

Priest arrested
for praying...
yes, you read
that right!
Caroline Farrow



Friday 10th February 2023

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Aid, prayers needed now after earthquake horror

Catholic aid agencies race to provide assistance as scale of devastation revealed

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic leaders in the UK and Ireland have offered practical support and prayers following the devastating earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, as experts on the ground said they face a race against time to extract more survivors from the rubble and provide food, clean water and health supplies to those injured and displaced.

Monday's earthquake caused a swath of destruction stretching hundreds of miles across south-eastern Turkey and neighbouring Syria. Thousands of buildings came down, causing more pain in a region which has been shaped by Syria's 12-year civil war and refugee crisis. At the time the *Universe* was published the death toll was above 20,000 – and the World Health Organisation warned that this figure could go much higher.

Catholic aid agency CAFOD already has its teams working to support those affected by the earthquake and has committed £100,000 to support local efforts to provide urgent humanitarian support to survivors.

Cardinal Nichols has written to Fr Andrawis Toma, Chaplain to the Chaldean Catholic community in London, to share his prayers and condolences on behalf of the Church in England and Wales.

'I am writing to offer my sincere condolences following the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and northern Syria,' the Cardinal wrote.

'Please do extend my sincere sym-

pathy to your congregation in the Chaldean Catholic Church. May God grant strength and enduring faith to all who are bereaved, injured and traumatised. May God welcome into his merciful presence all those who have died.'

'I assure you all, too, of the prayers and condolences of the Catholic Community in England and Wales. We, too, mourn this loss of life. We pray for the eternal repose of all who have died.'

Search teams and emergency aid from around the world have poured into Turkey and Syria as rescuers working in freezing temperatures dug – sometimes with their bare hands – through the remains of buildings flattened by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake. The scale of the suffering, and the accompanying rescue effort, were staggering.

CAFOD's Hombeline Dulière called the situation "dire". Speaking to Sky News, she said: "It is going to have a long-term impact on people's lives. People have lost their homes and some have lost their livelihoods, so the impact is not going to last for days, or months, but years."

UK Catholic charities, like CAFOD, have launched their own appeals for the crisis. Mary's Meals, which has worked in Syria since 2017, said it 'stands ready to provide emergency support to communities affected in Aleppo and the surrounding areas following the devastating earthquakes.'

Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) has opened an emergency fund for people in northern Syria which 'will provide urgent support to children and families in desperate need.'

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HOPE RISES FROM THE RUINS OF HATAY



Muhammet Ruzgar, 5, is carried out by rescuers from her destroyed home in Hatay, Turkey, after a powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake ripped through the region on Monday. Pope Francis has joined others in calling

for the international community to prioritise aid for those affected, and to lift sanctions on Syria amid fears of a growing humanitarian disaster.

World: see pages 18-19 Photo: Umit Bektas, Reuters

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Aid, prayers needed after earthquake

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Bishop Declan Lang, who chairs the International Affairs department of the Bishops' Conference, offered prayers of his own for victims and survivors of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake.

"Our prayers are with the people of Syria and Turkey; all those who have died, those who are mourning their family and friends, and those who have lost their homes," Bishop Lang said.

"We pray too for the brave local rescue workers and volunteers from across the world."

Irish Archbishop Eamon Martin shared his condolences on social media. "Please pray for all caught up in horrific aftermath of #syriaearthquake #TurkeyEarthquake," he tweeted.

"Thinking tonight of those who grieve the loss of life and livelihoods; who tend to the suffering and pain of victims; and support heroic efforts of emergency services."

Turkish vice president Fuat Oktay said that more than 8,000 people have been pulled from the debris in Turkey alone, with around 380,000 having taken refuge in government shelters or hotels.

In northern Syria, meanwhile, Sebastien Gay, the head of mission in the country for Doctors Without Borders, said health facilities were overwhelmed with medical personnel working "around the clock to respond to the huge numbers of wounded."

Bishop Lang urged Catholics to pray for survivors, victims and their families and, if possible, to support CAFOD's appeal (see separate article).

"I encourage Catholics throughout England and Wales to continue supporting our sisters and brothers who have been affected by this tragedy, through your prayers, and if possible through CAFOD's emergency appeal which is providing urgent food, water, and shelter to survivors," he said.

How you can help:

Click on any of the headings below to go through to their website and make a donation

CAFOD
Mary's Meals
ACN



The pope responds to disaster:
see pages 18-19

An earthquake survivor sits amid the rubble of destroyed homes in Hatay, Turkey, Photo: Guglielmo Mangiapane, Reuters

Charities in race to help as 'quake devastates region

Andy Drozdziak

CAFOD has launched an appeal in response to the 'catastrophic' Syria Turkey earthquake, which has already killed thousands of people.

CAFOD's partners were already responding to the severe humanitarian need in Syria, which meant they were able to support the emergency effort as soon as the earthquake hit.

The response has included supporting the search and rescue operation, as well as humanitarian aid needed in the aftermath of an earthquake: clean water, hot meals, warm clothes and somewhere safe to stay.

Hombeline Dulière, CAFOD's Programme Manager for Syria Crisis Response, told the *Universe* that "while the eyes of the world have been elsewhere, our partners in Syria remained on the ground responding to the severe humanitarian. This meant that when the earthquake tragically hit, they were already there and were able to respond quickly to the disaster."

"It is heart-breaking that this disaster has hit people who have already suffered so much. The impact has been

catastrophic and will be felt in the country for years to come."

To ensure teams on the ground can continue in their efforts, CAFOD has committed an initial £100,000 in support.

CAFOD urged *Universe* readers to support the appeal.

"Supporting CAFOD's appeal will help those responding to the search and rescue operation, as well as ensuring they can deliver the humani-

tarian aid that will be needed in the coming weeks, months and even years," the charity said.

"This work will be even more urgent in the coming months, as homes and communities will once again need to be rebuilt after the devastating earthquake."

The earthquake has proved particularly catastrophic in Syria, as the infrastructure was already damaged from a brutal conflict.

Prior to the earthquake, CAFOD's partners worked on a number of projects in Syria, including a programme which worked to support families repair their homes, and communities repair schools that had been damaged by the war.

CAFOD is also calling on the international community, including the UN, governments and international NGOs, to focus on supporting local organisations already rooted in the community.

UK Development Minister Andrew Mitchell said that, despite "very considerable strain" on the UK aid budget, the Government would provide the support needed in response to the earthquake. He told Sky News, "Britain always looks to help in humanitarian crises. That is what people in Britain expect us to do. Britain is always there first and in strength to help when these appalling catastrophes take place. And we will be there this time."

CAFOD's appeal can be supported by heading to their website at cafod.org.uk

Turkey earthquakes



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Scotland's palliative care doctors say 'no' to suicide plans

Pro-life campaigners have welcomed news that the vast majority of palliative doctors in Scotland would refuse to take part in assisted suicides if the law changes.

A study by the Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland found that seven out of 10 of its Scottish members would object, while four in 10 doctors would immediately resign if their organisation offered 'assisted dying', and seven in 10 would consider resigning.

The survey shows deep concern among end-of-life medics, with almost all saying assisted suicide would have a negative impact on palliative care, particularly their conversations with patients and families.

Almost all also do not believe proposed legal 'safeguards' would prevent



'Once assisted dying is legalised, investment in palliative care always lags behind'
Dr Gordon Macdonald

harm to vulnerable patients.

Campaigners Care Not Killing (CNK) Alliance welcomed the results of the survey. "We have always warned legalising assisted suicide will sound the death knell for palliative care," CNK chief executive Dr Gordon Macdonald said.

"Once assisted dying is legalised, investment in palliative care always lags behind countries where it has not been legalised. Resources will be diverted to other areas. Now we see an additional danger that palliative care professionals will leave the profession."

MSPs in Holyrood have twice voted against making assisted suicide legal in Scotland, with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon twice voting against the proposal.

However, she now claims to be

"more open" to a change in the law.

Under the assisted suicide plans, proposed by Liam McArthur MSP, a mentally competent adult who is thought to have no chance of recovery from an illness which will result in death could be prescribed lethal drugs on the NHS. Those opting for assisted suicide would have a "period of reflection" before ending their lives.

Palliative care expert Dr Gillian Wright from Our Duty of Care (ODOC), a group of healthcare experts from multiple disciplines, called on MSPs to "listen to ... concerns" expressed in the survey.

"This survey shows the deep concern palliative doctors have should assisted suicide or euthanasia be introduced," she said.

"The palliative care community has made a clear statement that assisted dying should not be embedded in healthcare. Doctors have expressed in this survey how it will damage the care they provide and adversely affect clinicians themselves, with significant impact on mental health and subsequent service provision. We urge MSPs to listen to their concerns."

Christian charity CARE is urging Scottish politicians not to back fresh plans for doctor-assisted suicide in Scotland, citing fears about the impact on the vulnerable, while pro-life group SPUC warned that its introduction would be "a dangerous and unethical practice."

"Wherever assisted suicide is imposed on a people it fast becomes the go-to response for 'treating' illness, old age, mental illness and even poverty," SPUC's Michael Robinson said.

"We have seen it before, it is happening now, and we must do all we can to speak out against it. We must send a strong message to our political leaders that assisted suicide is a dangerous and unethical practice that must never be legalised in the UK."

Priest latest to face charges over silent prayers near clinic

A Catholic priest is facing a legal battle after he was charged for breaching a censorship zone by silently praying, and holding a sign with the words "praying for free speech," near a closed abortion facility in Birmingham.

Father Sean Gough also faces charges over parking his car, which for some time has displayed a small 'Unborn lives matter' bumper sticker, within the same area.

The area surrounding the facility, located on Station Road, has been covered by a local Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), in force since November, which prohibits prayer, distributing information about pregnancy help services, and other activities considered to constitute "protest".

For peacefully supporting free speech within the censorship zone, Fr Gough was charged with 'intimidating service-users' of the abortion facility despite the fact that the abortion facility was closed.

Fr Gough commented that he believed his "actions to be lawful."

"I pray wherever I go, inside my head, for the people around me. How can it be a crime for a priest to pray?" he said.

"At all times, I believed my actions to be lawful. It is deeply undemocratic



Father Sean Gough

that they did not think he was breaking rules. However, the priest was later invited for interview at the police station, interrogated on his actions, and eventually criminally charged.


The Crown Prosecution Service subsequently dropped the charges against Fr Gough, but made clear that they could be reinstated. The priest has stated his intention to pursue a clear verdict on his charges in court in order to clear his name.


Jeremiah Igumnubole, legal counsel for ADF UK, commented that Father Gough "is understandably seeking clarity as to the lawfulness of his actions."

"Though charges were dropped after several weeks due to 'insufficient evidence,' he has been warned that further evidence relating to the charges may soon be forthcoming, implying the entire gruelling process could soon restart from the beginning," Jeremiah Igumnubole said.

"This is a clear instance of the process becoming the punishment and creating a chilling effect on freedom of expression in the UK – a value that this government, incidentally, had promised to champion in their election manifesto".

• **Caroline Farrow** - see page 8





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Correction

The article in the 3rd February issue of the Universe Catholic Weekly (page 21), headlined 'Vatican changes to Sacrament of Penance to take effect from Lent', referred to the introduction of a new translation of the Rite of Penance in the United States of America.

This new translation has not yet been approved for England and Wales, however, and therefore the content of the article does not apply here. Apologies for not making this clearer in the article and for any confusion and distress caused

In brief

Church considers 'human composting'

The Church of England could consider "human composting" at funerals to help meet its net zero target. The process, which is not currently legal in the UK, sees microbes convert a deceased body into compost. It is "popular amid a desire for environmentally conscious funerals", said *The Telegraph*.

Bishops want to establish a consultation group to assess the "theological considerations" of alternative means to dispose of human bodies.

Return rail tickets to be scrapped

Return tickets will be scrapped as the government plans sweeping reforms of Britain's railways, said *The Telegraph*.

Mark Harper, the Transport Secretary, wants to rollout "single-leg pricing", in which two-way tickets, which offer a discounted rate, will be replaced by "single-leg pricing" under which the price of two singles would be the same as a return fare. The idea has been trialled by London North Eastern Railways since 2020.

The change comes as "the government faces criticisms for its failure to resolve months of strikes on the railways that have affected commuters and leisure travellers alike", said *The Guardian*.

Protest at Glitter bail hostel

Police were called to a disturbance at the Hampshire bail hostel where sex offender Gary Glitter is staying after his release from jail.

A crowd gathered outside the property after the disgraced 79-year-old former pop star was released from prison having served half his 16-year sentence for sexually abusing three schoolgirls.

According to Sky News, an angry crowd "demanded he be removed from their neighbourhood, with one man attempting to scale a fence".

EU says Sunak risks trade war

Senior EU figures have warned that the UK government's plan to scrap thousands of EU laws by the end of this year risks triggering a full-scale trade war.

European leaders have warned that Rishi Sunak's plan will spark retaliatory countermeasures, including imposing tariffs on goods. They believe that Sunak's intention to lower standards in areas such as environmental protection and workers' rights breach "level playing field" provisions that were agreed. However, said the UK government, the plans are "not about watering down standards".

Vindicated pro-lifer wants all prayer charges dismissed

Andy Drozdzia

A Catholic charity worker, arrested for silently praying outside an abortion clinic in Birmingham, has vowed to pursue a full dismissal of her charges in court after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dropped charges against her.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was searched, interrogated, arrested and charged for breaking a Public Space Protection Order censorship zone (or 'buffer zone') four times last December. When asked whether she was praying, she said she "might be" praying in her head.

She was arrested and criminally charged with 'protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users' in a censorship zone around an abortion facility in Birmingham.

The CPS has dropped the charges against Ms Vaughan-Spruce, but has also said the charges 'may well start again' at an unspecified date, subject to a further evidential review.

Ms Vaughan-Spruce vowed to clarify the situation in order to continue her pro-life work.

"It's total chaos," she said. "It can't be right that I was arrested and made a criminal, only for praying in my head on a public street. So-called 'buffer zone legislation' will result in so many more people like me, doing good and legal activities like offering charitable support to women in crisis pregnancies, or simply praying in their heads, being treated like criminals and even facing court."

"It's important to me that I can continue my vital work in supporting women who'd like to avoid abortion if they only had some help. In order to do so, it's vital that I have clarity as to my legal status. Many of us need an answer as to whether it's still lawful to pray silently in our own heads. That's why I'll be pursuing a verdict regarding my charges in court."

Faith-based justice group ADF UK, which advocates for fundamental freedoms in the UK and across the world,



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce with ADF UK's Jeremiah Iggunnubole

are supporting Ms Vaughan-Spruce, as well as army veteran Adam Smith-Connor, who was fined for silently praying near an abortion facility in Bournemouth.

Jeremiah Iggunnubole, legal counsel for ADF UK, warned of the "chilling" impact of the CPS initially dropping charges and then stating that more charges may emerge.

"Isabel is right to request proper clarity as to the lawfulness of our actions," he said.

"It's one thing for the authorities to humiliatingly search and arrest an individual simply for their thoughts. It's quite another to initially deem those thoughts to be sufficient evidence to justify charges, then discontinue those charges due to 'insufficient evidence',

and then to warn that further evidence relating to the already unclear charges may soon be forthcoming so as to restart the entire gruelling process from the beginning.

"This is a clear instance of the process becoming the punishment creating a chilling effect on free expression and freedom of thought, conscience and belief."

Disgraced police officer highlights need for tough curbs on pornography access

Tougher curbs on internet pornography must be introduced immediately, in the light of the shocking case of rapist police officer David Carrick, a leading Christian justice charity says.

Former Metropolitan Police officer Carrick was sentenced on Tuesday to more than 30 years in prison for "violent and brutal" sex attacks against 12 women. During court proceedings, the court heard that a review of his electronic devices revealed searches for porn including words such as "extreme" and "painful".

Carrick is not the first UK police officer to have been jailed for serious sexual crimes who was also found to

have an interest in vile pornography.

In September, former policeman Wayne Couzens was found guilty of kidnapping, raping and murdering Sarah Everard, with judges noting his attraction to "brutal" porn.

Tim Cairns, CARE's online safety policy expert, says there was a growing body of evidence linking viewing extreme sexual content online and sexual violence in the real world.

"In cases like David Carrick's involving grotesque sexual violence, the attraction of the offender to violent pornography is often noted. This was true in regard to Wayne Couzens, and many other men jailed for sex crimes

in recent years. Experts are alarmed at the availability of abusive, degrading internet porn; it is inspiring sexual violence offline," Mr Cairns said.

"Schools' regulator Ofsted has reported growing levels of sexual harassment among school-aged children, with porn also being cited by girls who are the victims of attacks. The idea that our society is not being negatively affected by open-ended access to pornography is absurd. The government needs to address this situation through its online safety regime."

Mr Cairns called for specific changes to the UK Government's Online Safety Bill.

"In terms of pornographic content, what is illegal offline should be illegal online. Extreme pornography and prohibited pornographic material that cannot be sold in shops should not be available online. Upwards of 65% of pornography available on mainstream websites would not be allowed to be sold in shops. The Government must close this legal loophole now," he said.

"The Online Safety Bill also needs to include a definition of pornography as harmful content; robust age verification measures; and measures verifying the consent and age of people in porn videos."

Drag queen's half-term children's stories at the Tate labelled 'nonsense on stilts'

Andy Drozdziak

A petition protesting against a drag queen reading a story at the Tate gallery to children reached over 9,000 signatures in less than 18 hours.

Drag queen 'Aida H Dee' is due to appear at The Tate Gallery as their headline act at a free event for children over the February half-term.

The petition, drawn up by *Universe* columnist and Catholic activist Caroline Farrow, highlights the 'highly inappropriate' content and calls upon the Tate Gallery to 'cancel the half-term performance of Aida H Dee' and 're-publishing your booklet (which was authored by a transgender activist group) to stop promoting gender ideology to children.'

"Drag queens have long been known as a niche form of adult entertainment predominantly found in gay night-clubs. Drag queens present a highly sexualised, demeaning and distorted vision of women, which many members of the public find offensive," the petition states.

"Drag acts do not constitute education and do not teach tolerance. Their aim is to expose children to sexualised and political messaging regarding the LGBTQ+ movement."

The Tate website states: 'Join @DragQueenStoryHourUK for an exciting pop-up in the galleries this Feb-



ruary half-term. Hear fabulous stories in an exciting storytime show from Aida, the first drag artist in Europe to read stories to children in a nursery."

Caroline Farrow is hoping that the petition will stop the Tate Gallery in its tracks. "I was enraged to discover that the Tate had taken a deliberate

decision to target children with gender ideology propaganda by choosing to platform a drag queen at their free events over half term," she told the *Universe*.

"The particular performer chosen by the Tate raises a number of red flags, having posted a number of x-

rated posts on social media indicating various unsavoury interests."

The petition includes a letter from Baroness Emma Nicholson of Winterbourne to Roland Rudd, Chair of the Board at the Tate Gallery, in which she describes the decision to book Aida H Dee as "nonsense on stilts."

"Why does it have to be a man who posts on Facebook about anal sex and orgies, with photographs of themselves in a 'Daddy' t-shirt, whose mission is to be a 'role model... for queer young people', pretending to be a woman?" she asked.

"The answer, apparently, is 'our galleries offer a broad programme and visitors have the freedom to choose which parts to engage with.' That is nonsense on stilts."

Mr Rudd responded by calling Tate's programme "broad and diverse" and that visitors are "free to choose with which aspect of our programme they engage."

Mrs Farrow said she was disappointed that "despite the many safeguarding flags that have been raised, Tate's board remain blindly defiant."

"They have scoffed over a letter written by Baroness Nicholson in the House of Lords and a group of drag queens have laughed that a similar petition only garnered 3,000 signatures. Tate are publicly funded and therefore the petition aims demonstrate the strength of feeling among the public, to raise awareness of how they have strayed from their original mission and to stop subjecting children to gender propaganda."

