloom),



the marketing executive who conceived the contest as a publicity ploy, initially offers Jann his support. But the youth struggles to gain the confidence of Jack Salter (David Harbour), the hard-bitten coach

hired to train the entrants.

Jann also faces opposition from his dad, Steve (Djimon Hounsou). An ex-football player, Steve considers Jann's many hours spent at the console as so much wasted time.

Teen viewers might potentially have benefited both from the example of Jann's persistence and from the arc of his relationship with Steve. But, while *Gran Turismo* is free of problematic violence or sexual

**After a life of gaming, Jann gets to grips with the real thing in *Gran Turismo***

content, as scripted by Jason Hall and Zach Baylin, it comes freighted with an amount of vulgar dialogue that makes it doubtful material for any but grown-ups. Mature moviegoers will appreciate the picture's positive values as it highlights the need for family solidarity, reconciliation and the open acknowledgement of mistakes. There are some touching emotional moments along the plot's familiar course as well, and Madekwe succeeds in winning empathy for his character.

Still, lengthy sequences demonstrating Jann's resourcefulness and resilience behind the wheel, while suspenseful, may try the patience of all but enthusiasts. Fewer laps before the chequered flag would have kept this engaging biopic in sharper focus.



# Pendant offers tantalising glimpse into pre-Christian days of the Norse gods

HISTORY

**Marianne Hem Eriksen**

## Is Norse god Odin older than previously thought? An expert analyses new evidence

A new find from Denmark, dubbed the Vindelev bracteate, has challenged previous understanding of religion in late prehistoric and early medieval Scandinavia.

The discovery of the oldest recorded mention of the god Odin – usually known from much later stories of Norse mythology – pushes the age of this deity back at least 150 years to the early 5th century. Odin is a complex and fascinating deity and the new find offers insights into the worldviews of ancient Scandinavians.

In 2020, a hoard of gold objects from the 5th century was found in Jutland, Denmark. Among the objects was a Scandinavian-style 'bracteate' – a type of pendant modelled on Roman coins and medallions.

More than a thousand of these bracteates have been found across Europe. Most were likely made in south Scandinavia and feature depictions of animals and human or human-like figures.

The Vindelev bracteate is particularly large and displays a human head (probably male) and a galloping horse. The gold pendant has also been inscribed with runes – an alphabet used in Scandinavia for almost 1,000 years before the Latin alphabet took over.

Rune experts Lisbeth Imer and Krister Vasshus of the National Museum of Denmark and Sagnlandet Lejre museum have examined the inscription. While the full interpretation will be published next month, they have identified the name Jaga, or Jagaz, and the phrase 'Odin's man'.

Runes and bracteates all emerged from a melting pot of beliefs, ideas and technologies between the Roman Empire and their northern neighbours and attackers, the Germanic "barbarians". The gold from which they were made and, probably, the Norse gods themselves came from the same pot.

Imer and Vasshus argue that Jagaz was a king and cult leader among a south Scandinavian tribe. However, when it comes to prehistoric iconography, scholars can be a bit obsessed with kings. In reality, there is no direct



The inscription 'He is Odin's Man' is in a round half circle over the head of a man.

information about who the figure is. He could be a warrior, a shaman, a medicine man – all or none of the above.

### Odin: shaman, shape-shifter, queer?

Odin was a pan-Germanic god known as *Wuotan*, *Wōden* and *Óðinn* across northern Europe before the conversion to Christianity (although belief in the Norse gods probably continued in remote areas for some time).

Odin, the king of the gods, was associated with war and the dead. According to later medieval sources, he ruled over the death realm known as *Valhall* (the hall of the slain warriors). We preserve his Old English name in our word Wednesday: *Wōden's day*.

In later written sources, Odin is known by over 200 names, among them 'the masked one', 'terrible/ugly one' and – my personal favourite – 'horsehair-moustach'.

Odin had shamanistic qualities.

He sacrificed one of his eyes to gain wisdom and hanged himself from *Yggdrasill* (the world tree) for nine nights in order to learn to read runes.

Odin had the capacity to shape shift into animal form and could send his thoughts and intent into the world in the form of two ravens called *Munin* and *Hugin*.

As 12-13th century Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson describes: 'Odin could transform his shape: his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in shape of a fish, or worm, or bird, or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands.'

Odin was a master of *seiðr*. *Seiðr* was a magical, ritual practice involving chanting, drumming and seeing into the future or speaking with the dead.

According to Snorri, Odin learned *seiðr* from the goddess Freyja. However, because *seiðr* was associated with women and because its ecstatic components

may have had sexual allusions, it was seen as unmanly. This has led some scholars to question whether Odin was a queer god, or gender fluid.

### What does the Vindelev bracteate tell us?

Despite the popularity of the Norse gods today, much about their history remains uncertain. The historical sources describing these gods were written centuries after the fact by Christian authors. How reliably they describe Viking age beliefs has been debated.

The find adds to several objects that confirm that the written sources are not purely the inventions of Christian authors in high medieval Scandinavia.