You can back the petition by clicking **HERE**:

Press stylebook orders reporters to drop 'pro-life' for 'anti-abortion'

Pro-lifers have blasted a major journalists' style guide after an update showed a 'strong bias toward abortion.'

The new Associated Press Stylebook tells journalists to stop using the term 'pro-life', and say 'anti-abortion' instead. It also recommends that journalists 'avoid abortionist, which connotes a person who performs clandestine abortions,' and that journalists don't say 'pro-choice', and instead use 'abortion-rights'.

The Associated Press style guide is widely used by journalists from across the political spectrum.

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said: "The new style guide from the AP betrays a strong bias in favour of abortion. The pro-abortion bias of the AP is on clear display in this style guide."

"Replacing the terms 'pro-choice' and 'pro-abortion' with 'abortion-rights' inaccurately implies that women have a right to end the life of the child growing in their womb", two reporters, Virginia Allen and Mary Margaret Olohan, said.

"The new phrasing is not reflective of the pro-life community, a community that consists of millions of people across the world, more than 3,000 pregnancy care centres...and thousands who give of their time and resources every day to journey with women during and after unplanned pregnancies," the reporters added.

The BBC, in its own style guide, also carries a heavy bias in favour of abortion. It states: 'Avoid pro-abortion, and use pro-choice instead. Campaigners favour a woman's right to choose, rather than abortion itself. And use anti-abortion rather than pro-life, except where it is part of the title of a group's name. Heartbeat bill should be carried in inverted commas, attributed or framed as so-called heartbeat bill.'

"The Associated Press Stylebook's decision to replace the term 'pro-life' with 'anti-abortion' is another attempt... to paint the pro-life community in a negative light," Virginia Allen and Mary Margaret Olohan added.

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— COMMENT —

It's make your mind up time for the West as the Ukrainian war's anniversary looms on the horizon

We are fast approaching the first anniversary of Vladimir Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine, and now Kyiv clearly knows who its true friends are.

Before the war began, the UK was among the few to take seriously the intelligence warnings that the Kremlin would indeed attack. While other European countries sat on their hands or were actively obstructive, Britain sent thousands of anti-tank weapons that proved crucial in the early days of the conflict. Yesterday in Westminster Hall President Zelensky gave a rousing speech in which he thanked the UK for its support from day one, paying particular tribute to then Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

As the war enters its second year, there is little sign that the Kremlin is prepared to let up. Kyiv has warned that the Russians are planning a formidable new offensive and Putin is presumably confident that his resolve is firmer than that of the West.

The belated decision to dispatch tanks to Ukraine might have given the Russians cause to doubt that calculation but Mr Zelensky clearly does not think heavy armour will be enough, witnessed by his plea for combat aircraft – or 'Wings for Freedom', as he called them.

Thus far, the West has stopped short of sending fighter jets and some defence analysts fear that it would represent an escalation too far, perhaps prompting Putin to unleash the nuclear weapons he has long made veiled threats about using.

But they have been wrong on that danger before. Not so long ago, it was said that Kyiv should not be given anti-air defences lest it should provoke the Kremlin.

What the West has to decide now is whether it really does wish to help the Ukrainians to drive the Russians from their borders, or merely to conspire in a bloody stalemate.

Sadly, warm words and rounds of applause by dewy-eyed politicians is not enough; something firmer is required.

Britain has gone it alone before in the extent of its support. It should not be afraid to do so again.

Time to break the Met up?

POLITICS

John Fox



In the two weeks since an officer in London's Metropolitan Police admitted to being a serial rapist, politicians and commentators have called for the Met to undergo 'root-and-branch' reform.

Beyond the abhorrent case of the now-former police constable David Carrick, Met commissioner Mark Rowley has revealed that London currently has a damaged and ineffective police service. Rowley said that every week for the foreseeable future, many of his officers would be appearing in court in trials involving "violence against women and girls" – as defendants, not case officers.

Since the 1970s, the Met has had a series of so-called "reforming commissioners". One was Rowley's predecessor, Cressida Dick, the first woman to be appointed to the top job.

She had what many felt was a fairly disastrous tenure, which ended after the heavy-handed policing of the Sarah Everard vigil and the Charing Cross misogyny scandal. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, publicly said he had lost faith in Dick's ability to change the toxic force culture where sexism, homophobia and misogyny seemed to be prevalent.

Being the chief of the biggest police force in the country is undoubtedly a very tough job – I think, in fact, it is an impossible one. London and its eight million inhabitants deserve to be policed effectively, and by a respected service, but calm thought is needed about how that can be achieved.

As a criminologist, researcher of police culture and oversight, and former police officer, I care about the way our police forces are perceived by the public. I have concluded that the Met is just too big and the toxic culture is too deeply set into its foundations.

I believe we are now entitled to ask why it should not be disbanded. Rather than tinker with the branches, perhaps the root needs to be dug up, thoughtfully divided and transplanted.

A new structure

The Metropolitan Police was created in 1829, and was the first professional police force in the UK. As London grew, the area policed by the Met expanded, as did the workforce. The Met currently employs nearly 47,000 people, of whom 35,000 are police officers.

Policing in the rest of England and Wales developed in a rather haphazard way until the 1964 Police Act, through which parliament ratified the 42 other forces which exist today. These forces were each designed to cover an English county, with exceptions for larger areas such



Met Police officers have a reputation for arrogance and an insular attitude among other police forces

as West Midlands and Greater Manchester. These two forces have around 6,500 officers, while the county forces average around 2,500.

The Met is unique in both size and governance structure. Rather than having an elected and dedicated police and crime commissioner like every other force, the Met is jointly governed by the Home Secretary and the Mayor of London, who often don't see eye to eye. The Met also has unique national policing roles, leading on counter terrorism and protecting the royal family and senior politicians.

The potential argument that it is more sensible for the whole of London to have one police force doesn't stand scrutiny. In the middle of London, there is a separate police force – the City of London Police. They police just one square mile around St Paul's and the Tower of London, but are fiercely independent of the Met influence, are considered effective and efficient with good performance ratings for keeping people safe and reducing crime.

A reorganisation strategy could include a single force south of the Thames and an east-west split in the north. Or, a more sophisticated arrangement where the existing forces surrounding London – Hertfordshire, Surrey, Thames Valley, Kent and Essex – absorb their neighbouring outer London boroughs. For example, Kent police could take in the boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham and Bromley.

The City of London police area could be expanded beyond its current anachronistic square mile to take the remaining East London

boroughs. This would leave one constabulary covering roughly the area within the north and south circular roads surrounding inner London, containing about 3.8 million people.

These smaller forces would have a fresh command team, and the former Met boroughs would absorb the culture and ethical standards from outside of London. Each could then create its own identity, ethical standards and history, where fresh ideas are allowed to flourish.

Counter terrorism responsibility could be transferred to the National Crime Agency which is where many people think it belongs anyway.

In the face of so much damage being done to public confidence, the current Met force structure should not be considered sacrosanct or immune to full-scale reform. The reputation of every force in the country is being tainted by the mismanagement and bad behaviour of one huge policing organisation.

In 1997 it would have been unthinkable to most people in Northern Ireland that the famous Royal Ulster Constabulary GC would ever be completely disbanded and replaced by a new police service with a different name, uniform, symbols and culture. But police reform was a key part of the peace process, leading to the modern police service of Northern Ireland.

Changing the culture

It is my experience talking to police officers outside London that they feel the Met has a prevailing culture of a kind of arrogance. Their criticism is that Met officers feel that they are 'Policing UK PLC' and that

the county forces are amateurs who should watch and learn.

This is anecdotal, of course, and perhaps an unfair generalisation. But the reality is that, as illustrated by the Stephen Lawrence, Rachel Nickell and Victoria Climbié murders, the Met seems to be no better at policing than any other police force in England and Wales.

The Met also seems to be quite an inward-looking organisation. Upon the creation of regional police and detective training centres in the 1940s, every force in England and Wales (except the Met) began sending their officers to these shared centres where they would mix in a classroom for weeks with colleagues from other forces. Police officers were exposed to the high ethical standards and practices which were prevalent and commonly accepted elsewhere.

The Met, meanwhile, did all their initial police training and specialist detective training in-house. Their officers were rarely exposed to what was happening in policing elsewhere, including what sort of behaviour might be unacceptable in other forces.

Perhaps this history of insulating their staff from the rest of the police family in England and Wales contributed to the current problem. The Met's traditions, rituals, canteen culture and ethical standards are deeply ingrained. Decades of evidence show that it will take more than a new commissioner to change it.

John Fox is a Senior Lecturer in Police Studies, University of Portsmouth

Caritas project generates its warmth from companionship

Andy Drozdziak

Caritas Westminster's Warm Spaces project has seen churches being transformed into places for companionship across the country.

The County Councils Network said more than 2,000 warm spaces remain open as people look for somewhere to keep warm amid the cost-of-living crisis. Warm Spaces are 'designed to signpost anyone in need of warmth, to a warm space to share with others.'

Caritas Westminster has been supporting a number of Warm Spaces, as a way of providing people left struggling to heat their homes with a place to go for warmth and food.

In the parish of St Bartholomew, St Albans, asylum seekers from different cultures have gathered to cook soup, and Fr Richard Nesbitt from Our Lady of Lourdes in White City reported that their warm space has provided a safe and creative space for a variety of young families.

"A local Syrian father was teaching his two young sons to play chess on one table, while a Ukrainian family were preparing a variety of pancake fillings with an Italian family on the next table, while the parish priest was playing dominoes with a Muslim mother and daughter at another table," Fr Nesbitt said.



Caritas Westminster is regularly seeing people come together across cultures and generations, cooking, making friends and helping each other.

The SVP set up a Warm Space at St Paul the Apostle in Wood Green. They reported that people who had never met before are making friends and supporting each other, such as 'Glen.'

"'Glen', a parishioner and a wheelchair user, has come every week, regardless of the weather. His journey is not easy as he has quite a distance to travel by bus, but every Wednesday,

shortly after opening time, he is there. Glen says he enjoys the company and that his Warm Space visit gives him a focus for his day," the SVP said.

Nineteen parishes and one community project have set up Warm Spaces in the diocese and most have received a small grant from Caritas, to go towards the heating, refreshments and other costs associated with their warm space. Fr. Howard James from Bow said the money had had a real impact: "We were grateful for the money as previously, I had been using

my own resources. The 'warmers' get to spend time together – many of them live alone – and it strengthens my ministry to see people at ease and happy to be with each other."

Sr Silvana Dallanegra, Caritas Westminster's Warm Spaces support manager, said: "It seems as though the needs being met aren't only for physical warmth, but for the warmth which comes from companionship and good company. And it's so lovely that this is happening, and able to happen again, after the worst of Covid."

In brief

Ofcom asked to look at phone bills

The regulator is being urged to respond to concerns that mobile and broadband operators are "lining their pockets" with £2.2bn of above-inflation price rises.

Some providers have already announced increases of more than 14 per cent and experts believe price rises for some customers could be as high as 17 per cent.

Matthew Upton, director of policy at Citizens Advice, said: "We keep calling on these firms to do the right thing and axe their price hikes, but they've not listened. It's now time for Ofcom and the government to force them."

Coffey 'to scrap foie gras ban'

The government's proposed ban on importing fur and foie gras is to be shelved, the environment secretary has told *The Telegraph*.

In her first interview since being appointed to the role, Therese Coffey said that although animal welfare is important: "We need to think through priorities."

Banning fur and foie gras imports had been part of the Animals Abroad Bill, but Coffey said "there's only so much time" on "stuff like that".

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Peace or apocalypse?

Sir John Battle



The news that President Assad of Syria ordered the bombing of the northern city of Marea within hours of its people being driven onto the streets after the destructive earthquake only underlines the violent horrors that have continued in Syrian under his rule. The war in Syria has dropped out of the headlines in recent years, its place taken by the war in Ukraine. It's notable that the Russians, led by President Putin, committed so much military firepower to flattening whole Syrian cities such as Aleppo (now stricken by the earthquake) and are now applying the same scorched earth tactics in Ukraine.

Many centuries before, at the height of the Roman Empire, the Roman General Bellisarius and his elephants flattened Carthage, leading to the Roman historian Tacitus famously commenting that "he made a desert and called it peace." President Putin seems to take the same approach.

Tragically since the end of the Cold War in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, there has been a complacent assumption that war, and in particular the threat of nuclear war, was history. At the same time, the interventionist role of the United Nations, undermined by national vetoes, has declined in its power and influence. There is now less international peace co-ordination than during the Cold War. International arms treaties and weapon conventions have slipped back and wars, particularly within states, throughout the world have proliferated.

Our Popes have all regularly emphasised the need for international co-operation as crucial for action for peace. All three most recent popes – St John Paul II, Benedict and Francis – pleaded directly at sessions of the United Nations for action to end violent conflicts and increased work for peace.

Perhaps the devastatingly tragic facts and images of the earthquake that has cut across the Turkish-Syrian border will be a catalyst not only for an international emergency response but also for one of longer term rebuilding, including peace making that offers all those who remain a future.

At present all those who have died in disasters and wars and their families should be present in our daily prayers.

"Perhaps the earthquake will be a catalyst for longer peace making that offers all those who remain a future..."

Priest arrested for praying... yes, we've gone full 'Alice in Wonderland' in the UK!

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



Once again, another individual is facing a legal battle after being caught engaging in the heinous crime of silently praying in public and this time, the culprit is a Catholic priest!

Fr Sean Gough, a priest from the diocese of Birmingham, was found holding a sign, reading 'Praying for freedom of speech' inside a zone covered by a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). He was charged with intimidating abortion clinic 'service-users' even though he had deliberately chosen a time when the clinic was closed.

Fr Sean didn't believe himself to be in breach of the PSPO because his sign made no mention of abortion, which is strictly prohibited by the ban, but contained a message about freedom of speech. Indeed the police who arrested him, initially said that they did not believe that he was breaking any rules, but after being interrogated, the priest was criminally charged.

Just let that sink in for a moment. A Catholic priest has been charged because he was holding a sign protesting about freedom of speech and his right to pray. If, a few years ago, I had told you that the UK would introduce laws criminalising Catholic priests for praying in public, you would no doubt have thought I was catastrophising. For all its faults, the UK is, after all, a liberal tolerant democracy, not the People's Republic of China.

Equally shocking is that Fr Sean was additionally charged because of a small bumper sticker affixed to his car that read 'Unborn Lives Matter'. This is a sticker that had been on Fr Sean's car for almost a year – a long time before Birmingham council introduced the PSPO – but it is now illegal for him to drive through or park in the zone, with the sticker attached.

As Fr Sean said in a statement, "I pray wherever I go, inside my head, for the people around me. How can it be a crime for a priest to pray? I often pray in my head near the abortion facility, but when confronted by the authorities, I was praying for free speech which is under severe pressure in our country today".

I would like to say that Fr Sean's situation is yet another example of the law of unintended



Fr Sean with his car, and the 'offending' sticker proclaiming that 'Unborn Lives Matter'

consequences, but the authorities and the police seem to know exactly what they are doing here. During the consultations leading up to the imposition of this PSPO, questions were asked about how the restrictions on prayer would affect the occupants of private homes situated within the zones and the council responded that it would be 'difficult to enforce'.

Technically, it is a criminal offence for those who live inside the perimeter of the buffer zones to pray inside their own homes, demonstrating the appalling and unjust nature of these restrictions.

A law that can only work if it is applied inconsistently is inherently unfair. Residents inside the exclusion zones now have certain restrictions placed on their civil liberties, meaning that they are now banned from putting up posters in their front windows or front gardens displaying a certain point of view. Residents are not banned from displaying posters or car stickers displaying allegiance to a particular political party or cause or expressing

voting intentions, but they will face criminal charges if they dare to say anything about abortion, or as Fr Sean did, express a prayer intention.

We can all agree that harassment of women entering clinics is wrong, but it is clear that these zones go way beyond preventing such harassment. This is about a mindset that is prepared to do whatever it takes to suppress pro-life voices, even if it means contravening the rights and freedoms of others.

But perhaps that's hardly surprising from a movement that is built upon denying the most fundamental human right of all.

There is absolutely nothing offensive or intimidating about a priest holding a sign stating that he is praying for freedom of speech, especially as it was during a time that the abortion facility was closed. Fr Sean's sign that he was praying for free speech didn't specifically mention abortion, although it has been interpreted that he was protesting the ban, however he could have been praying for freedom of speech when it comes to

other contentious issues such as, for example, the transgender debate, or LGBTQ+ politics.

To be a Christian, is to be called to be a person of prayer all of the time, yet in this age of insidious identity politics, it is ironically Christians who are being prevented from being their 'authentic selves' as restrictions are placed on where they are allowed to express themselves.

Anyone claiming to be intimidated or upset by the sight of a priest with sign praying for free speech is either lying, needs mental health help, is an authoritarian intolerant bigot and possibly a combination of all three.

As in the case of Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, upon thinking about it and realising that they do not want to risk the media circus that a prosecution would entail, the Crown Prosecution Service has indicated that they will drop the charges against Fr Sean, but they could be reinstated at any time – presumably if he doesn't peel off his bumper sticker or has the audacity to pray in public again. That's the same threat that still hangs over the head of Isabel Vaughan-Spruce.

Both Isabel and Fr Sean have bravely decided to force a criminal court to issue a verdict on their behaviour in order to seek legal clarity and clear their names.

A bumper sticker and a prayer for free speech should never be the grounds of a criminal trial in the United Kingdom.



Technically, it is a criminal offence for those who live inside the perimeter of the buffer zones to pray inside their own homes, demonstrating the appalling and unjust nature of these restrictions.

Prison health is still being neglected, says report

National Catholic prison charity Pact has published a new report which amplifies the voices of families supporting unwell loved ones in prison.

Nobody's Listening reveals that prisoners' mental and physical health is at historically low levels following Covid. Families too often feel 'locked out' of the system, unable to support their loved ones who are unwell.

Pact proposes that a more proactive role for families would save lives, as well as relieving pressure on the NHS and reducing reoffending.

Involving families more proactively in prisoners' healthcare would reduce deaths in custody, relieve pressure on the NHS and the criminal justice system, and cut crime, *Nobody's Listening*, which was published on 3rd February, said.

Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust) spoke to families caught up in the criminal justice system, inviting them to share their experience of trying to support loved ones in prison.

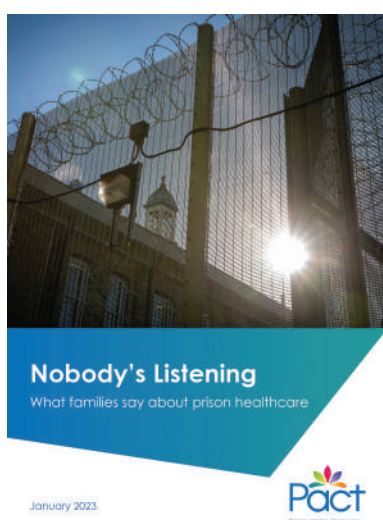
The report finds that when families are involved in the process everyone benefits – prisoners, families, the criminal justice system and the NHS. When the system works well, it can have a positive impact on people's health, allowing prisoners to access previously unavailable support.

However, families and significant others are too often locked out of a system that does not value their role as carers.

In the report, Pact makes a series of recommendations to improve the way that healthcare providers and prisons can involve families more proactively, such as diverting more appropriately risk-assessed people with mental health problems to community treatment and secure treatment settings.

The prison charity also recommends training for staff to ensure that they understand how to involve family members, as well as a single point of contact in every prison to champion the role of families in the healthcare process.

The Rt Rev. Richard Moth, Liaison Bishop for Prisons, welcomed the report. "The findings reaffirm a Christian understanding of our connectedness as human beings and especially of the importance of family relationships. It is to be hoped that the report's recommendations are recognised and inspire real change in a system which so often leaves families feeling unheard and isolated," he said.



ommendations are recognised and inspire real change in a system which so often leaves families feeling unheard and isolated," he said.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs underlined the 'crucial role' families play in supporting ill prisoners.

"All the research and guidance stress the crucial role that families have in caring for loved-ones who are ill. Families bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge - they know what 'well' looks like and understand the subtle signs that someone is struggling," he said.

"We found examples where the system works well and people's health had improved while they were in prison. But all too often guidance about family involvement is not put into practice, leaving family members locked out, prisoners struggling and a healthcare system under pressure.

"Ensuring that prisoners get access to the right healthcare isn't just about doing the right thing - it creates safer prison regimes, reduces reoffending and relieves pressure on the NHS."

The report also reveals some stark statistics which illustrate the extent of the health problems facing the prison population. These include rates of self-harm at near record levels – 684 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. Half of prisoners, and three in five female prisoners, have mental health issues.

Drug addiction is also a major issue, with one in three prisoners having a serious drug addiction, whilst prisoners have a life expectancy 20 years younger than the general population.



'The findings of this report reaffirm a Christian understanding of our connectedness as human beings and especially of the importance of family relationships.'

The Rt Rev. Richard Moth, Liaison Bishop for Prisons

Charity demands action over crisis women's jail

Andy Drozdziak

A Catholic prison leader has called on the Government to make more resources available as a new report revealed "acutely" mentally ill women are being held in "terrible conditions" in a prison.

Gloucestershire prison and young offender institution HMP Eastwood Park was given the lowest rating for safety, according to findings published last week.

Chief inspector of prisons Charlie Taylor said the levels of distress witnessed among women in crisis in one wing of were "appalling", while an experienced member of his team described conditions as the "worst he had ever seen".

In the HM Inspectorate of Prisons report, the cells were described as "appalling, dilapidated and covered in graffiti, one was blood-splattered, and some had extensive scratches on the walls", reflecting the "degree of trauma" experienced by inmates.

Responding to the report, Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs called for drastic changes and for women to be placed "in mental healthcare settings where their needs can be properly met", rather than prison.

"We work in Eastwood Park prison, and most of the other women's prisons in England, where we share the extreme challenges of caring for far too many women who have very serious



mental ill-health, and who struggle to cope with the aftermath of trauma and abuse," Mr Keen-Downs told the *Universe*.

"For those who are mothers, we see the devastating impact of separation, both on them and their children, which results in horrifying levels of self-harming."

"Pact and other charities do all we can to provide practical and emotional care and support to women who have multiple and complex needs, working alongside some remarkable prison governors, healthcare staff and chaplains, but Government needs to recognise the need to make more resources available. Many of the women in prisons like Eastwood Park should simply not be there, but instead, places should be made available in mental healthcare settings where their needs can be properly met."

Mr Taylor said: "Some of the most vulnerable women across the prison estate were held in an environment wholly unsuitable for their therapeutic needs. The levels of distress we observed were appalling. No prisoner should be held in such terrible conditions."

At the time of the inspection, in October 2022, Eastwood Park held 348 women and 83 per cent reported having mental health problems.

Levels of self-harm were very high, but the standard of case management documents used to support those at risk of suicide was "poor", the report said.

The watchdog concluded the prison was "fundamentally unequipped to support the women in its care, and leaders did not seem fully aware of the severity of the situation".

Staff shortages "severely" affected the day-to-day regime, with inmates often unable to attend education, skills and work activities. Women were "not reliably" provided "positive social and recreational time" to support their mental well-being, Mr Taylor added.

There was some areas of "excellent" work, but found the jail was "failing in its most basic duty" – to keep women safe – and said 'immediate and meaningful change is required.'

A Prison Service admitted it was a "a deeply concerning report", adding that it was addressing the issues raised.

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good

In brief

Energy bills ‘to fall in summer’

Two leading economic analysts have predicted that energy bills will fall this summer, helping to bring down inflation and reduce pressures on the cost of living.

The Resolution Foundation said it expected the average bill to fall to £2,200 by October, while energy consultancy Cornwall Insight predicted that average bills could fall to about £2,360 over the summer.

Emily Fry, an economist at the Resolution Foundation, said: “The cost of living crisis is far from over, but falling gas prices mean that it’s looking less bleak than just a few months ago.”

Man City’s rivals demand relegation

Premier League rivals are demanding Manchester City are relegated if the club is found guilty of breaking financial fair play rules. Following a four-year investigation, the club has been referred to an independent commission over 100+ alleged rule breaches between 2009 and 2018.

City said they were “surprised” by the development and have a “body of irrefutable evidence” to counter the charges. However, said *The Sun*, other clubs are “demanding blood”. One club chief told the paper: “If these charges are proven there must be proper punishment – and the only fitting one is for them to be relegated.”

Extremists ‘victims’ really, says Prevent

Islamic extremists are being treated as victims, an official review into Prevent, the government’s anti-radicalisation programme, will warn.

The report says that officials have been too focused on the “personal vulnerabilities” of extremists, with terrorism treated as a mental illness. Seven of the 13 terror attacks in the past six years, including the murder of MP David Amess and the bombing of Liverpool Women’s Hospital, have been carried out by extremists who had been referred to Prevent, noted *The Telegraph*.

Digital ‘Bitcoin’ could be close

The Bank of England and the Treasury are exploring creating a digital pound. Consumers could be using digital sterling as an alternative to cash by the end of the decade as ministers speed up their response to the rise of cryptocurrencies. However, the public will need to be reassured a state-backed digital currency is as safe as cash, says *The Guardian*.



Disaster diplomacy can bring warring countries together

POLITICS

Ilan Kelman



The death toll of the massive earthquakes that have rocked the Turkey-Syria border region is rising by the hour and the World Health Organisation has suggested it could rise as high as 20,000. The catastrophe has led to an international outpouring of support. Numerous international rescue, medical, and other teams are arriving and on their way. (see pages 18 and 19)

As ever, local emergency services were first on the front line to pull survivors from the collapsed buildings. We know from researching previous earthquake responses that most survivors are pulled out of the rubble by local residents and workers in the immediate aftermath.

But rescue attempts are on going and reports are continuing to emerge of people being found alive under the rubble, despite freezing temperatures at night and poor weather in many earthquake-affected areas.

Having researched disasters in conflict zones for more than 20 years, I’m acutely aware of how difficult the task will be in Turkey and Syria. This border region is riven with conflict which not only impedes the response to the disaster, but also often prevents or inhibits work to reduce the risk of

earthquake impacts. Yet effective diplomacy and a willingness for countries to work together despite their tensions can make a huge difference.

The area over which shocks continue to be felt has suffered long-term violent conflict. Kurds in the region have been fighting for a homeland for years in Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Syria has been shattered by civil war since 2011, so the area around Turkey’s border with Syria is packed with refugees from the fighting and is a crossing point for terrorists.

Reports are emerging that Damascus is demanding control of aid crossing into Syria and is allowing relief supplies to enter the region through only one border crossing. There have been calls for more crossing points to be opened to allow aid to get to disaster-affected people in Turkish areas affected by the quakes but so far there is no confirmation that Syria will allow this.

However, past experience tells us that if countries who are seemingly at loggerheads can pull together after a catastrophe such as this, it can sometimes yield dividends.

Turkey itself provides an instructive example. For several decades, Turkey has had a fraught relationship with its neighbour

Greece, including over Cyprus since 1974 in response to a coup supported by the Greek military government of the time.

Then on 7th September, Turkey’s main search-and-rescue team challenged this picture of mutual enmity and distrust. On August 17, more than 17,000 people died in an earthquake in north-west Turkey. Greece offered extensive assistance and Turkey accepted.

Then on 7th September, Turkey’s main search-and-rescue team phoned the Greek ambassador to Turkey to explain that they had heard that Athens had been rocked by a tremor and to offer assistance. The quake killed over 140 people. A Turkish team pulled at least one trapped person from the rubble.

Since then, collaboration between Greece and Turkey on preventing disasters – involving wildfires, earthquakes and other hazards – has endured despite the shifting status of their diplomatic relationship.

Now, less than two months after threats of war over disputed territory in the Aegean Sea, Greece is once again offering disaster aid to help Turkey in the wake of the latest earthquakes.

Stopping earthquake disasters

However, measures to help prevent disasters are always more

useful than international post-disaster aid, which is notoriously inefficient. It usually takes at least 24 hours for an international search-and-rescue team to be on site and active.

It’s expensive, too. As part of our research, we calculated that the approximate cost per post-earthquake life saved by international search-and-rescue teams is US\$1 million (£830,000).

Research has shown that “informal disaster diplomacy” aimed at preventing or mitigating disaster impacts, such as those seen in these earthquakes, tends to be more successful than co-operation after the event. Long-term pre-earthquake actions are certainly far more effective for saving lives and helping people than waiting until the ground has shaken and infrastructure has collapsed.

From the US to Japan, many lives have been saved by building codes and planning regulations – not to mention a population that knows what to do before and during an earthquake. It’s eminently possible these days to build structures that can withstand seismic shaking.

Because of our ability to mitigate the effects of hazards such as earthquakes, researchers avoid the phrase “natural disaster”. Earthquakes will always happen as the earth’s tectonic plates can and do shift. But it doesn’t follow that this must always mean a disaster. And we can make ourselves less vulnerable to tremors by working together – even with our political enemies.

Ilan Kelman is a Professor of Disasters and Health, UCL



Past experience tells us that if countries who are seemingly at loggerheads can pull together after a catastrophe such as this, it can sometimes yield dividends.

MPs, peers flock to hear USA's Bishop Barron speak

Popular US Bishop Robert Barron, who has given presentations to Google and Facebook, was welcomed to the Houses of Parliament this week as part of a visit to the UK organised by Catholic Voices.

Bishop Barron, who is Catholic Bishop of Winona-Rochester (USA) and founder of Word on Fire Ministries, delivered a keynote speech in Parliament on Monday 6th February.

Ahead of the speech, Bishop Barron was greeted and introduced by Mike Kane MP, Convenor of the Catholics Legislators Network and Vice President of the Catholic Union.

Over 100 civic and religious leaders gathered on the Terrace Pavilion in Parliament overlooking the River Thames for the event, including Catholic Union President Sir Edward Leigh MP and Catholic Voices Patron, Lord Brennan of Bibury.

Bishop Barron, who has over three million followers on Facebook, spoke on the theme of what Christianity brings to the public conversation.

Using Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes as a framework for his remarks, he said that Christian virtues were greatly needed in public life. Turning the other cheek, he said, was not a message for Christians to be passive but to stand their ground, including in the public sphere.

The speech was part of a week-long programme of events being organised

by Catholic Voices, culminating in a major conference in London on Saturday 11th February. Over 1,300 people are expected to attend the sold-out event on 'Sharing the Church's Story' in the QEII centre.

As part of his visit, Bishop Barron also had a meeting in No 10 Downing Street and celebrated Mass in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft in Parliament.

Mike Kane MP, Catholic Union Vice President, said: "After many years in the planning, I'm delighted that Bishop Barron was finally able to be with us in Parliament. It was great to see Christians come together from different parties and parts of the country for his talk. We're called to do many things as MPs, and the Bishop's talk was a great reminder of what Christianity has to offer the public conversation and the duty to work towards a more peaceful and virtuous society."

James Somerville-Meikle, Deputy



Bishop Barron with James Somerville-Meikle outside 10 Downing St

Director of the Catholic Union, said: "This was a truly inspiring occasion. In a place where there is usually so much noise and busyness, you could have heard a pin drop at times during

the Bishop's remarks. All of us who were there will remember the occasion for a very long time.

"I know many of our Catholic parliamentarians greatly appreciated the chance to hear from Bishop Barron and speak to him afterwards."

Brenden Thompson, CEO of Catholic Voices, said: "The theme for this week has been sharing the Church's story. As well as in our daily lives and in our local communities, the Church has so much to offer the public conversation – as Christians we are called to give witness to our faith in public. I'm really proud that we were able to put on this event."



Bishop Barron addresses MPs and peers in Parliament

Slavery and trafficking charity wins new award for being a great place to work

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic anti-slavery charity Medaille Trust is celebrating after being ranked as the fourth best charity to work for in the UK for 2023.

The Best Companies League Tables for the first quarter of this year revealed that Medaille was also ranked nationally as the 10th best mid-sized company to work for in the UK, and the 12th best company to work for in the North West.

The top rankings follow Medaille being rated in January 2023 as an outstanding company to work for in 2023, as reported last month in the *Universe*.

A Best Companies staff survey last December revealed that 85 per cent of staff felt engaged and satisfied. The survey also showed that 8 out of 10 workers loved working for Medaille



Trust, and 9 out of 10 employees believe the organisation is run on strong moral principles.

Medaille Trust's mission is to provide refuge and freedom from modern slavery. Founded by Sister Ann Teresa SSJA in 2006 to house women trafficked into prostitution, Medaille has grown into a national network supporting all people trapped in modern slavery – women, men and families. The charity is now one of the largest

provider of supported safe house beds for victims of modern slavery in the UK.

Responding to the good news, CEO of Medaille Trust Garry Smith paid tribute to his 'amazing staff.' "This achievement is a celebration of the commitment and hard work of Medaille's incredibly resilient and amazing staff," he said.

"The work we do can be intensely emotionally draining because we are dealing every day with survivors of modern slavery who have often been through severe psychological trauma. The least we can do as an organisation is to ensure the conditions are right for staff to feel happy and satisfied in their jobs. "Over the last year, we have listened to staff and placed a major focus on staff well-being."

Medaille has introduced a variety

of staff initiatives, including a 10% pay rise for employees receiving under £30,000, a day off for birthdays, a day off for volunteering, a staff benefits package and a Menopause Café.

"I want to say a heartfelt thank you to our incredible staff who make Medaille Trust the caring and compassionate charity that it is," Garry Smith said.

The news comes as the Church celebrated the feast of Sudan-born St. Josephine Bakhita on 8th February. Bakhita (1869-1947), the patron saint of human trafficking survivors. 8th February is also the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking.

Medaille posted this message on 8th February: "Please pray for the millions of people around the world who have been trafficked."

Hunt urged to deliver a fair Budget for families

The Catholic Union has sent a submission to HM Treasury ahead of next month's Budget calling for the Government to help families keep more of the money they earn.

Research shows that the UK tax system penalises families much more heavily than those of other countries – especially those where one parent works in the home or works part-time outside the home in order to take on caring responsibilities.

The Catholic Union has previously made submissions to the Treasury setting out the need for reform of the tax system to make it fairer for families. Ahead of the Spring Budget on Wednesday, 15th March, the Catholic Union has called for a commission to be set up to look at the options for reform.

The calls in the wake of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak saying in his New Year speech that he desired to see a society that truly values the family. He also acknowledged that strong, supportive families make for more stable communities and happier individuals.

The Catholic Union has called for the Prime Minister's words to be put into action with a new commission on family taxation.

Catholic Union Director Nigel Parker highlighted the "essential" need for the Government to help "families keep more of the money they earn."

"As we recover from the pandemic, there has never been a better time to ensure that the tax system does not discriminate against single-earner families who forsake a wage on account of caring responsibilities, including looking after children and elderly parents," he said.

"We urge the Chancellor to set up a commission on family taxation to consider ways of reforming the current system and reducing the tax burden on working families.

"In the current economic climate, helping families keep more of the money they earn is essential."

The Catholic Union offered to work with Chancellor Jeremy Hunt on establishing a new commission.



Chancellor Jeremy Hunt must offer more help to families, says Catholic Union

The Catenians

Friendship is the gift that never stops giving

Roger Lillie,
Catenians GB
National
President



In the words of that irrepressible comedian, Ken Dodd, happiness was the “greatest gift which he possessed.” He had no silver or gold, but happiness was in his soul.

We have always looked at wealth as the primary key to happiness, but a recent lengthy research project undertaken by Harvard University found that at the core of happiness are friendships and contact with others.

As Catenians, we place great emphasis on this. Our motto of ‘Friendship in Faith’ recognises that support of each other is most important.

Looking at friendship, we must recognise that loneliness is a major cause of sadness. We must make sure that our social bonds remain strong and support is there for all. We do our utmost to keep in touch with retired members and, in particular, we focus on widows and widowers who may be living alone.

Catenian membership groups place particular emphasis on this need.

Life at the moment is very difficult, with extreme pressures on our lives, but with close friendships we may be able to experience happiness. However, friendships must be sincere, forgiving and supportive.

When disagreements arise, we must forgive and forget.

So the key secret of human happiness is not wealth or material things, but human connections. Our genetic make-up can affect our disposition, but the quantity and quality of our friendship connections are imperative to our happiness. And happiness is a factor for long life.



We place great emphasis on friendship ... our motto of ‘Friendship in Faith’ recognises that support of each other is most important...

Mental health champions tackle rise in child anxiety

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic schools in the North East are prioritising the promotion of good pupil mental health in Children’s Mental Health Week after a report suggests anxiousness among pupils “worsened” during the 2021/22 academic year – despite a return to full-time in-person schooling after the pandemic.

The annual report suggests the recovery of children and young people’s wellbeing towards pre-pandemic levels has been “inconsistent”.

It found that “significant challenges” remained during the 2021/22 school year, adding that anxiousness among both primary and secondary-age pupils “appears to have increased” and is higher than in 2020/21.

The DfE report said: “While annual trends indicated that children and young people’s subjective happiness and life satisfaction appears to have recovered to pre-pandemic levels by 2022, some measures, such as anxiousness among primary and secondary-age pupils, and loneliness and mental health among older young people, may have worsened further.”

Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) in the north east has put a keen focus on the mental health of children and adults, with 110 mental health first aiders amongst its staff.

During Children’s Mental Health Week, 6th-12th February 2023, the Trust is focusing on the theme Let’s Connect – one of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing (Give, Connect, Learn, Take Notice and Be Active).

The Trust, which covers East Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland, has 110 trained mental health first aiders across its different sites.

Julie McCulloch, director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said: “Children and young people are facing a tsunami of pressures which affect their health



The wellbeing champion team at St John Bosco Primary School in Sunderland. Inset, BCCET mental health co-ordinator Louise Swailes

and wellbeing.”

She added that ‘significant investment, targeted towards the most vulnerable in society, is needed.’

Louise Swailes, mental health co-ordinator at Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, said: “We all have mental health and it is equally as important as our physical health, as it impacts all areas of our lives including our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.”

“Here at BCCET, we have made a commitment to support the wellbeing of our staff and students through a whole Trust approach to embedding

positive mental health across its culture and ethos.”

The Trust’s Sunderland-based schools have prioritised mental health by working towards the Sunderland Mental Health Charter Mark. St Mary’s Catholic Primary School has achieved gold and St Aidan’s Catholic Academy the silver award, while St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Jarrow and St Aidan’s Catholic Academy in Sunderland both received a bronze Better Health at Work Award for their commitment to physical and mental health within the school staff.

Louise Swailes outlined the exten-

sive support provided. “We now have 110 staff members trained through MHFA England as Mental Health First Aiders across the Trust,” she said.

Mental Health First Aiders are trained in spotting the signs of mental ill health, how to respond in an empathetic manner and where to signpost for appropriate support.

Louise added: “The trust has also created a tiered mental health support system in our schools with students, teaching assistants, teachers and SLT trained in mental health support, as well as external agencies delivering counselling sessions.”

Sir Mo to be patron of trafficking charity

Britain’s greatest ever distance runner, and campaigner against modern slavery and human trafficking, Sir Mo Farah has become a Patron of the Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse at St Mary’s University, Twickenham.

Sir Mo has a long relationship with St Mary’s and trained, studied, and lived at the university from 2001-2011. He began campaigning against human trafficking and modern slavery following his decision in 2022 to reveal he himself was a victim of these crimes.

Sir Mo was trafficked to the UK from Djibouti at the age of eight and forced to work in domestic servitude until he was ultimately able to escape when he confided in his teacher.

The announcement comes on the feast day of St Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of victims of human trafficking. The Centre is named in honour of St Josephine, who herself was a



victim of human trafficking in Sudan and Italy, becoming the first black female saint in 1992.

Sir Mo Farah said: “I am honoured to have the opportunity to support the work of the Bakhita Centre as its first Patron. Fighting the crimes of

human exploitation is a cause close to my heart and I hope I can support the Centre in their work.”