Whether the Odin of the Vindelev bracteate is quite the same character as the Odin of the medieval sources almost 1,000 years later is difficult to ascertain. But the name had deep roots among the Scandinavians. The new discovery also places the deity among the Germanic peoples who contributed to the fall of the western Roman Empire.

As a scholar researching the human body in the Iron and Viking ages in northern Europe, I am intrigued by the figure's hair, which may be connected to sacrificed

braids found in bogs in Scandinavia from centuries earlier.

This provides clues about hairstyles and body ideals at the time and supports evidence that hair was an especially important and meaningful part of the body.

While the mention of Odin is unparalleled, the glimpse of Jagaz (whoever he was) is also fascinating. We can speculate that he lived in the early 400s in what is now Denmark, adorned his hair with a braid, believed in Odin and had a horse companion.

He may have practised something akin to *seiðr*. Perhaps he journeyed to the Roman Empire and served as a soldier, returning with experiences of exotic animals, enormous monuments, foreign languages and gods that his community would have difficulty grasping. Perhaps he used his pay to have an exaggerated bracteate made, that he would ultimately sacrifice in a gold hoard in the ground.

Despite gaps in the story, the Vindelev bracteate opens new possibilities to imagine the decidedly foreign worlds of past people – and their gods.

**Marianne Hem Eriksen is an Associate Professor of Archaeology, University of Leicester**



*Despite gaps in the story, the Vindelev bracteate opens new possibilities to imagine the decidedly foreign worlds of past people – and their gods.*





St. Peter's Basilica is seen from  
St. Peter's Oratory football field  
Photo courtesy Knights of  
Columbus Multimedia Archives

# The Vatican's football pitches were built with a different goal in mind

FAITH IN SPORT

**Andrew  
Fowler**

The next generation of football players, religious and even the Vatican's national team have displayed their skills on five fields nestled in a Rome neighbourhood, overlooking St Peter's Basilica, maintained by the Knights of Columbus for almost a century.

The football pitches have served a loftier goal than simply being arenas of competition. They function under a mission entrusted to the Knights by Pope Benedict XV: to keep the children of Rome Catholic.

Such a responsibility was imparted on the Catholic fraternal organisation's leaders when meeting with the pope on a pilgrimage to the Eternal City on 28th August 1920.

Impressed by the Knights' recreation efforts during World War I, Pope Benedict XV addressed his concerns over emerging anti-Catholic sentiments ravaging secular sports associations that attracted Catholic youth. The best prevention of apostasy, he believed, was providing high quality sports centres under the auspices of a Catholic organisation.

"There is another field of competition before you; may the



struggle bring you as much merit as it brings us hope," the pope told the Knights' leaders.

The Knights heeded the pope's plea. Between 1922 and 1927, the organisation built five recreation centres overlooking the Vatican. The design and construction of each location were supervised by Count Enrico Pietro Galeazzi, who would later become the Knights' representative in Rome and confidant of Pope Pius XII.

Known as 'playgrounds', each centre was designed in the architectural style of the

surrounding neighbourhood. They included an outdoor soccer field, clubhouse and gymnasium.

True to the mission, Rome's children, parishes and schools were, and still are, allowed free use of the five fields. More than 100,000 children utilised the centre in the San Lorenzo district alone within the first year.

However, the playgrounds soon were threatened under Italian leader Benito Mussolini and the rise of fascism. The Government suspended the centres' operations in 1931 in order to absorb all youth

programmes under its indoctrinating jurisdiction.

Recognising how such an arrangement was antithetical to the centres' mission, Galeazzi urgently persuaded Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to eventually allow the Knights to continue their work. Other organisations such as the Boy Scouts and Catholic Action had to shut down unless they formed part of a fascist youth organization.

Throughout World War II, the playgrounds remained open, but also served as Vatican hubs for food distribution to Rome's citizens. In

A football match is seen in Rome during the dedication of Pius XI playground on 13th May 1926.  
Photo courtesy Knights of Columbus Multimedia Archives

collaboration with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, reportedly 400,000 were fed daily at the sports centres after the war.