The Bakhita Centre was founded in 2015 to conduct research on modern slavery and human trafficking, to influence practice and policy, and to raise awareness across the university, in local communities and further afield. The Centre supports Cardinal Vincent Nichols’ initiative to combat slavery and trafficking, along with Bakhita House (a London-based safe-house for trafficked women) and the Santa Marta group, which seeks to co-ordinate the efforts of law enforcement authorities, NGOs, and governments worldwide.

St Mary’s Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran said: “We are delighted Sir Mo has agreed to become a patron of the Bakhita Centre. On the athletics track, he is our most famous and successful alumnus, and it is a great ho-

nour that he will continue his relationship with the university on this topic that is both close to Sir Mo’s personal experience, and our mission as a University.”

The centre aims to broaden the university’s research on global issues that intersect with modern slavery, including gender-based violence, sexual and other forms of exploitation, abuse and discrimination based on structural inequalities, race, ethnicity, asylum seeking/refugee and migrant status.

Director of the Bakhita Centre Dr Carole Murphy added: “Sir Mo’s presence as our patron will help us raise the profile of the work of the Centre and our commitment to expose the structural factors that underpin the crimes of human exploitation and in turn provide more support to more survivors and anti-exploitation practitioners.”

Easter Gifts and St Patrick's Day Souvenirs

Universe Catholic Weekly readers' offers



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Easter Cards



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Easter Card pack – Blessings (Pack of 6)

Pack of 6 large Easter Cards. Gold foil, embossed, featuring floral designs and Easter Blessings message. Inside text: Design 1: 'To wish you peace and happiness at Easter.' Design 2: 'Wishing you every happiness at Easter'.

Ref: E0417 Price: £5.50

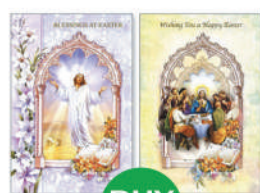
Easter Card pack – Christ

Pack of 12 small Easter Cards with Gold foil. Featuring 2 designs ft. Christ the Good Shepherd, and 1 with Christ knocking. Inside text: 'With Best Wishes at Easter'

Ref: E0121 Price: £3.95



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BUY
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Ref: E0122 Price: £5.50

Easter Card pack – Risen Christ (Pack of 6)

Pack of 6 large Easter Cards. Gold foil, embossed, featuring Risen Christ Designs. 'Easter Blessings/God Bless you at Easter' on front. Inside text: Design 1: 'God Bless you at Easter and always'. Design 2: 'This brings an Easter message with a very special prayer, that God will always bless you and keep you in his care'.

Ref: E0415 Price: £5.50



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Orthodox Icon Crucifix, with carved frame. Lithographic image of crucifixion on sturdy composite wood, with hand-painted detail, frame gilded with imitation gold-leaf with antiqued effect, with hook for wall hanging. Handmade in Greece, with certificate of authenticity on back. Size 16 x 23 cm (6.25 x 9 inches). See range on website

Ref: I0328 Price £39.95



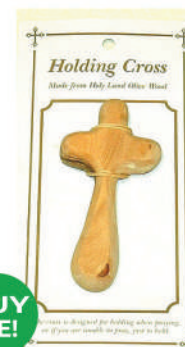
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ST PATRICK'S DAY



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Beech wood crucifix, 8" (20 cm) narrow wooden cross, with oxidised metal corpus, for wall mounting. In presentation box.

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Ref: E0210-6 Price: £6.50

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Green St Patrick rosary beads. Metal St Patrick centre piece. Hand made in Italy. Strong wire, Celtic Cross crucifix. Shamrock imprint beads. Very tactile with smooth beads Supplied in Organza bag

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Irish Blessing Pewter Key ring, with circular medallion, featuring Celtic Cross design on one side, and Irish Blessing on the reverse: 'May your troubles be less, your blessings be more, and nothing but happiness come through your door!' Ref: E0203 Price: £5.25



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FEATURE

Editorial Contact: **Andy Drozdziak** – News@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

An investigation by three leading academics has found that marriage – and staying married – provides health benefits. Here they explain why

Libby Richards, Melissa Franks and Rosie Shrout

At this time of year many people feel a renewed commitment to create healthy habits, such as exercising regularly, drinking more water or eating more healthfully.

But it turns out that when it comes to health, the easiest way to make yourself healthier – particularly if you are a man – is to be married!

In this special feature we look at whether the act of walking down the aisle can give you a health advantage.

So what exactly is at play?

As a team, we study how relationships affect health. One of us is a nursing professor who studies how social support influences health behaviours. One is a social health psychologist who explores how stress affects couples' relationships and health, and one is a social psychologist who researches how relationships influence health behaviour changes.

Together, we examine how partners influence each other's health, taking gender into account in this equation.

One theory that seeks to explain the link between marriage and health is the act of self-selection. Simply put, people who are wealthier and healthier than average are more likely not only to get married but also to find a partner who is wealthier and healthier than average. Men and women with poorer health and wealth than average are less likely to marry at all.

While this may be part of the story, marriage also provides partners with a sense of belonging, more opportunities for social engagement and reduced feelings of loneliness. This social integration, or the extent to which people participate in social relationships and activities, can greatly influence health – from reducing the risk of hypertension and heart disease to lowering one's risk of death or suicide.

Another important connection between marriage and health involves the body's inflammatory process. Research links loneliness and lack of close relationships with inflammation, or the body's way of reacting to illness, injury or disease. Though inflammation is needed for healing, chronic inflammation is associated with heart disease, arthritis, cancers and autoimmune diseases.

While single adults undoubtedly have very meaningful close relationships too, a healthy marriage by nature provides more opportunities for closeness and socialisation, supporting the link between marriage and inflammation.

When you dig deeper, gender seems to play a role as well.

One study related to marital quality, gender and inflammation found a connection between lower levels of spousal support and higher levels of inflammation for women, but not men. In another study, if couples used negative communication patterns, such as one partner making demands while the other partner withdraws, women but not men experienced heightened inflammation.



A happy marriage is good for your health

Marriage and longevity

Married men and married women live, on average, two years longer than their unmarried counterparts. One reason for this longevity benefit is the influence of marital partners on healthy behaviours. Study after study shows that married people eat better and are less likely to smoke and drink excessively.

All of these healthy behaviours help explain why married people tend to live longer. However, men married to women tend to see additional longevity benefits than women married to men, for several possible reasons.

For example, female spouses may be looking out for their male partners, reinforcing healthy behaviours and providing more opportunities for healthy choices. On the flip side, married men are less likely to attempt to influence their wives' health behaviours.

Women tend to take the lead in promoting healthy behaviours, benefiting their husbands. Data suggests that men and women in married relationships tend to engage in teamwork to mutually promote positive health behaviours. Further, married men and women are more likely to want to change their

partners' health behaviours, such as exercise, especially if the spouses' habits are worse than their own. These findings suggest that both the person and the partner's gender matter.

Relationship quality can also influence health behaviours. For example, in the context of exercise, both men and women who reported higher levels of marital support were more likely to walk for exercise. However, as men aged, the association between marital support and walking became even stronger for them, but the same was not true for married women.

Cultural norms and caregiving

To further understand how men's health benefits from their wives, consider cultural norms that foster expectations that women will be the primary caretaker in committed relationships.

Middle-aged people, and in particular women, have also been described as the "sandwich generation," since they are often "sandwiched" between taking care of growing children and aging parents. Caregiving can take a toll on the immune system and one's overall health. Additionally, invisible labour related to

"Research links loneliness and lack of close relationships with inflammation, or the body's way of reacting to illness, injury or disease... marriage acts as a counter to this"

child care and household duties, which often disproportionately fall to women, can leave women with less time for self-care, such as being physically active.

Women also take on more responsibilities in terms of co-ordinating doctors' appointments and promoting adherence to medical advice for their husbands than husbands do for their wives.

However, men often increase their time spent caregiving when their wives are ill.

Of course, not all marriages are created equal

Relationship quality and relationship conflict also play important roles when it comes to marriage and health. Gendered socialisation and power differences often lead to women's thinking and caring about their relationships more than men, causing women to take primary responsibility for managing relationship issues, while men take on less of the burden.

Research shows that women are also more likely to base their identities on their relationships, and so when they experience marital conflict or other relationship issues, they experience more negative emotional and physical health effects than men. This can include increased risk of metabolic syndrome, inflammation and cardiovascular disease.

Does this mean that all men should get married to protect their health or that unmarried people can't enjoy the same health benefits as those who have said "I do"?

Not at all. Unmarried people can, of course, enjoy good health and longevity. Creating and maintaining strong social ties and engaging with one's community go a long way when it comes to health. Further, making the best lifestyle choices available, seeking preventive health care and reducing stress can help everyone live a longer, healthier life.

Libby Richards is Associate Professor of Nursing, Purdue University

Melissa Franks is Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Purdue University

Rosie Shrout is Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Purdue University



"Married men and women are more likely to want to change their partners' health behaviours, such as exercise, especially if the spouses' habits are worse than their own. These findings suggest that both the person and the partner's gender matter"



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“The earth is filled with harmony and trust when the alliance between man and woman is lived well.”

– Pope Francis

Choose your legacy: ignominy or as a history maker, pope tells leaders

Cindy Wooden

The pope has demanded that South Sudan's political leaders put their differences aside and build a new nation living in peace during an ecumenical visit as part of his trip to Africa.

Accompanied by Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, he told the president and vice presidents of South Sudan that it was time for them to get serious about peace, development and democracy.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation, but has known war and violent conflicts for nine of the 11 years since independence.

Thousands of people lined the roads from the airport to the presidential palace, cheering the Church leaders as they drove by. The crowd included many groups of women dressed alike, dancing and ululating as the visitors' motorcade passed.

After closed-door meetings with President Salva Kiir and with Riek Machar and the four other vice presidents, the Christian leaders said it was time to stop their violent jostling for power and wealth and to start serving their people.

Speaking first, Kiir told those gathered in the palace garden, "This historic visit of these prominent global Christian leaders must compel us to engage in deep thinking about our recent history, especially on how it relates to the noble task of peace consolidation and the important projects of reconciliation and forgiveness among our people."

The president used the occasion to announce that he would restart peace talks with five political-military groups who did not accept the 2018 peace accord. Kiir pulled out of the talks, hosted by the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio, in November.

Pope Francis admitted that the re-



The pope arrives at the John Garang Stadium to celebrate Mass with 50,000 people

ligious leaders' words might seem blunt, "but they flow from the heart and from the Gospel the three proclaim," the same Gospel most of the government leaders and an estimated 60 per cent of the population claim to follow.

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "it's time for peace."

Archbishop Welby recalled the retreat and meeting that he, Pope Francis and the Church of Scotland moderator at the time offered at the Vatican in 2019 for South Sudan's political leaders. "Pope Francis knelt to kiss the feet of each politician," the archbishop said. "Almost five years later, we come to you in this way again: on our knees to wash feet, to listen, serve and pray with you."

But he added, "when I remember

the commitments made back in 2019, compared to what has happened since, I am saddened that little has changed."

Rev. Greenshields did not place all the responsibility at the feet of the politicians but pressed for co-operation among all members of society, including local church leaders.

"We need churches and leaders who are generous of heart, liberal of love and profligate with God's grace," he said. "We need leaders who care about the values by which our countries live, who care about the conditions in which people live, and who act out their faith in work amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised. These things make for peace."

Kiir, 71, and Machar, 70, were leaders in South Sudan's war for independence

from Sudan, a dream that became a reality in 2011.

But Pope Francis asked if their legacy was to be "heroes of the fight for independence or warlords who failed their people?"

"Future generations will either venerate your names or cancel their memory, based on what you now do," the pope told them.

"We undertook this ecumenical pilgrimage of peace after hearing the plea of an entire people that weeps for the violence it endures, its persistent lack of security, its poverty," the pope said. "Years of war and conflict seem never to end."

Pope Francis told the leaders they must work to make the land a garden again and not a "cemetery."

"No more bloodshed, no more con-



licts, no more violence and mutual recriminations about who is responsible for it. No more destruction: it is time to build! Leave the time of war behind and let a time of peace dawn!"

He urged the leaders to include women and children in the peace discussions, reminding them that "anyone who commits an act of violence toward a woman commits it toward God, who took flesh from a woman."

"Before all else," he said, "there is a need to combat poverty, which serves as the fertile soil in which hatred, divisions and violence take root."

The poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable are the estimated two million South Sudanese who have been displaced by fighting, he said. "How many people have had to flee their homes, and now find themselves consigned to the margins of life as a result of conflicts and forced displacement."

"Above all, there is a need to control the flow of weapons," he said.

"Many things are needed here, but surely not more of these instruments of death!"

'Lay down the weapons of hatred and revenge'

Cindy Wooden

Pope Francis told South Sudanese Catholics that the only way the country will get out of the darkness of violence is with the light of their faith and their commitment to peace.

"In the name of Jesus and of his beatitudes, let us lay down the weapons of hatred and revenge, in order to take up those of prayer and charity," the pope said as he celebrated a morning Mass in Juba on the grounds of the John Garang Mausoleum.

Garang led the country to the 2005 peace agreement that set the stage for the country's independence from Sudan in 2011.

Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, attended the

Mass, which came at the end of the ecumenical pilgrimage for peace that they were making with the pope.

Some 60 per cent of South Sudanese are Christian with the Catholic, Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches traditionally being the largest.

President Salva Kiir, a Catholic, and other government leaders also were present, as were close to 100,000 people present.

Exhorting South Sudanese Christians to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world," as the day's Gospel reading called them to be, Pope Francis told the people, "This country, so beautiful yet ravaged by violence, needs the light that each one of you has, or better, the light that each one of you is."

The path toward peace, he said, requires that people "overcome the dis-

likes and aversions that risk pitting tribes and ethnic groups against one another."

It is time "to apply the salt of forgiveness to our wounds; salt burns but it also heals. Even if our hearts bleed for the wrongs we have suffered, let us refuse, once and for all, to repay evil with evil, and we will grow healthy within."

He added: "Accept one another and love one another with sincerity and generosity, as God loves us."

After so much war Pope Francis said he understands that individuals may feel small and powerless.

But, he said, the salt that the Gospel calls them to be is also small, as just a pinch makes all the difference.

Right, local women perform a traditional dance to welcome Pope Francis to South Sudan



President Salva Kiir with the pope, Archbishop Welby and Rev Iain Greenshields

Criticism for politicians, but a plea for youth to lead peace

After scolding South Sudan's political leaders and consoling some of its poorest victims, Pope Francis, Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, rallied their faithful to prayer and action.

They urged all Christians to work together to seek justice, to model unity and to press their divided political leaders to make peace, describing the ecumenical tradition of South Sudan as a precious treasure, an example to all for the advancement of Christian unity.

Some 50,000 South Sudanese gathered with the three leaders for an evening ecumenical prayer service on the grounds of the John Garang Mausoleum.

Rev. Greenshields Moderator of the Church of Scotland, told the crowd that the ecumenical pilgrimage was meant "to encourage the continued unity of the Churches for the common



good of the people of South Sudan, for justice and fullness of life for each and every citizen of this country."

Pope Francis focused on the obligation of Christians "to pray, to work and to journey together," breaking down all walls of suspicion and hostility between different political, ethnic or denominational groups while also valuing the unique identity of each.

God's peace, he said, is "not only a truce amid conflicts, but a fraternal fellowship that comes from uniting

and not absorbing; from pardoning and not overpowering; from reconciling and not imposing."

Archbishop Welby gave the homily "The only way the world will know Jesus came from the Father is when we are one for God" the archbishop said. "Our being one is how the world will know that Jesus is Lord, that God reigns over all powers and authorities, that the glory of the Father is believed, and more people come to know his love."

The archbishop had special words of encouragement for the young people of South Sudan, a nation where some 70 per cent of the population is under the age of 30. "If we value you, we will listen to your hopes for peace and opportunity and allow those hopes to shape our nations and churches."

"You will not be deceived into war. You will not be forced to kill," the archbishop said. "You will disagree with others, but still love them."

Arms trade is a 'plague', pope says on flight back from Africa

Pope Francis told journalists on his flight home from Africa that "the biggest plague" afflicting the world today is the weapons trade.

Tribalism with its ancient rivalries is a problem, he told reporters, "but the violence is provoked by the ready supply of weapons" and that making it easier for people to kill each other just to make money "is diabolical."

The pope was joined by Archbishop Justin Welby and the Rev. Iain Greenshields for the traditional end of papal trip airborne news conference.

The three responded to questions on topics ranging from violence in Africa to the criminalisation of homosexuality, the war in Ukraine and future ecumenical trips. Pope Francis also was asked if his job had become

more difficult since the death of Pope Benedict XVI and the publication of various books and articles portraying the late pope as critical of Pope Francis.

He reiterated that his relationship with Benedict was always warm. "I was able to talk about everything with Pope Benedict and change opinions," Pope Francis said. "He was always at my side, supportive, and if I had some difficulty, I would tell him, and we would talk."

Stories that Benedict was embittered by this or that decision of Pope Francis have no foundation, he said. "I think the death of Benedict has been instrumentalised by people who want 'to bring water to their own mill,' meaning they want to reinforce their

own position even if it harms another.

Pope Francis also was asked about telling the Associated Press that he believed it was an injustice to criminalise homosexuality; it is illegal in South Sudan while in Congo many LGBTQ young people are thrown out of their families.

He recalled his previous words, that being gay was not a crime and "who am I to judge?"

Those with a homosexual orientation "are children of God. God loves them. God accompanies them," the pope said.

Both Archbishop Welby and Greenshields said they would be "delighted" to join the pope on another ecumenical pilgrimage.

Trip's success hangs on Kiir's response



Pope Francis' visit to Congo and his ecumenical pilgrimage to South Sudan put a face on the horror of war.

But he also seemed energised by the enthusiasm of the crowds in Kinshasa, Congo, and his visit to Juba, South Sudan, with Archbishop Welby and the Rev. Iain Greenshields.

Archbishop Welby, joining the pope and Rev. Greenshields for a news conference on the flight back to Rome, used the word "miracle" to describe the three Churches pulling off a retreat for South Sudan's squabbling leaders at the Vatican in 2019.

But none of the three seemed certain this time that their words and gestures changed anything for South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, a former warrior and still an imposing and commanding figure at age 71, or for the five vice presidents who are supposed to be sharing governance with him.

However, they welcomed the news that Kiir was re-engaging with the peace talks.

In the absence of peace, some 2,000 internally displaced people living in camps that dot South Sudan had their own meeting with the three Church leaders, where they shared their stories and their dreams of a better future.

Archbishop Welby blamed the pandemic for "a loss of momentum in the peace process," although the trip showed that the people are desperate for peace after 10 years of violent conflicts.

"What we now need is a serious change of heart from the

leadership. They have to agree to a peaceful transition of power," the archbishop said. "There has to be an end to corruption and gun smuggling and the amassing of huge quantities of weapons."

In the most emotional part of his journey, Pope Francis came face to face with the results of that violence, blessing a young woman and the twins that were conceived when she repeatedly was raped as a hostage of militias and gently cradling the stump of an arm of another woman whose hands had been cut off.

In both Congo and South Sudan it was clear that the violence, the poverty and the lack of education, health care and opportunity do not just weigh on the nations' women, but come close to crushing them.

In the presence of the Congolese victims, Pope Francis said, "I pray that women, every woman, may be respected, protected and esteemed. Violence against women and mothers is violence against God himself, who from a woman, from a mother, took on our human condition."

At the meeting with people living in camps for the displaced, Pope Francis said that "mothers, women are the key to transforming the country. If they receive the proper opportunities, they will have the ability to change the face of South Sudan, to give it a peaceful and cohesive development."

"I ask you, I ask all the people of these lands, to ensure that women are protected, respected, valued and honoured," he said.

The pope flew home with Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields

Pope rallies the world to race aid to Turkey as quake death toll mounts

Calls for sanctions on Syria to be dropped so they do not become a crime against humanity

Pope Francis urged all people to be in solidarity with the regions of Turkey and Syria struck by two powerful earthquakes, and that are “in part already martyred by a long war.”

He expressed his “spiritual closeness and solidarity” with those affected by the pair of powerful earthquakes that struck on 6th February, even as local emergency teams and volunteers, supported by a growing army of overseas rescuers, continued to claw their way through rubble in the hope of finding survivors.

The 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes wreaked havoc on both sides of the border, flattening towns and villages and leaving hundreds of thousands in fear of their lives.

The combined official death tolls for Turkey and Syria now stands at over 20,000, with the World Health Organisation saying it was prepared for the final death toll to be considerably higher.

The Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need said a Catholic priest was among the dead in Syria. Father Imad Daher died in the collapse of the residence of retired Melkite Archbishop Jean-Clement Jeanbart of Aleppo, who was injured and hospitalised,



Rescue workers search for survivors under the rubble of a collapsed block of apartments in the Turkish town of Diyarbakir

the charity said.

Pope Francis was “deeply saddened” to learn of the “huge loss of life” caused by the disaster and offered his “heartfelt condolences” to those mourning losses. He urged the international community to send aid to the region, particularly Syria, which is currently still struggling economically as a result

of its ongoing civil war.

The pope also prayed that emergency personnel would “be sustained in their care of the injured and in the ongoing relief efforts by the divine gifts of fortitude and perseverance.”

The earthquake is the largest disaster to hit the country since 1939, when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake

killed more than 32,000 people and injured over 100,000.

Many people are being forced to sleep outdoors in freezing night time temperatures after their homes were destroyed. Even those whose homes are still standing are said to be fearful of returning to them, amid fears further quakes will hit or damaged build-

ings will collapse.

More than 45 countries have offered to support Turkey in relief efforts, in addition to NATO and the European Union. Specialist UK firefighters are on the ground and have successfully extracted a number of trapped people from collapsed buildings, and the Foreign Office confirmed two flights of emergency aid have taken off from the UK, with more expected.

The Middle East Council of Churches, representing Orthodox, Evangelical and Catholic churches, called on the international community to provide emergency aid to the region. They said their particular concern was the situation in Syria, which remains under UN, US and EU sanctions as a result of the actions of its dictatorial President, Bashar al-Assad.

The Churches appealed for the sanctions to be lifted, “so sanctions may not turn into a crime against humanity.”

Just a few hours after the quake, the Knights of Malta announced that Malteser International, their relief agency, was sending an emergency response team. “Our local partners have an urgent need of support, especially in areas of northern Syria where hundreds of thousands of people live in simple refugees and now, with the earthquakes, are even more defenseless,” said Oliver Hochedez, head of the Malteser International emergency response department.

“In the hospitals run by our partner organisations the number of injured arriving increases hour by hour. We must provide help rapidly.”

Chaldean Catholic Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo told Vatican News that he had never seen such destruction in war-torn Syria. “There was a strong fear and now the people are in the street, in the cold and under the rain,” he said. “There is damage everywhere. The cathedral has been badly damaged, houses are crumbled, the roads have been ripped up. It’s an apocalyptic situation.”

He added that the region’s transport infrastructure was so badly damaged he feared rescue workers would take many more days to reach outlying villages: “we know there are people trapped in the mountains who have received no help. Their situation is desperate.”

Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella organization of national Catholic charities, immediately began a fundraising campaign for relief efforts in Turkey and Syria. The charity has been active in Turkey since 1991 and in Syria since 2011, primarily providing aid for refugees.



Left, devastation in Kahramanmaraş is said to be near complete, with thousands of homes destroyed, including many blocks of apartments. Local authorities said the death toll in the town will run into the thousands.

Aid needed now amid the chaos... and your prayers

Caritas and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), an agency of the Holy See, is looking to aid over 2,000 families in Syria's Aleppo and Hama regions by providing bedding, food, medicines, infant formula, nappies and clothing.

Caritas is also looking for cash donations to allow it to provide emergency shelter for displaced victims, as well as food and clean water.

CNEWA president Mgr Peter I. Vaccari said its people on the ground had identified these items as part of "a preliminary response" to the disaster. "Survivors are still processing the shock of the earthquake, searching through the rubble and assisting in rescue efforts," said CNEWA Beirut regional director Michel Constantin. "There is a general state of panic, exacerbated by the harsh weather, complicating rescue efforts and the capacity to collect and assess data and plan accordingly."

"The situation is tragic. ... We have opened our convent doors to hundreds of families who have lost their houses, and their number is increasing by the hour," said Blue Marist Brother Georges Sabe, whose order is sheltering up to 1,000 families in Aleppo, coordinating with the Franciscan Friars and the Salesian Fathers.

The Brother said he was worried for the vulnerable "the elderly, children and women ... they are in urgent need of food, clothes, medications and most of all, comfort and warmth in this harsh winter."

CNEWA's campaign will bolster outreach by the Society of St. Vincent de

Paul, which currently aids more than 850 families in the Aleppo region through local church parishes and schools. It has set up three emergency shelters, with more planned.

"We lived and survived the long years of war but never experienced this kind of fear," said Bishop Abdo Abrash of the Melkite Catholic Eparchy of Homs, Hama and Yabroud, which is running the shelters. "It is true misery ... there is a lack of first aid equipment to tend to the survivors."

Constantin said amid the "chaotic" situation on the ground, "this is a critical moment to help heal those who have survived, those who 'saw death,' as one of our partners told me."

Along with financial support, prayer remains an essential response to the tragedy, said Msgr. Vaccari. "Even though we at CNEWA are accustomed to tragedies and emergencies, we are not immune to their toll," he said. "We ask for your prayers of support and consolation for the victims."

Volunteers recover a body from a collapsed building in Sanliurfa, Turkey, after the earthquake. Photo: courtesy of @mehmetyetim63



A mother and her daughter scream out in anguish as they stand outside their destroyed home in Hatay. Inset, a fortunate survivor is carried from a shattered building in Sanliurfa



Determination to rebuild after horror

Turkish residents have used social media to describe their horror after the deadly earthquake that rocked the region on Monday. Gaziantep Castle, an ancient castle built over 2,000 years ago, was severely damaged in the wake, while the Turkish city of Adana has been badly hit, with hundreds dead and many more missing. Rescue teams are thin on the ground. One survivor could be heard calling from beneath the rubble of his home: "God, help me, I don't have strength anymore."

In Syria, the Syrian Civil Defense – a humanitarian organisation commonly known as The White Helmets – said via Twitter, "The toll will increase as many families are still trapped. Our teams are on the ground searching for survivors & removing the dead from the rubble."

The quake was felt as far as Cairo and woke people up in Beirut and in Damascus, Syria. In Syria, it hit the region divided between government-held territory and Syria's last enclave held by the opposition forces.

Giulia Longo, programme manager of Caritas Turkey and director of the Catholic charitable organization's office in Anatolia, said the earthquake devastated the agency's diocesan offices in

Iskenderun.

"Our diocese has been destroyed, the diocesan office has been damaged beyond repair, the church is no longer there," Longo said. "Therefore, the services that we offered no longer function. We are still in contact with people. The facilitators of the community are alive, (however) some of our benefactors have died."

Longo, who has worked in Turkey for the past four years, was in Italy at the time of the earthquake and is now working to co-ordinate relief efforts with Caritas Internationalis and its affiliates.

She admitted that the destruction of Caritas offices in the country makes relief efforts very difficult.

Nevertheless, she said she was struck by "feeling very much loved and part of a group of people who have the desire to rise up again."

"It is very strange that there is never time to suffer, there is only time to get working again," Longo said.

"There will be a time to speak about what has happened, but at the moment, we are still in an adrenaline-filled moment; (we are) trying to understand what we should do and how best to do it. But the people will recover."

Biden doubles down on Roe v Wade threat

President Biden used his 'State of the Union' address to restate his desire to codify Roe v. Wade into US law.

Biden's 2023 State of the Union was his first to a divided Congress, as Republicans began their slim House majority in January, and his first to a full chamber, as the event had reduced seating capacity for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden called on Congress to codify Roe v. Wade "to protect every woman's constitutional right to choose."

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in June 2022 overturned its previous abortion-related precedents in *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. Biden said he would veto any effort to restrict the procedure at a federal level, as some states have done since the *Dobbs* decision.

He touted job growth and a bipartisan infrastructure package passed during the first part of his term, while outlining remaining agenda items including banning assault rifles, restoring the child tax credit and passing immigration reform.

German Church pays out 40m to victims

The Catholic Church in Germany has so far paid more than 40 million euros to victims of sexual abuse, German Catholic KNA agency reported.

The Independent Commission for Recognition Payments, set up by the German Bishops' Conference, approved an average amount of 22,150 euros in 1,809 cases.

There have been a total of 1,839 applications from the Catholic Church. In 143 cases, the UKA ordered a payment of more than 50,000 euros; in 24 cases, more than 100,000 euros). In almost 1,000 cases, the approved amount was 15,000 euros or less, KNA said.

Pope prays for African justice

On the feast of Sudan-born St. Josephine Bakhita, Pope Francis prayed for "a future of justice and peace for our brothers and sisters in Africa." His remarks were his first since his return to Rome from Congo and South Sudan, where he prayed for peace in both nations.

Along with colleagues from the Anglican community "we went to bear witness that it is possible and a duty to collaborate in diversity, especially if one shares faith in Jesus Christ," the pope told more than 5,000 pilgrims in the Vatican audience hall. "Together we listened to the Word of God, together we raised prayers of praise. But unfortunately there are those who abuse the name of God to justify violence and oppression. This is why it is so important to bear witness that religion is fraternity, it is peace, it is communion; justice."

Archbishop warns of Russian threat to religious freedom

Gina Christian

Russia's aggression poses "the biggest threat to religious freedom in Ukraine," said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak, head of all Ukrainian Catholics in the USA.

He made his comments during a roundtable discussion entitled 'Is Religious Freedom Under Threat in Ukraine?' at Georgetown University.

Speaking by video call from Paris, Archbishop Gudziak said Russian attacks on Ukrainians "over the last three centuries ... (have led) to some kind of religious repression."

He noted that Russian attacks from the 18th century to the present have particularly impacted Ukrainian Catholics, "who are always outlawed sooner or later by any Russian occupying regime, whether it's tsarist, communist or Putinist."

Since declaring independence in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has constitutionally protected the freedom of religion, ensuring a separation of Church and state.

The nation has developed "a very admirable expression of religious freedom and diversity, (with) over 100 different confessions" that "range the whole Christian spectrum" as well as Jewish, Muslim and other faith traditions, said Archbishop Gudziak.

However, the majority of those groups have come under pressure from Russia over the years.

Russian proxy authorities have imposed stringent registration requirements on various faiths, outlawing the Jehovah's Witnesses sect altogether and using minority faith buildings for military purposes.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, "Baptist and Orthodox priests have perished," said Archbishop Gudziak, adding that two Ukrainian Catholic Redemptorist priests – Father Ivan Levytskyi and Father Bohdan Heleta – are currently being held captive and rumoured to have been tortured by Russian forces.

More than 100 religious sites in



Rishi Sunak (left) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during a press conference at a military facility, in Lulworth, Dorset, during his first visit to the UK since the Russian invasion. Lulworth is currently home to a number of Ukrainian soldiers training on the UK Challenger battle tank, 14 of which have been donated to the country's defence against Russia

Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed as a result of Russia's attacks over the past year, according to UNESCO.

Historically, the Russian Orthodox faith has had a deeply entwined relationship with the state, fostering a religious nationalism known since the 19th century as 'ethnophyletism'.

Close to 80 per cent of Ukraine's population identifies as Orthodox, but that affiliation has become increasingly complex in light of Russia's decade of aggression against Ukraine, which began with 2014 attacks on the Donbas region and the attempted annexation of Crimea.

In January 2019, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Constantinople Patriarchate – regarded as the 'first among equals' of the Orthodox churches – formally recognised the independence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

A few months prior, he had restored Metropolitan Filaret, head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate – an independent Orthodox

Church in Ukraine – to full communion.

In response, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) severed communion with Constantinople. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, a close ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin, has vigorously endorsed the war on Ukraine, even reassuring Russians that "sacrifice in the course of carrying out your military duty washes away all sins."

Archbishop Gudziak said that "some of the things Patriarch Kirill has been saying (are) rather in symphony with jihadist language."

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which had traditionally remained loyal to Russia, broke with the Moscow Patriarchate in May 2022 over Patriarch Kirill's stance on the invasion of Ukraine.

However, the Ukrainian government has called for investigations of links between Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox churches, while formally banning activities of all religious organizations 'affiliated with centers of in-

fluence' in Russia.

Concern was expressed at the conference that such efforts were an overreach, noting that while "the UOC missed a chance to distance itself" from individual collaborators, "those mistakes ... do not give the Ukrainian government a right to deny the (UOC)'s right to exist as such."

Religious freedom was fully under threat in Ukraine, but "we must be careful and vigilant to protect the unique model of religious pluralism that has emerged" in that nation.

Ukraine faces a balancing act amid the battle, having to "maintain religious freedom ... to the degree it can, while maintaining the right to investigate ... individuals and contacts with the ROC."

More broadly, "this war denies anyone any kind of freedom at all, religious or otherwise," said Wanner.

"We're not talking just about abstract rights," said Archbishop Gudziak. "(Russia poses) a deadly danger for religious confessions, and I think this needs to be remembered."

Church labels treatment of Yanomami 'genocide'

The severe healthcare and hunger crisis affecting the Yanomami indigenous people in Roraima state has been labelled a genocide by the Brazilian Church as it appealed for the global Catholic community to help.

The Amazonian people have been harshly affected in recent years by cuts to healthcare funding from central government, collapsing incomes and loss of traditional hunting lands to wildcat farmers and illegal loggers.

The Church is trying to co-ordinate help and to work side by side with government agencies and indigenous organisations to provide food and medical attention to the sick, many of whom are suffering from malaria and malnutrition.

A number of Catholic voices have been demanding that the authorities who allowed the situation to get to

this point must be properly held accountable for their misdeeds, saying that the actions of former President Jair Bolsonaro in abandoning the Yanomami is tantamount to genocide. The former president is currently living in Florida, after fleeing Brazil on losing the presidential election last year.

The National Conference of Bishops

of Brazil (CNBB) donated \$70,000 to pay for food and medicine kits, with the support of Adveniat, the German episcopal charity for Latin America and the Caribbean. Dioceses and church movements all over the South American country have also been collecting funds among churchgoers and sending them to Roraima.



A four-year-old Yanomami Indigenous child with malnutrition, lies in a hammock at the special yard for indigenous people of the Santo Antonio Children's Hospital in Boa Vista, Brazil. Photo: Amanda Perobelli, Reuters

"There is a growing number of people asking the Church to receive their donations to the Yanomami. Brazilian society is deeply mobilised with their problem and is willing to help," Antonio Eduardo de Oliveira, of CNBB's Indigenous Missionary Council, said.

Cardinal Leonardo Steiner, who heads the Archdiocese of Manaus, visited the Yanomami people in Boa Vista, Roraima's capital, and gathered with indigenous leaders.

"In the hospitals, many Yanomami are still in critical condition due to malaria and starvation," he said.

Cardinal Steiner said the current crisis is the result of the dismantling of the health care services provided by the government to the Indigenous over the past few years and of the invasion of their territory by illegal miners.

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE,
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

The lost tribes of Israel – and the meaning of other Hebrew terms

While I was delving into Catholicism on the internet, I repeatedly came across words such as Sanhedrin, Levites, High Priests, Rabies, Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees. I had no idea what they were, so I investigated.

The following is just a very simple explanation. Before covering these, it is important to know about the history of the Hebrews. Again this is a very brief explanation.

The Bible depicts the family of the Hebrew patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – as living in northern Mesopotamian. From there Abraham, the founder of the Hebrew people, is said to have migrated to Canaan.

From Canaan, the Hebrew ancestors migrated to Egypt where they lived and then became slaves of the Egyptians. A few generations later they were released by the actions of the Prophet Moses and returned to occupy part of Canaan.

These freed Hebrews were made up of twelve tribes named after the sons or grandsons of Jacob, who it was believed wrestled with an angel and afterwards was called Israel. The tribes, with land of their own were: Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun, Judah and Benjamin.

Although there was a thirteenth tribe called Levites, they did not have any land, but were a priestly tribe dispersed among the other tribes.

Years later, ten of the twelve tribes were lost forever after their lands were conquered by the Assyrian Empire around 722BC. The lost tribes were Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin survived, as well as some members of the priestly Levites.

At the time of Jesus, these were all that remained of the tribes of Israel.

Some of the senior organisations and leaders in Israel at the time of Jesus were known as the Sanhedrin, Levites, High Priests, Rabbis, Essenes Pharisees, Sadducees.

The following is a very simple explanation of their roles in Jewish society.

The Sanhedrin

This was the name of the Hebrew Council, it being a religious and political assembly of elders. It was responsible for enforcing the religious laws regulating Hebrew

worship and legislated on day-to-day affairs in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. At the time of Jesus, Caiaphas was the leader of the Sanhedrin. Another prominent member was Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43 & John 19:38-39).

Levites

Levites were one of the tribes of Israel, but were the only one not to have any land. They were scattered among the other tribes of Israel as priests and High Priests. They became famous when God told Moses to use male Levites to slaughter those who engaged in idolatry. After this they became a priestly caste. It was King David who said God had ordained that only Levites could carry the Ark of God. Zacharia and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were Levites.

High Priest

All Hebrew priests were Levites. High Priest was the title of the chief religious official of Judaism. It was said that they traced their paternal ancestry back to the elder brother of Moses, who was called Aaron and was Israel's first High Priest.

A High Priest was both a secular and religious leader in the Hebrew nation. At the time of Jesus, Caiaphas was High Priest.

Rabbis

These were Hebrew religious teachers who interpreted the Jewish law. Jesus was regarded as a Rabbi by many of his followers (Mark 10:1, 17 35 and 51).

Rabbis tended to reflect one of the three main religious schools of thought: Essenes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.

Essenes

This sect held extreme religious views. They were a monastic community where all initiates pooled their belongings and lived in the Judean desert at Qumran, well apart from the rest of Hebrew society, not far from Jericho.

Some historians believe that the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, found in 1949, were written by them, but others are not so sure.

Pharisees

These were the Hebrews who re-interpreted the Law of Moses. They believed in the immortality of the soul and the transmigration of souls, that is re-incarnation.

They were strict observers of Jewish religious laws and added their own requirements and restrictions. Jesus criticised the

Pharisees for their hypocrisy and ability to twist the original intention of the Hebrew law (Matthew 15: 1-20)

Sadducees

This sect only believed in the written Law of Moses and rejected any later customs. They did not believe in any life after death and were in continuous conflict with the Pharisees. Jesus disagreed with the Sadducees because they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22: 23-33).

This is just a simple explanation of these fascinating and complex tribes and senior organisations of Jewish society up to the time of Jesus. More in-depth and accurate explanations can be found on the internet.



Flags with the names of all the tribes of Israel on at the archaeological excavations of the Ancient city of Shiloh archaeological site in Israel.

HEART OF THE MATTER

JAMES MARTONE

Faith leaders urge UN to advance religious tolerance and harmony

James Martone

A UN meeting has heard an urgent call for the global security body to do more to promote religious tolerance and harmony around the globe, amid fears that persecution is on the rise.

The meeting drew ambassadors, religious leaders, diplomats, academics, representatives of nongovernmental agencies and several musicians gathered Feb. 3 in a vast conference hall at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The special week, observed from 1st-7th February, is a product of a 2010 UN resolution, first conceived by Jordan's King Abdullah II, known for his commitment to religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

The week stresses the need to advance mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue as a way to promote harmony among all people.

While there were no signs of the Jordanian kingdom at the event, a different Arab kingdom, Bahrain, showed up in the person of Ambassador Jamal Fares Alrowaiei, the country's permanent UN

representative.