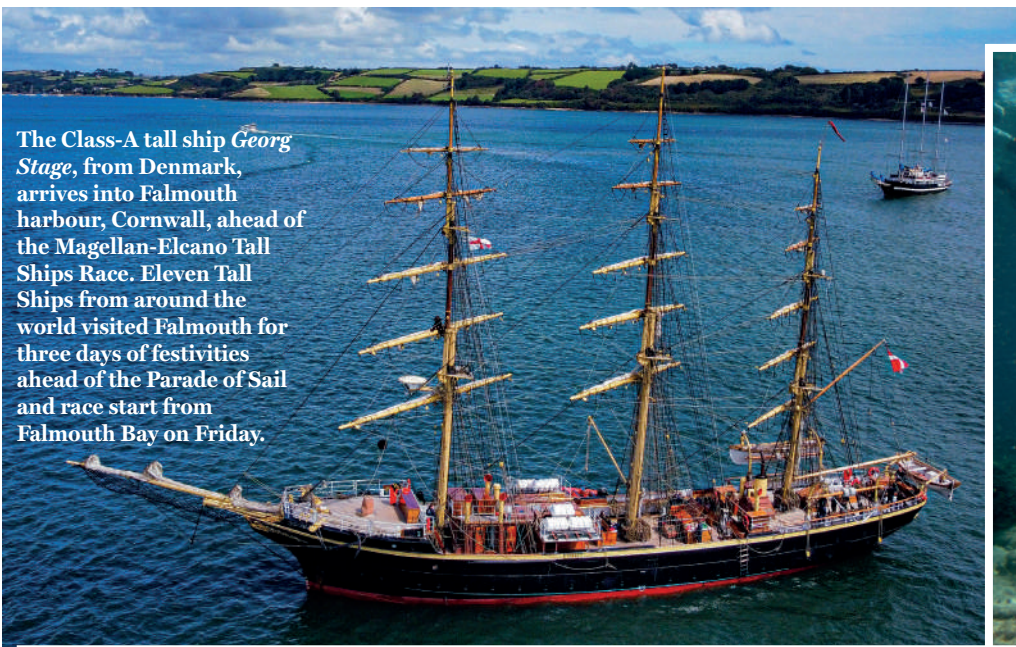
This nearly century-long work is aligned with the Knights' tradition of providing sports opportunities for children, including baseball and basketball leagues, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the annual Free Throw Championship, Football Challenge and Special Olympics competitions.

In more recent years, the football fields, particularly Campo Pio XI, have hosted three matches for the Vatican City national team in 2014, 2017 and 2019. Prior to the pandemic, the annual Clericus Cup tournament for the pontifical seminaries and universities in Rome has taken place at Campo Pio XI.

Today, the fields' operations maintain their initial mission by serving the children of Rome, providing areas for sports, fraternity and friendly competition free of charge within a Catholic atmosphere.



# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



The Class-A tall ship *Georg Stage*, from Denmark, arrives into Falmouth harbour, Cornwall, ahead of the Magellan-Elcano Tall Ships Race. Eleven Tall Ships from around the world visited Falmouth for three days of festivities ahead of the Parade of Sail and race start from Falmouth Bay on Friday.



Paralympian swimmer Ellie Simmonds visits Indonesia's Spermonde Archipelago to take part in 'Sheba Hope Grows', which is the world's largest coral restoration programme.



Above, Dave Thompson (centre) at the end of a boxing marathon session in which he completed 5,583 minutes of exercise in 24-hours, at Bells Gym in Altrincham. Dave and his son Will are raising awareness for mental health charity Mentell after losing his eldest son George, 18, who took his own life after battling mental health problems. In 2021, the year George died, 5,583 suicides were registered in England and Wales.



Shire horses Bryn and Cosmo harvest the wildflower meadow at King's College Cambridge. The heavy horses from Waldburg Shires stable are helping to cut the meadow before turning and carting the hay on a traditional wain, with the bales being used to propagate more wildflower meadows across the city of Cambridge, and the hay offered to local farmers as winter feed for livestock.



Gearoid Doherty (right) who lost his brother Oran in the bombing, lifts his son Daithi, aged 4, to place a flower during a service to mark the 25th anniversary of the bombing that devastated Omagh in 1998, at the Memorial Gardens in Omagh, Co Tyrone.

Left, kite surfers enjoy the windy weather in Camber Sands, East Sussex. The wet summer could finally be turning warmer and drier, with temperatures predicted to hit 30C in parts of the UK next week, according to the Met Office.



LITURGICAL  
CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar  
Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I  
Sunday, August 20: 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Isa. 56:1, 6-7; Ps. 67: 2-3, 5-6, 8 r.4; Rom.11:13-15, 29-32;  
Mt.15:21-28

Monday, August 21: St Pius X, Pope, Jges.2:11-19; Ps.  
106:34-37,39-40,43-44; Mt.19:16-22

Tuesday, August 22: Our Lady, Mother and Queen,  
Jges.6:11-24; Ps. 85:9,11-14; Mt.19:23-30

Wednesday, August 23: Weekday in Ordinary Time  
or St Rose of Lima, Virgin Jges. 9:6-15; Ps.21:2-7;  
Mt.20:1-16

Thursday, August 24: St Bartholomew, Apostle-feast  
Rev. 21:9-14; Ps.145:10-13,17-18; Jn.1:45-51

Friday, August 25: Weekday in Ordinary Time or St  
Louis or St Joseph Calasanz, Priest Ruth 1:1,3-6,14-  
16,22; Ps. 146:5-10; Mt.22:34-40

Saturday, August 26: Weekday in Ordinary Time or  
Blessed Dominic of the Mother of God (Dominic  
Barberi), Priest (E) or St David Lewis, Priest, Martyr  
(W) Ruth 2:1-3,8-11,4:13-17; Ps. 128:1-5; Mt.23:1-12

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**Tomb of Pope St Pius X in St Peter's Basilica.**

Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto was pope from 4th August 1903 until his death on 20th August 1914. Pius X is known for vigorously opposing modernist interpretations of Catholic doctrine, and for promoting liturgical reforms and scholastic theology. His Feast Day is 21st August.