"Bahrain is a small country, but when you go to the capital, in just one kilometer you will see the mosque, the church, the synagogue," Alrowaiei told the UN gathering, showcasing his tiny, predominantly Muslim island nation in the Persian Gulf as a living example of interfaith harmony.

He said Bahrain had "built on its rich history, as a multicultural and inclusive society, to become an example in upholding and promoting the values of mutual understanding and respect, interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence."

Another good illustration of Bahrain's positive role in promoting peace among different cultures and faiths, Alrowaiei noted, was its November 2022 hosting of Pope Francis's meeting with the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar mosque.

"The visit ... was an example and great message to the world about the interfaith and the dialogue," Alrowaiei said.

Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Holy See's permanent UN observer, also addressed the UN conference.

He too evoked Pope Francis' trip to Bahrain, quoting the pontiff as saying, "Bahrain ... where a further step forward was taken in the journey of Christian and Muslim believers."

Pope Francis was even more recently making a "major, major contribution to reconciliation and peace" through his visits to the war-torn countries of South Sudan and Congo (see page 16-17), Archbishop Caccia continued, and quoted the pontiff one more, as telling Vatican diplomats in January that "religion provides genuine opportunities for dialogue and encounter between different peoples and cultures."

Still, "in a world that is witnessing heightening division and wars, the creation of a culture of peace is not an easy task," the archbishop admitted, asking the conference participants, "From where can we start?"

In his speech, Sierra Leone's UN Ambassador Fanday Turay offered some suggestions about where countries should begin.

"We encourage that we collectively embrace diversity, strengthen trust and denounce extremism," said Turay, whose West African nation was among the

sponsors of this year's World Interfaith Harmony Week.

He called on fellow UN member states to "accelerate" their efforts toward producing resolutions "that speak to the culture of peace, love and conscience," urging them to incorporate and use "faith and spiritual leaders ... as the key components to building bridges" across religious and cultural divides.

The Rev. Theodora Brooks, an Episcopal minister present at the UN event, seemed a perfect illustration of such bridge-building by faith leaders.

"As people of faith, we are to follow the example of Jesus, and create a more bountiful and harmonious world by ending discrimination based on religion, gender, ethnicity, marital status, physical ability, and any label or tool that is easily used to exclude others," she said in her address to the UN conference hall.

"We do so by respecting the dignity of every human being, and by daring to have conversations that make others feel safe, seen and heard," said Rev. Brooks, who hailed from St. Margaret's Episcopal

Church in the Bronx, a borough of New York City.

Another New York faith leader invited to speak was Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, executive vice president of the New York Board of Rabbis.

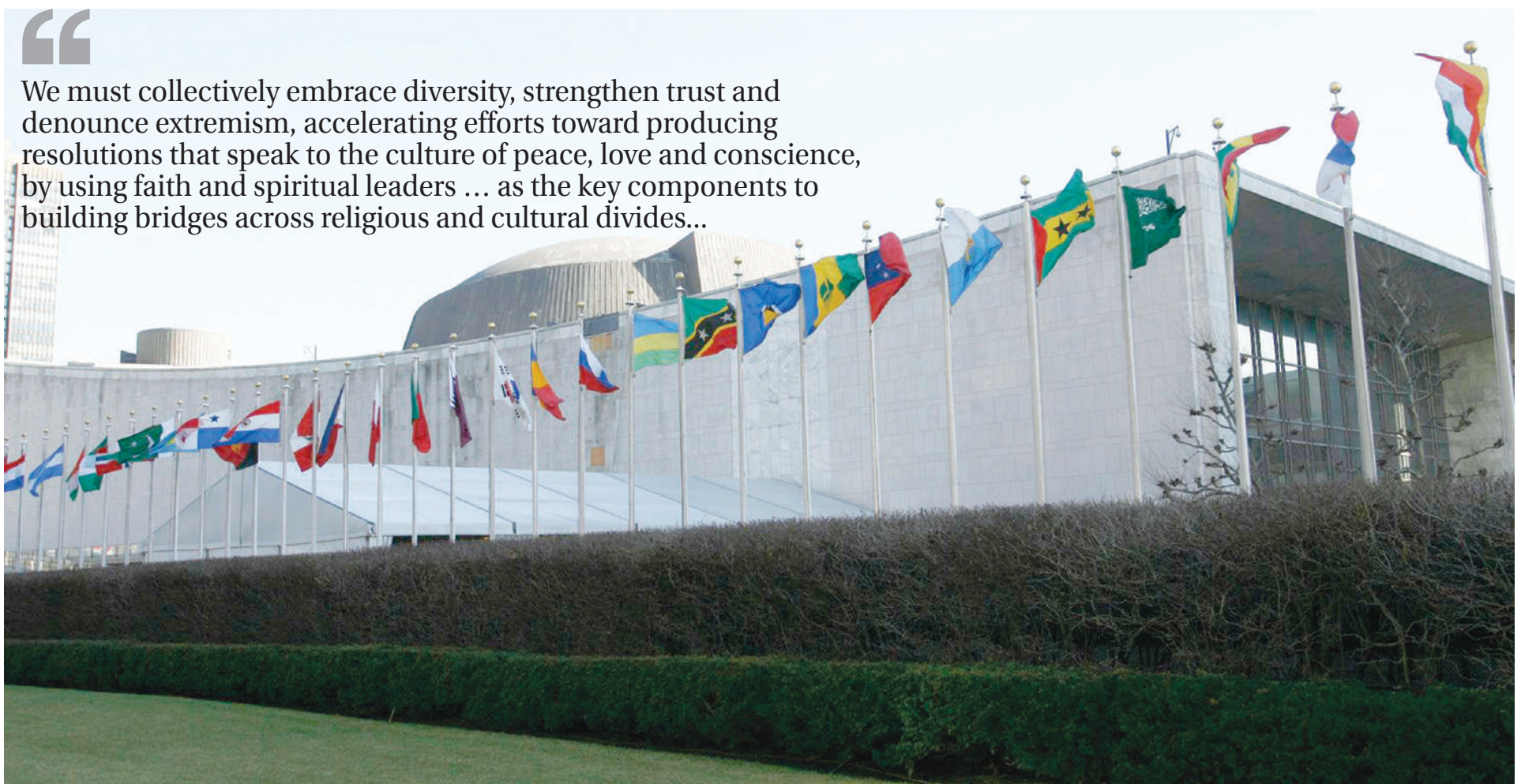
"We all need each other to open doors for one another," he told the conference hall, describing various incidents in the US and around the world in which Jews, Muslims and Christians had joined ranks in defence of each other, or sought shelter in each other's houses of worship.

"After 9/11, when people were seeking refuge running away from that horror, where did they run to? They ran to houses of worship, in the downtown area ... and they all felt comfortable in the house of worship, even if it wasn't of their own denomination," Rabbi Potasnik said.

But there was still "much to do together" toward eliminating the world's religious and multiple other divides, the rabbi reminded those present. "We can't allow harmony week to be just one week. It has to continue throughout the year and throughout our lives," he said.

“

We must collectively embrace diversity, strengthen trust and denounce extremism, accelerating efforts toward producing resolutions that speak to the culture of peace, love and conscience, by using faith and spiritual leaders ... as the key components to building bridges across religious and cultural divides...



VATICAN LETTER

CAROL GLATZ



Pope's old holiday home to boast new ecological centre

The papal property at Castel Gandolfo, with its vast gardens and diverse livestock, is being transformed into a new scientific and educational centre dedicated to promoting integral ecology, sustainability, and a circular and generative economy.

Pope Francis established the new *Laudato Si'* Center for Higher Education because he wanted "to make a tangible contribution to the development of ecological education by opening a new space for training and raising awareness," the Vatican City governor's office said.

The initiative, called the *Borgo Laudato Si'* project, will have the beauty of the Villa Barberini gardens and the papal villas as the natural setting for developing a centre for education in integral ecology, open to all people of goodwill, the Vatican said.

Planned activities and initiatives will be announced in the coming months, it said; they will aim to "combine training in integral ecology, circular and generative economy, and environmental sustainability."

According to the papal document establishing the centre, it is under (the pope's) personal attention and managed and run by its own governing bodies and staff.

The pope appointed Scalabrinian Father Fabio Baggio, undersecretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, to be the centre's new director general. He will be assisted by Salesian Sister Alessandra Smerilli, secretary of the dicastery, and Francesca Romana Busnelli as members of the board of directors; and Antonio Errigo as secretary.

According to its new statutes, the centre will actively seek ways to involve young people and those who are marginalised as well as the general public.

Its papal mandate focuses on developing specific projects that foster people's holistic development and that promote education and training in economic and environmental sustainability, inspired by the principles in pope's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*.

In addition to sponsoring events, seminars, conferences and study weeks, it also will organise visits for the general public that highlight the

natural, cultural and scientific patrimony of the papal property, according to its statutes.

Beyond research and education, the centre's activities also can include cultural events, hospitality and food services, utilising traditional and advanced agricultural methods, and continuing the papal farm's activities of animal husbandry and producing dairy products.

The papal property at Castel Gandolfo extends over 135 acres – compared to the 108.7 acres of Vatican City. It includes 74 acres of gardens – 17 of which are formal gardens – 62 acres of farmland, three residences and a farm with chickens, hens, rabbits, assorted fowl, cows and a small dairy operation. There are fruit and olive orchards, vineyards, hayfields, vegetable patches, aromatic herbs, flowerbeds and plants that often are used to decorate the papal apartments and meeting rooms at the Vatican.

Pope Pius XI established the farm in the 1930s to be 'a model of a genuine lifestyle, the same he was able to enjoy as a youth,' the Vatican newspaper reported in 2011, and to make use of the fertile pastures – which had been abandoned after the loss of the Papal States in 1870 – to provide fresh fare for the papal menu.

The people who live around Castel Gandolfo and Lake Albano that it sits next to will no doubt be pleased to hear about the Vatican's plans.

For centuries Castle Gandolfo was the pope's summer residence, and as a result the small town that sits underneath it became a popular tourism spot, with people flocking from Rome to enjoy the lake, eat a meal and perhaps catch a glimpse of a relaxing pontiff.

However, from the start of his papacy Pope Francis made no secret of his distaste for the villa, thinking perhaps it harked back to the days of popes acting like minor monarchs and flaunting their affluence.

He made the decision to not visit, but did open the grounds to visitors so they could walk in the footsteps of countless pontiffs before them. The grand house is now a museum, and the tourism industry is starting to recover despite the pope's absence.

"There are some businesses that never recovered from Pope Francis's decision not to come," said one shop

owner. "He rarely visits, and as a result the tourism that relied on the lure of the pope's presence has faded too."

But at the same time many businesses took the pope's absence as an opportunity to refocus their operations, with the lake now boasting a lively sailing and rowing scene.

The hills around the lake have also been opened up, with new hiking trails added to encourage the citizens of Rome to drive the 15km south east of the city to enjoy the clean, fresh air.

"The new ecological centre is exactly in the spirit of how Castel Gandolfo's tourism sector now works... it will boost the area."



Why do we take Holy Communion?

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

If they asked, could you answer questions such as:

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

and many, many more...

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



CREDO

FR HUGH DUFFY

It's never really the end of the world

Year in, year out, somebody takes on the task of naively reading the signs of the end-times for us. We have heard the prophets of doom, of Armageddon, and of the end of the world who have predicted the destruction of our planet. But, our planet still keeps turning, and we keep churning along.

The Gospel offers an important insight about the end of the world. We do not know when it will be, Jesus tells us. Only Our Heavenly Father knows and He's not telling (Gospel of Mark 13:32). Then what do we do? We have to stay focused daily on following the Lord who, in spite of all that's going on around us, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The gospel urges us to keep ourselves in a constant state of vigilance. By pointing to the end times, as Jesus actually does in Mark 13:25, he wants us to be fully awake when it comes. In Jesus, however, this time has already begun. We can further God's reign by our watchfulness, one day at a time. We can heal broken hearts, comfort our neighbors, take care of the needy,



spread the good news, and create a better world. This allows us to recognise the Lord's coming at the end of time but, more importantly, it will enable us to experience the Lord's many comings into our lives, all the time.

We can expect near, apocalyptic events such as the disastrous effects of climate change on our planet. But, all is not lost. We can do something about it. We can do our part to cut down on the use of fossil fuels, we can recycle plastic materials, we can improve the environment in which we live, and

we can avoid useless waste. The harrowing events of our day do not mean that the end is in sight. We can expect to be set to by earth-shattering events and problems in our society such as those posed by nuclear weapons. It comes with the territory.

The fragmentation of the world around us calls for steadfast patience and faith, not panic. No need to draw our wagons in a circle and let the world fall apart. This reaction won't wash. It is not based on scripture and it won't help bring about God's reign.

As Christians, we rest our case on our faith that the risen Lord is with us, active and effective. We must open our hearts and minds to the great work at hand, and "not be terrified," but walk confidently, with hope, through life. (Gospel of Mathew 24:6).

Life is no bed of ease. It's often what happens to us when we least expect it. A few weeks ago, I was driving along a busy road when, out of the blue, a big truck lost its tyre and came hurtling across the carriageway, narrowly missing the flowing traffic. God only knows what would have happened if the big tyre had hit one of the cars travelling at a fast speed! It missed my car too, but came rebounding off the wall along the highway and banged into my back door, popping it open. I followed the driver as he attempted to get off the road. We got out of our vehicles, and I showed him what his tyre did to the back door of my car.

While we were talking, he shouted, "Watch out!" The same wayward tyre came rolling down the road, and slammed into my back. I

thought my back was broken, but it wasn't. I suffered bruises on my left leg. At hospital, I was x-rayed, and released immediately. I had no broken bones, thank God. I missed my meeting, but that was nothing. I was alive. That's life.

Sometimes we are inclined to think about the good old days. Our selective memory inclines to convince us that they were without fault, and that we need to return to them. The gospel focuses on the good new days when Jesus' message will be effective, here and now, in our daily lives.

Let us be attentive to the signs of the times and try to make our community and our world a better place to live in with God's help. Do not be preoccupied about the end of the world which is beyond your grasp. Focus rather on how you can help your neighbour, and improve your environment which is within your grasp.

Live your life one day at a time, and don't be preoccupied about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself (Matthew 6:34).

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SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



God is looking for a path through which we can build a perfect world

12th February 2023 – 6th Sunday, (A)
Sirach 15:15-20

To act well and faithfully is a matter of our own choice

If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose. Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given.

For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; his eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows every human action. He has not commanded anyone to be wicked, and he has not given anyone permission to sin.

Responsorial: Psalm 118:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

R./: Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

They are happy whose life is blameless,

who follow God's law!

They are happy those who do his will, seeking him with all their hearts.

(R./)

You have laid down your precepts to be obeyed with care.

May my footsteps be firm to obey your statutes. (R./)

Bless your servant and I shall live and obey your word.

Open my eyes that I may consider the wonders of your law. (R./)

Teach me the demands of your statutes

and I will keep them to the end.

Train me to observe your law, to keep it with my heart. (R./)

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Among the mature we impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the



law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be

thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

"But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or

'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Seeking what unites

The Jews were proud of the Law of Moses. According to tradition, God had given it to their ancestors, as something precious and unique. In that Law was contained the will of the one true God. There they could find all that they needed to be faithful. For Jesus too the Law is important, but now it's not in the centre. He communicates another priority: God's Reign is coming, the Father is looking for a path to open among us for the building of a more human world. It's not enough for us to just keep Moses' Law. It's necessary to open ourselves to the Father and to collaborate with God in building a more just and fraternal life.

That's why it's not enough to fulfil the law that orders: "Don't kill". It's also necessary to root out of our lives aggression, looking down on others, insults or revenge. Whoever doesn't kill fulfils the law, but if we don't free ourselves from violence, then that God who seeks to build a more human world with us still doesn't reign in our hearts.

There's a growing tendency in our society to speak in ways that express aggression. More and more we see offensive insults cast about just to humiliate, look down on others, wounding their dignity; words born

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until Heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished."

of rejection, resentment, hate or revenge. How often are our own conversations woven from unjust words that spread criticism and suspicion? Words spoken without love or respect, that poison our living together and cause damage – words born of irritation, meanness or baseness.

This malice isn't just found in our day-to-day living together. It can also be a serious problem among church leaders. Pope Francis warned against conflicts and confrontations between different groups.

He shared this sobering thought: "It pains me greatly when some Christians can foster enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy, and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is how we act?"

Ideally outsiders should be able to admire in our church how we care for one another, encourage and support each other.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH FR DOYLE

Celibate priests are a real gift to God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. When we say the Lord’s Prayer at Mass, we pray: “Lead us not into temptation.” Why would God lead us into temptation? I know that God allows temptation to occur, but the word “lead” is an active verb that implies God may be actively involved in our being tempted. Would you please clarify the Church’s teaching on God’s role in temptation?

A. I agree with your concern over the phrase “lead us not into temptation.” But more important, so does Pope Francis. In an interview back in 2017 with Italian television,



Pope Francis said: “That is not a good translation.”

He suggested this as a possible alternative: “Do not let us fall into temptation.” And within two years, Vatican-approved translations in French, Italian and Spanish included equivalents such as “Do not abandon us to temptation.”

That comports with the biblical Letter of James that says: “No one experiencing temptation should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; ... Rather, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (1:13-14).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clarifies that the Greek wording used in the Scripture “means both ‘do not allow us to enter into temptation’ and ‘do not let us yield to temptation’” (No. 2846).

So be comforted: The God who created us out of love would not purposely place us in temptation and set us up to fall into sin.

Q. My wife and I recently came into communion with the Catholic Church. Concerning the question of whether there should be married priests, I have come to the belief that unmarried priests make logical and biblical sense. Seeing how hard our own parish priest works, it doesn’t seem that he would have time to care for a family, and I have read the biblical reasoning in Matthew 19:12 and Paul’s guidance in 1 Corinthians. But how does the Catholic Church reconcile this teaching with the fact that the chief apostle and first pope, St. Peter, was married?

A. In the Latin-rite (Roman) Catholic Church, celibacy is today a prerequisite for ordination to the

priesthood. But that has not always been so; it is a discipline that developed over history. Even today, clerics of Eastern-rite Catholic churches are permitted to marry before ordination. For the first several centuries of the Christian era, it was common for Latin-rite priests to be married.

As you mention, St. Peter was obviously married, since Luke 4:38 tells the story of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law. And St. Paul says in his First Letter to Timothy 3:2 that ‘a bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled.’

But over time, the church came to the realisation – as you yourself suggest – that a priest is most free to serve the people and his ministry by not having the responsibility of a family, and it was the First Lateran Council in 1123 that finally mandated celibacy for Western clergy.

That requirement, and the practical reason behind it, are reflected in the current Code of Canon Law: “Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven and therefore are bound to celibacy which is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and are able to dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and humanity” (Canon 277).

Further evidence, though, of the fact that clerical celibacy is not a revealed truth but a matter of church law can be found in the fact that, in the UK, many former Anglican married clergy who became Catholic have been allowed to be ordained as Roman Catholic

priests while still remaining married through the Ordinariate.

Q. At a church I sometimes attend, the priest there does not use his thumb to sign himself with the cross on his forehead, lips and heart at the beginning of the Gospel reading. I had understood that this gesture demonstrates your intention to take the Gospel into your mind, proclaim his word to others and keep his message in your heart. Because the priest has foregone that important sign, his parishioners omit it, too. Has this gesture been declared optional now, or perhaps dropped altogether?

A. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says in No. 134 that the priest, upon announcing which of the Gospel writers that day’s passage is taken from, then makes “the sign of the cross with his thumb on the book and on the forehead, mouth and breast, which everyone else does as well.”

Note that the wording is ambiguous and could be taken to indicate that each member of the congregation should sign the Gospel book itself, but such has never been the practice and would be impractical.

The congregation signs only their foreheads, mouths and breast, and there is evidence that they have done this at Masses as far back as the ninth century. The fact that this gesture by the entire assembly was first mentioned specifically in the general instruction only in 2002 would seem to indicate that, far from having been dropped, there is even stronger reason to keep to it today.

As so often happens with

Catholics, a ritual gesture reminds us of what our faith calls us to do: in this case, to receive the Gospel with an open mind, to speak it faithfully and to treasure it in our hearts.

Q. It is a common practice of Catholics to request Masses for the deceased. How can the blessings of a Mass help a person who has died and presumably has already been judged?

A. The custom of Catholics praying for the dead has its origin in Scripture and tradition, which stand as the twin pillars of Catholic faith and practice. First, with Scripture, in the Old Testament’s Second Book of Maccabees in Chapter 12. The Jewish leader Judas Maccabeus prays for his troops who have been slain. Some of the fallen soldiers have been found wearing pagan amulets taken as booty, which would have violated the law of Deuteronomy, and Judas asks that God forgive their sin.

The New Testament shows in 2 Timothy 1:18 that Paul prays for a deceased man named Onesiphorus that the Lord ‘may grant him to find mercy.’

The Catechism of the Catholic Church records in No. 1032 that ‘from the beginning, the Church has honoured the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.’ During the days of Roman persecution, the ancient Christians would gather in the catacombs to pray for the dead, and Tertullian in the early third century wrote that, once a year, Christians would gather to offer special Masses for their ancestors in the faith.

All of this is based, of course, on the theological doctrines of purgatory and of the communion of saints. In explaining purgatory, the catechism explains in No. 1030 that “all who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven.”

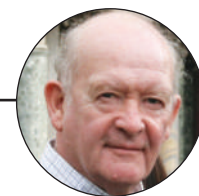
The communion of saints describes the spiritual relationship that endures among believers and produces mutual benefit. Those who have already attained Heaven pray for us who are still on earth, while we can pray (and offer good works) for those deceased who are still undergoing purification.

What that purification consists of, and how long it lasts, remains a mystery for us while we are still on this near side of eternity; but our prayers and Masses beseech the Lord to speed the process and soften whatever heartache it entails.

Please note that this column does not accept reader inquiries or questions

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



Following the purification path

St Paul - The Mystic

Let me explain the teaching of the 'Cloud of Unknowing'. It is so full of wisdom that the orthodoxy of this practitioner is above question.

Those who have tried to reveal him as a counterfeit mystic have only succeeded in revealing themselves as non-practitioners.

As the author of this famous work on mystical theology explains, the short prayer that you make and keep making enables you to do two things at the same time. It acts like a prop that enables you to keep your heart's desire fixed on the God whom your faith tells you is on the other side of the Cloud.

At the same time it enables you to suffocate all the distractions and temptations that would draw your attention or what he calls 'your naked intent' elsewhere. He then tells you to put them under what he calls 'a cloud of forgetfulness.' This is, for the foreseeable future, your work in the daily time that you religiously give to prayer like the early Christians before you, who kept to their daily time for prayer come hell or high water.

Two words must be seared into your mind and heart that if followed will guarantee that you have done your part and will therefore guarantee that the Holy Spirit will do his part. They are the words, 'perseverance' and 'immediately'. Firstly then you must persevere no matter what you encounter in the 'Dark Night'. No matter how dark it becomes, no matter how many distractions and temptations you have to contend with and no matter how long you have to face up to all that is within you, that separates you from God, you must persevere. Secondly, the very moment you find that your heart's desire is being drawn elsewhere you must immediately turn back and open your heart to the divine love that this continuous action will enable you to receive.

Wisdom from Simone Weil

The Jewish philosopher Simone Weil said that 'we are no more than the quality of our endeavour'. It is the quality of our endeavour in prayer that will determine the measure with which God's love can prepare and purify us for union with himself. In his monumental history of the Catholic Church, Monsignor Philip Hughes uses one word to describe the prevailing attitude of heart and mind of the early Christians. It is the word 'renunciation'. They chose to follow Christ above and beyond all else and in order to do this they renounced all and everything else that could possibly prevent them from doing this day in and day out.

However, renunciation has to be

"It is the quality of our endeavour in prayer that will determine the measure with which God's love can prepare and purify us for union with himself."



learnt and it is learnt by practising it repeatedly, and the place where it is practised is in the time that they gave for personal prayer. This is the practical way in which they took up their daily Cross and practised selfless sacrificial giving. This was most especially true when they seemed to receive nothing in return. It was then that they united themselves with the selfless, sacrificial giving that was the hallmark that characterised the life of Christ on earth.

Just as this daily dying to self in imitation of his daily dying to self, led to Resurrection and Glorification, they knew that what they called white martyrdom would do the same for them, but in God's time, not theirs.

Transformation and transfiguration

Gradually and with perseverance they enabled the Holy Spirit, not just to purify their hearts desire, but their hearts too. Then through using their hearts as a prism, the rest of their human being. For the union for which they were being prepared was not just for their minds but their bodies too, and the whole of their human being. This is not only known but experienced by the great mystics, beginning even in this life when their purification enables them to be led into the mystical marriage. Here they tangibly experience God's love as it filters

down into their bodies making them ready and able to be united with the physical body of Christ. Christ's transformed and transfigured body transforms and transfigures their bodies too in the process.

The mystical marriage that is the summit of the spiritual life in this world is preceded by what St Teresa of Avila calls the mystical betrothals. As the expression suggests it is the mystical marriage but only for brief periods of time, at least until the requisite purification for ecstatic union has been completed.

Mystical loving

Like St John the Baptist, the first Christians realised that if they were to introduce Christ to others they would first have to have undergone a prolonged purification in a real or metaphorical desert. That is why while St Paul was preparing for ten years to become a true and effective apostle, his confreres in Jerusalem were doing the same. They did not write down the details of their spiritual purification as later mystics did, but nevertheless a few words from St Paul's letter to the Corinthians is most revealing:

"I know a man who fourteen years ago was caught up whether still in or out of the body, I do not know – God knows – right into the third heaven. I do know however that this same person whether in or out of the body; God knows, was caught up

into paradise and heard things that cannot, must not be put into human language' (2 Corinthians 12 :1-5).

The mystical purification of St Paul

A brief look at the chronology of St Paul's life enables us to see that 14 years before this letter to the Corinthians, St Paul was just completing his ten years of preparation and purification for his apostolate. St Paul could not have had such profound mystical

experiences without such a purification, nor could he have received the wisdom that we find in his letters, without the fruits of contemplation that shine through everything that he wrote and did. Although we do not find similar details of mystical experiences from the writings of the other apostles, we do know that they experienced them, as we see the fruits of contemplation in all they wrote and did, as we can read in the Acts of the Apostles and the Acts of the Martyrs.

The same is true of the Fathers of the Church whose writings are still the bedrock of our Catholic faith. That the Church is at present full of would-be apostles eager to do what the first apostles did for the Church is clearly evident. Sadly what is not so evident is that they are prepared to do what their predecessors did.

Wisdom from St Catherine of Siena

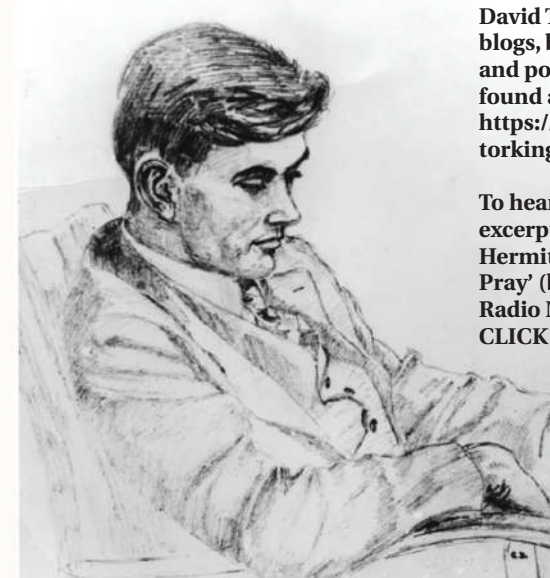
Both born Catholics or recent converts seem to think that a religious experience, albeit genuine, is a call to set out without delay to become the spiritual leaders for which they have not been prepared. The first apostles had profound and personal experience of God's love, but they still believed they had to spend many years of penance and repentance learnt in 'the desert' before they had the effrontery to set themselves up to lead and guide others.

Lest what I say is taken too literally, remember St Catherine of Siena found her spiritual desert in her own home where the success of her incredibly fruitful apostolate was made possible by years of continual prayer.

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

David Torkington reads from The Hermit – Episode 1

by David Torkington | Jan 18, 2021 | Mystical Prayer, Podcast | 10 comments



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AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



At Candlemas, embrace light of Christ and the Holy Spirit

Seventy-five people joined Bishop Peter Collins at St John's Cathedral, Norwich, for a special Mass for Religious on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

The celebration of the feast, which is traditionally known as Candlemas, began with the lighting of candles at the west end of the Cathedral. Bishop Peter then joined a procession of priests into the building and sprinkled the congregation with holy water before processing with the congregation to the east of the Cathedral.

The annual Mass is an opportunity for Religious to renew their vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, as well as other obligations specific to each community. It takes place 40 days after Christmas – an opportunity, said Bishop Peter, to “contemplate the purification of God's People that

was accomplished by the 40 years of their wandering and wondering in the midst of the desert”.

The theme of wandering and wondering ran through the bishop's homily as he turned to each person's journeys and asked the congregation to contemplate what is being asked of us today.

“Human beings are charged with the duty of contemplation,” he said. “From the confines of our finite existence we are empowered to contemplate the infinite realm of the Godhead.”

He then turned to the characters in the Gospel narrative – firstly Mary, who received the Annunciation, and Joseph, who was given visionary insight through a dream, and then the two as a couple who learned to walk together.

Then there were Simeon and Anna, “aged in years but fresh in spirit”, to



whom the Holy Spirit provided the “ignition of recognition”.

It was the Holy Spirit who gave them the flame of insight, said the Bishop, the same Holy Spirit who prompts and sustains the consecration to religious confession.

“In all our wanderings and wonderings,” he said, “we stand with Mary and Joseph, having to contemplate all authentic questions of identity and destiny.”

On this journey we “embrace the light of Christ that brings clarity, that reveals what is concealed,” and we “embrace the flame of the Holy Spirit that brings both comfort and purification”.



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Bishop's meeting as sister prepares for her fidelity oath

Bishop Philip Egan

On Saturday, I met with Sr. Margaret of the Handmaids of the Holy Child, along with Sr. Veronica and Sr. Rita. The Handmaids live in Reading and help in the parish of St. James and St. William of York.

Sr. Margaret, who worked in Carlisle and in Blackpool before being appointed to the community in Reading, arrived in Reading in September and has been working with Fr. Stan Gibzinski, parish priest of Our Lady of Peace and Blessed Dominic Barberi, who is the priest-chaplain to Reading University.

Sister will take the Oath of Fidelity and make her Profession of Faith at a Mass in the chaplaincy in March before then officially taking up her appointment as Assistant Chaplain.

Please pray for her and for the students of the University.
Right, Bishop Philip and
Sr Margaret



Tommies' Church inspectorate report marks it out as 'outstanding' in every area

Andy Drozdziak

A Birmingham Catholic school is celebrating after being one of the first secondary schools to be awarded outstanding in all categories under stringent new inspection rules.

St Thomas Aquinas secondary school in Kings Norton, Birmingham, known as 'Tommies', was awarded outstanding in their Section 48 inspection in December 2022.

The Catholic Schools Inspectorate focused on three areas: Catholic life and Mission, Collective Worship and Religious Education. St Thomas was graded "outstanding" in all these areas.

Headteacher Chris Martin explained the philosophy behind the school's success in the inspection. "Fundamentally we are committed to unapologetically building the Kingdom of God," he told the *Universe*.

"We celebrate our charism as a school and our mission. When the new framework was published, we started planning for it."

The Catholic Schools Inspectorate and new National Inspection



Chris Martin and students spell out their report success

Framework said in November 2022 that its aim is 'to improve the rigour, consistency, objectivity, oversight, and accountability of inspections.'

Mr Martin praised the attitude and application of St Thomas students and staff. "We were really conscious, post-pandemic, that we wanted to create a sense of joy and belonging among our students which the inspectors certainly noticed. We wanted to give the children, in their busy lives, a sense of peace and prayer, to create moments of stillness," he said.

"The new criteria from September

2022 are a very high bar to meet. Our children have responded and bought into what we are trying to do incredibly well, hence they (the inspectors) pointed to their exemplary behaviour and respect for one another."

Positive comments came from the inspectors in the areas of behaviour, which was said to be 'exemplary', whilst the 'rich tradition of prayer' at the school was praised for being 'diverse and inclusive.' Staff commitment is 'exceptional' and 'the pastoral care of students is excellent.'

Mr Martin explained how the school strives to model the life and learning of St Thomas Aquinas, which is taught through the school's 'Virtues Curriculum.' The living virtues are service, compassion and integrity, and the learning virtues are being intentional, attentive and eloquent.

"They are based on the life of St Thomas Aquinas," Mr Martin explained.

"We tell his story – that he was a committed learner and an incredible person of service. We try to encourage our children to

develop into committed learners, through what we call our virtue curriculum. To communicate what we are about, we use these six virtues, showing the type of person we want our children to grow to be. All those virtues come from a place of faith."

He also noted that students were able to articulate their beliefs effectively and translate this into action, which was noted by the inspectors.

"One of the things during the inspection was a charity day," Mr Martin said. "Our children can talk about the Catholic social teaching, the theology underpinning it. This matters to us because we are people of compassion and we see God in our neighbour, particularly the poor and the vulnerable."

"We are 27 per cent Catholic. Our educational mission of the church is to evangelise. Our children want to hear about Jesus," he said, adding that several children from the school make their confirmation each year.

"It is a framework for their lives. We do try and form them as people of integrity, compassion and service. This glowing report speak for itself."



Look who's back! New head Lisa returns to her first school

A little more than a decade ago, a young teacher was completing her training at a Newcastle primary school, little suspecting that she would one day become its headteacher. Now Lisa Hoey has returned to St Catherine's Catholic Primary School as its newly-appointed head.

"I am privileged to have worked at St Catherine's as a teacher and am extremely honoured to return as headteacher," she said. "It's lovely to be back. I already know some of the children who are in Years 5 and 6, as they were here when I was at the school before."

"I still feel like part of the family, and I've had the most wonderful welcome from the children and from their families too. The children I hadn't met before are now challenging me to learn their names by the end of the week," said Miss Hoey, who joined the school from St Mary's, Forest Hall, where she was deputy headteacher.

The staff at St Catherine's have also given

their new head a warm welcome.

Miss Hoey continued: "One thing we did was a staff team-building day where we painted self-portraits. I already knew some of the staff, but there were plenty of new faces too and it was a good opportunity to get to know each other. The portraits are now up on the wall and the children are enjoying trying to guess who's who."

Miss Hoey's predecessor, Michael Ewing, retired at Christmas having spent 27 years at the school. He did "a wonderful job, creating a well-established school and successfully building up school and community links."

St Catherine's, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year, was recently named a School of Sanctuary, in recognition of its inclusivity and welcoming ethos.

Miss Hoey added: "I've felt extremely welcomed by everyone, and the support I've been offered has been huge. The school has such a strong family feel, and I want to work to continue to build on that."



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We were judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2020. We are blessed to represent a 'close-knit', diverse and talented Catholic community that sees relationships with students and their families as integral to the success of every individual, as well as the belief that there are no limits to a child's potential, irrespective of background.

It is essential that you support the college vision of "Dignity and Excellence" by upholding the college's Catholic ethos and the fundamental belief that students must achieve their full learning potential. Saint John Henry Newman Catholic College is committed to safeguarding and protecting the wellbeing of children and young people and expects all staff to share their commitment. An enhanced DBS is required for all successful applicants

Closing Date: **12 noon, Monday 20th February 2023**

Interviews: **Friday 24th February 2023**

Please email completed applications to: Newmanhr@newmanrc.oldham.sch.uk

School address: Broadway, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 9QY

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Nuncio helps mark the Lunar New Year with Cantonese community

Elizabeth Lam and Dominic Chung

A large congregation of Cantonese Catholics and local parishioners turned out at the church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs in Cambridge on 29th January to warmly welcome His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio To Malta, Archbishop Savio Hon SDB.

Archbishop Savio celebrated a wonderful Pontifical Mass in Cantonese, using a special liturgy for the First Sunday after Lunar New Year.

The regular servers of OLEM under the guidance of Jonathan Wright offered their devotional service at this Mass and Deacon Gianluca Savini proclaimed the Gospel in Cantonese. Jesus' teaching on the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel was proclaimed.

In his homily, the Archbishop analysed the auspicious Chinese character for fortune and blessing (福) and reminded us that as in the Beatitudes, the truly blessed are those who live their lives in faith, and not simply of a worldly being. The character vividly signifies heavenly sacrifices, as depicted in the (ㄋ), but it also refers to upkeeping oneself with a reasonable amount of earthly goods (一口田).

It does not necessarily mean we have to subject ourselves to undue hardship. However, as followers of Jesus Christ, we must never forget the true meaning of fortune and blessing – it must be grounded in hope, love and charity, all in the context of God's Heavenly Kingdom.

He also encouraged those who felt



Archbishop Savio at OLEM in Cambridge with Mgr Provost Eugene Harkness and the Cantonese and parish congregation

displaced and persecuted to entrust themselves to God, and not to be too downtrodden, following Jesus' command to "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven".

After the Mass, the Archbishop was greeted warmly in the church hall by the Rector and parish priest, Mgr. Provost Eugene Harkness. Mgr. Harkness referred to the enrichment to Church life by people of all nationalities who come to settle in

the Diocese of East Anglia over the years. He was delighted that the Hong Konger Cantonese community, in a relatively short time, have shown their resilience, their well-rooted, strong Catholic faith and their willingness to be part of an English parish family.

Integration is of mutual benefit, and he was gratified to see these efforts bearing fruits.

The archbishop then gave a brief account of the life and work of Pope

Benedict XVI. It was as much a personal account as an historic narrative. At times, it was a privilege to gain an insight into their working relationship, and even a glimpse of a mentoring relationship. Archbishop Savio was consecrated a Bishop by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and they had collaborated on many fronts.

Archbishop Savio fondly recounted a warm glow on his head when the late Pope laid his hands on

him during the consecration rite. For a number of years, Archbishop Savio was the Secretary of the then Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

In sharing his many encounters with the late Pope, His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Zen SDB was frequently mentioned. The archbishop and the cardinal are, of course, both Salesians.

The archbishop reminded all that the late Pope never wavered in his love for the Church in China. He referred to the special prayers to Our Lady of Sheshan (a Marian Shrine, where a Basilica in Shanghai is dedicated to Our Lady, Mary Help of Christians), which Pope Benedict XVI had composed in May 2008. The late Pope asked the Universal Church to pray on 24th May each year, the memorial of Mary Help of Christians, for the Church in China.

It was an inspirational day, a fun and celebratory time and above all, a faith-reinforcing day for everyone of OLEM and beyond.

Bishop Peter Collins said: "I am delighted that the diocese of East Anglia has been graced with a visit by the Apostolic Nuncio to Malta and I rejoice to acknowledge that the Catholic parishes of Cambridge have extended a warm welcome to those whose first language is Cantonese.

"Although I could not attend personally, I offered a warm welcome to the Apostolic Nuncio as he prepared for his visit to Cambridge."

Archbishop Bernard Longley was among those who paid a fond farewell to Dr Margaret Jacobi as the Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group held their bi-monthly meeting at Birmingham Central Mosque last month. Margaret, who retired as Rabbi at Birmingham Progressive Synagogue at the end of January, was one of only four remaining founder members of the Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group, having served for 21 years. Archbishop Longley and the rest of the group thanked her for her wide-ranging work to foster and promote good inter-faith relations across the city, particularly her work on climate change, social inclusion and local and international justice. She was presented with a painting of the canals around Gas Street as a memento of her time with the Faith Leaders of Birmingham.



North Shields school welcomes Ukrainian students

A North Shields secondary school has welcomed four Ukrainian students to its community.

St Thomas More Catholic High School has been joined by Maks Denyshchych, Ksenia Zozulia, Valeriia Komorova and Nazar Popovych, all of whom have fled the war in their home country and are currently being hosted by families in the Newcastle area.

Helen Bell, who is responsible for English as an Additional Language (EAL) at St Thomas More, said: "Our first aim was to ensure our Ukrainian students felt relaxed and able to develop the English skills that they already had."

"When they first arrived, we were able to provide them with laptops, and also with buddies who helped them get used to the routines of a large secondary school – we all quickly learned how much Google Translate has improved!"

"They have all settled in well, and this academic year has seen Valeriia and Maks embark on GCSE courses."

Valeriia said of her new school: "All teachers try to help you, they try to understand. For us it's very important, because sometimes we don't understand everything, so they come to translate for us."

Maks agreed: "Here teachers help students who are working hard, here teachers are more kind."



Maks Denyshchych, Ksenia Zozulia, Valeriia Komorova and Nazar Popovych enjoying life at St Thomas More Catholic School

Nazar and Ksenia have also appreciated the support, with Ksenia reporting: "When I first came into this school, I was very nervous, because it's very big and I thought I would get lost."

"But I feel OK – my friends help me, lots of girls come with me to

every lesson and tell me where to sit and what to do."

Nazar added: "This school is very large. Our school in Ukraine is just one big building."

St Thomas More prides itself on its inclusivity and has also welcomed eight students from Hong Kong to

the school over the last two years.

The St Thomas More mission statement states that the school strives 'to follow the example of Jesus Christ in our work, worship and relationships.' It aims to 'be a prayerful community based on Christian values, notably Love,

Justice, Peace, Truth and Tolerance' and to 'provide a secure, welcoming and ordered environment in which individuals learn to value and respect both themselves and others.'

Ms Bell continued: "We are a very inclusive school, with about 30-plus different home languages being spoken by our students and their families, and we actively encourage multilingualism."

"I interview our Year 7 intake to make sure we have the correct language and educational information, and to float the possibility of doing a GCSE or A Level in their home language where appropriate."

Last year's GCSE subjects at St Thomas More included Polish and Spanish, while A Levels were achieved in Greek and Arabic.

This year the school hopes to enter students for GCSE Spanish, Polish, Arabic and Chinese, along with A Level Italian.

"It is clear that these four students from Ukraine have formed a bond based on language and their shared experiences, but that they have also become an integral part of our school," Ms Bell added.

"For as long as they choose to stay, we hope they continue to feel welcome, and, when they return home, we hope they will keep in touch."

Salford's new Mass series to pray for vocations

A call to respond to God's plan with an "open heart" was shared with people across the diocese of Salford at its first vocations Mass.

The Mass took place on Friday 20th January at St Bernard's RC Church in Burnage, and signalled the start of a renewed drive to inspire conversation and prayer around vocations to the priesthood.

Led by Mgr Michael Kujacz, the Mass was an invitation for people to pray for the future of the priesthood in our diocese, whilst also reflecting on their own God-given mission.

In the Gospel, the story of Jesus appointing the twelve apostles was revisited. (Mark 3:13-19). Reflecting on this, Mgr. Kujacz reminded all that, like the apostles, God also calls each one by name, presenting a unique mission. "In the same way as Jesus had chosen the names of his disciples, he gives that honour to each of us by name; and to each of us by name, he gives a certain challenge that each of us must face," he said.

"And, within that call, he will give us various tasks that we must do. He will challenge us to listen to his voice."

"That in itself can be frightening at times because we're not quite sure where that's going to lead us. We're not quite sure if it will turn our life upside down."

"But we're called to place ourselves before him with an open heart and ask that he will strengthen us and give us the grace to complete that journey."

The Mass was the first of a new series of monthly Masses for Vocations to the priesthood, reintroduced across the diocese of Salford this year to help nurture a culture of positivity, prayer, and conversation



Fr Michael Deas

around vocations. Masses will take place across the diocese, visiting a different deanery each month, with the next at 7pm on Friday 10th February at St Brendan's, Harwood.

Fr Michael Deas, Vocations Promoter for the Diocese of Salford, said: "The purpose of these Masses is to get people to become aware of the idea of vocation – in particular vocation to the priesthood, so that everybody can explore and think about the idea, and ask, are you called to do something for God's mission, and could that be priesthood or religious life?"

"But as well, another focus is to pray for vocations, to come together as a community, and to pray in the best way we can."



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Start date: 1st September 2023
Applications: To be submitted by **24th February**
Interviews: Week commencing **6th March**

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- The post would suit a practising Catholic who would oversee the mission and ethos of the school.

The role

The Deputy Head Academic will be accountable to the Headmaster and will work closely with him and the Deputy Head Pastoral to provide strategic leadership for the School. They will play a critical operational and organisational role in the efficient running of St Edward's, and work with the Deputy Head Pastoral and Assistant Heads in driving academic excellence and guiding the outstanding pastoral and enrichment provision so that everyone in the community can thrive and flourish.

About you

You will be highly organised, a strong communicator and effective problem solver, and positive in your approach to leadership. You will be collaborative and keen to build relationships across the school community and command the confidence of pupils, parents and colleagues, and model kindness and warmth in line with the school's Catholic ethos. In addition, you will be an excellent classroom practitioner and effectively engage with pupils and colleagues.

Benefits and Support

- Focus on staff well-being.
- Employee Assistance Programme (legal and tax advice, stress counselling and health information).
- Experienced staff team working together for the benefit of pupils. High staff retention has fostered a welcoming and cohesive community.
- Full induction package, supportive CPD and excellent career progression opportunities.
- Free lunch provided during term time.

- Free on-site parking.
- Positive teaching environment where the staff believe that it is possible for all pupils to develop and grow as learners and young people.
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COMPANION

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



GARDENING



Ah coffee... it's great for refreshing... the garden!

Have you heard the latest gardening tip? It turns out that using your waste coffee grounds is great for your soil. Find out why here...

First, composting with coffee is a great way to make use of something that would otherwise end up in landfill – and coffee grounds helps to add nitrogen to your compost pile.

Composting coffee grounds is as easy as throwing the used coffee grounds onto your compost pile. Used coffee filters can be composted as well.

If you will add used coffee grounds to your compost pile, keep in mind that they are considered green compost material and will need to be balanced with some brown compost material.

But using coffee grounds for gardening

does not end with compost. Many people choose to place coffee grounds straight onto the soil and use it as a fertiliser. The thing to keep in mind is while coffee grounds add nitrogen to your compost, they will not immediately add nitrogen to your soil.

The benefit of using coffee grounds as a fertilizer is that it adds organic material to the soil, which improves drainage, water retention, and aeration in the soil. The used coffee grounds will also help microorganisms beneficial to plant growth thrive as well as attract earthworms.

Many people feel that coffee grounds lower the pH (or raise the acid level) of soil, but while fresh coffee grounds are acidic, used coffee grounds are neutral. If

you rinse your used coffee grounds, they will have a near neutral pH of 6.5 and will not affect the acid levels of the soil.

To use coffee grounds as fertiliser, work the coffee grounds into the soil around your plants. Leftover diluted coffee works well like this too.

Coffee grounds can also be used in your garden for other things. Many gardeners like to use used coffee grounds as a mulch for their plants. Other uses for coffee grounds include using it to keep slugs and snails away from plants. The theory is that the caffeine in the coffee grounds negatively affects these pests and so they avoid soil where the coffee grounds are found.

Some people also claim that coffee grounds on the soil is a cat repellent and

will keep cats from using your flower and veggie beds as a litter box. You can use coffee grounds as worm food too if you do vermicomposting with a worm bin. Worms are very fond of coffee grounds.

Can you use fresh coffee grounds in the garden? Possibly, though it's a waste of a great drink! but what you can do is sprinkle fresh coffee grounds around acid-loving plants like azaleas, hydrangeas, blueberries, and lilies. Many vegetables like slightly acidic soil, but tomatoes typically don't respond well to the addition of coffee grounds. Root crops, like radishes and carrots, on the other hand, respond favourably – especially when mixed with the soil at planting time.

Finally, the use of fresh coffee grounds

are thought to suppress weeds too. They have some allelopathic properties, which adversely affects tomato plants, so use with care! That being said, some fungal pathogens may be suppressed as well. Sprinkling dry, fresh grounds around plants (and on top of soil) helps deter some pests as with used coffee grounds. While it doesn't fully eliminate them, it does seem to help with keeping cats, rabbits, and slugs at bay, minimising their damage in the garden. This is thought to be due to the caffeine content.

Coffee grounds and gardening go together naturally. Whether you are composting with coffee grounds or using used coffee grounds around the yard, coffee can give your garden as much of a pick me up as it does for you!



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HEALTH

Keeping our blood pressure low is at the heart of having good health

Sandra Jones and Matthew Lancaster

More than 7m people in the UK have high blood pressure; it is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes, associated with one in four deaths.

As many as 5.6m people in the UK do not realise they have it as they feel fine, while others show signs such as shortness of breath, persistent headaches, blurred vision or nosebleeds.

So, what is blood pressure and why is it so important?

Your heart is a pump, roughly the size of your fist. Contraction of the heart muscle generates a force, causing pressure to rise in your blood vessels, which drives the flow of blood around your body. This flow works continually to supply oxygen and nutrients to organs through your arteries and removes waste products through your veins too.

Problem pressure

The problems begin when the pressure becomes so high that it begins to cause damage to the blood vessels and increase the workload on the heart.

To measure your blood pressure, a cuff is wrapped around your upper arm and connected to an automatic device, but your doctor may prefer to use a stethoscope and sphygmomanometer. A normal blood pressure in the UK is around 120/70mmHg, measured in millimetres of mercury. The highest number is the systolic pressure, when your heart contracts to push blood through your arteries. The lower number is the diastolic pressure, when your heart relaxes.

But what is considered a healthy range to be in can depend on where in the world you are – in the US, for example, blood pressure was considered to be high if it was over 140/90mmHg but in 2017, the threshold was changed to include readings over 130/80mmHg.

The effect of age

As we get older, many people have an associated increase in blood pressure, clinically referred to as hypertension. Most of us know that as we age our skin loses its stretchy capability and we get wrinkles. Your blood vessels also age and lose their elasticity, which leads to what is often termed “stiffness” of your blood vessels. This is potentially exacerbated by an accumulation of fatty material in the wall of blood vessels over time, known as an atheroma. This



accumulation builds up over years through a process known as atherosclerosis, where small lesions, originating in damaged areas of blood vessels develop into large plaques, which ultimately reduce the internal volume of the vessel internal and restricts blood flow.

This blockage can occur in any blood vessel leading to an acute or chronic problem. If located in the coronary artery, which supplies the heart muscle with oxygen, it will result in a heart attack or chest pain known as angina. However, a blockage of the carotid artery – an artery found in your neck – would reduce blood flow to your brain and cause a stroke.

High readings

In the UK, your blood pressure will be classified in a NHS clinic according to official NICE guidelines. A first reading of 140/90mmHg or higher, will result in a second measurement and a third measurement. If there are substantial differences, the lower reading is recorded. If this is 140/90mmHg or above you will be diagnosed with high blood pressure.

There are also different tiers of high blood pressure. NICE currently states that: ‘Stage 1 hypertension is where a

clinical blood pressure is 140/90mmHg or higher,’ whereas ‘Stage 2 hypertension is where a clinic blood pressure is 160/100mmHg or higher’.

Those with “severe hypertension possess at clinic a systolic blood pressure [that] is 180mmHg or higher, or a diastolic blood pressure at 110mmHg or higher”.

However, the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association, the advisory body in the US, drastically reduced their thresholds for diagnosis; in the US, Stage 1 hypertension is classed as a systolic pressure of 130mmHg or over, and Stage 2 is over 140mmHg.

Considering this adjustment, the US expect more than 46 per cent of the adult population to have high blood pressure, and more specifically for those over the age of 45, the diagnosis is

expected to triple in men and double in women.

Risk factors

The idea of lowering thresholds of high blood pressure in the UK has been mooted. The reason is that high blood pressure is a key factor for predicting your individual risk of a cardiovascular problem.

Some of these risk factors are non-modifiable such as your age, race, gender born, family history and genetics, however others are modifiable such as blood pressure, blood cholesterol, body-mass index (BMI) – calculated from your weight and height – and of course lifestyle choices such as diet, physical activity, smoking/vaping and alcohol consumption.

A clinical study (nicknamed SPRINT –

Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial) took 9,361 people aged over 50 with at least one cardiovascular risk factor or with pre-existing kidney disease, and who used pharmaceutical drugs to lower blood pressure in accordance with new US guidelines.


SPRINT found a 25 per cent relative reduction in the risk of death during the six year follow-up among those people treated intensively to reach the 120mmHg target, compared with those treated to 140mmHg. This led to early termination of the study as it showed an obvious benefit to lowering resting blood pressure to 120mmHg or less, and gave a 30 per cent lower relative risk of cardiovascular problems such as stroke or heart attacks on follow up.

As such there is a clear argument that to maintain a typical blood pressure in the UK (120/70mmHg) should be the target for us all.


Sandra Jones is a Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Science, University of Hull

Matthew Lancaster is an Associate Professor in Biological Sciences, University of Leeds




“Under new proposals, the US expects more than 46 per cent of the adult population to have high blood pressure, for those over the age of 45, the diagnosis is expected to triple in men and double in women”



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FOOD

A taste of North Africa: Tagine chicken with lemon and olives

An interesting name for this dish, which is named after the pot it's cooked in, rather like a Tandoori in Indian cuisine, rather than named for itself. As a result there are loads of dishes called 'tagine' out there. This one can be prepared in an ordinary casserole dish, although a tagine – a large earthenware pot originating from North Africa and capped with a tall, conical-shaped lid – is a visual spectacle for any occasion such as a dinner party. Served with mounds of crusty bread and couscous.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsps olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 2 tps ground paprika
- 2 tps ground turmeric
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 6 chicken breasts cut into large chunks. Leave the skin on if you want, or strip it off if you prefer
- 150g pitted green olives
- 2 preserved lemons, cut into wedges
- pepper to taste
- 50g fresh coriander, chopped

METHOD

1. Heat the oil over a medium heat in a casserole dish
2. Add onions and sauté until soft then stir in all the spices.
3. Add the diced chicken, green olives and preserved lemon and season to taste with pepper.
4. Add 150ml water and simmer over low heat for 1 hour 30 minutes.
5. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.
6. Serve warm with couscous or fresh bread.

You can substitute the breasts for any cut of chicken, including bone-in thighs, drumsticks and legs.

“This one can be prepared in an ordinary casserole dish, although a tagine is a visual spectacle for any occasion such as a dinner party...”



APPLE AND ALMOND CAKE

This is a lovely moist cake that can be served on its own when cold or hot with cream or custard.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 small Royal Gala apples, quartered, cored & thinly sliced
- 3 eggs, at room temperature
- 150g self-raising flour
- 180g butter, at room temperature, chopped
- 80ml milk
- 140g caster sugar
- 100g ground almonds
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- melted butter for greasing

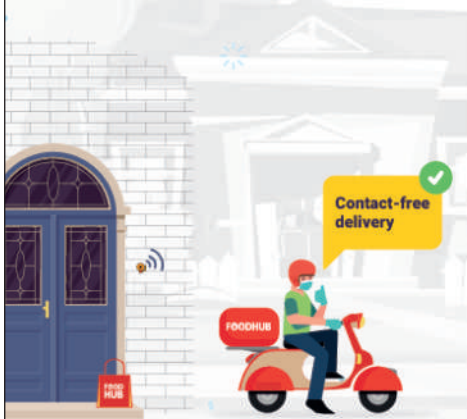
METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C.
2. Brush a 22cm cake tin with melted butter to grease, then line base and side with baking parchment.
3. Beat butter, caster sugar & vanilla in a bowl for 8 mins or till pale and creamy.
4. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.
5. Stir in ground almonds. Add half the flour and half the milk. Stir until well combined. Repeat with the remaining flour and milk.
6. Arrange the apples, slightly overlapping, over the base of the prepared tin. Spoon mixture into the tin and smooth the surface.
7. Bake in the oven for 30–35 mins or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
8. Cool slightly before turning onto a serving plate.


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TRAVEL

Top 5 great reasons to visit Guadalajara

Travellers in search of a destination rich in tradition with exciting culinary, art and nightlife experiences will fall in love with Guadalajara, Mexico. The second-largest city in Mexico is considered the country's cultural capital as the birthplace of iconic mariachi, tequila and charrería (Mexican rodeo).

Whether it's for a quick winter getaway or a longer stay, there's something for everyone. Here are the many attractions that keep tourists coming to Guadalajara, year after year.

1. Immerse yourself in the culture

Guadalajara's historic city centre allows travellers to walk back in time. The impressive buildings include the city's landmark Guadalajara Cathedral, with its distinctive neo-Gothic towers and UNESCO World Heritage Museo Cabanas. Even further back in history is the pre-Hispanic archaeological site of Guachimontones, where travellers can learn about the Teuchitlan society that existed as early as 300 B.C. The site is an easy day trip from Guadalajara and features one of the few circular pyramids in the world.

For an adrenaline rush, attend a charrería competition, which is Mexico's national sport and designated to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The sport is a way of life for charros and escaramuzas as an art form that has been passed down through the generations, demanding constant training and practice to master the skills needed to show off horsemanship.

To feel the passion of locals through music, enjoy mariachi performances at places like El Parian de Tlaquepaque. The roots of mariachi stem from Guadalajara's working class in the 1900s, and today is recognised on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Guadalajara is also known for hosting the annual International Mariachi Festival every

August/September, where the best mariachi bands from around the world gather for performances and a grand parade.

2. View classic and contemporary art

Visit Museo Cabanas, Museo de los Artes and Palacio de Gobierno to view stunning murals by Jose Clemente Orozco, one of Mexico's greatest muralists. Architecture buffs can visit creations from Guadalajara native Luis Barragan, Mexico's Pritzker Prize-winning architect, in places such as Parque Revolucion and Jardines del Bosque.

For those who want to gallery hop,



Colonia Americana is one of the best areas for visiting numerous art galleries with an emphasis on contemporary work. Tlaquepaque and Tonalá are two great areas to find traditional arts and crafts like blown glass, ceramics and pottery. Handicrafts are also available for purchase at San Juan De Dios Mercado,

one of the largest enclosed markets in Mexico, with approximately 2,800 stands featuring ceramic, silver, blown glass, leather and palm leaf crafts.

3. Get your mouth watering

Sample the large variety of Guadalajara's flavours and dishes – from

one-of-a-kind street food and casual restaurants to innovative fine dining.

Unique to the area is the torta ahogada (literally, a 'drowned sandwich'), Guadalajara's signature sandwich and most popular street food. Made with a bread called birote, which can only be found in Jalisco due to climate and altitude, the torta ahogada traditionally includes pork and is covered in a red sauce made of tomatoes and chili peppers.

Another popular Jalisco recipe is birria, a spicy stew made with goat or lamb, cooked slowly with spices and served with minced onions, cilantro and lime.

4. Embrace the nightlife

For local bars and nightclubs featuring cocktails, music and dancing, the Colonia Americana neighbourhood is a local favourite.

5. Explore Tequila

Jalisco is home to nine 'Magical Towns' as designated by Mexico's federal government. One of them is Tequila, the birthplace of the popular spirit. To explore the history and process of tequila making and agave harvesting, the town and its UNESCO World Heritage blue agave fields are the perfect day trip. Travellers can stop at the National Museum of Tequila or Centro Cultural Juan Beckmann Gallardo, enjoy distillery tours and tastings, observe a jimador (agave farmer) demonstration and view the blue ocean of agave via horseback or a tequila train.

Learn more about Guadalajara at <https://visitguadalajara.com/>



Guadalajara Cathedral: A must visit for any Catholic



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Egypt's desire for an afterlife led to mummies receiving a golden touch

FAITH IN HISTORY

Maiken Mosleth King

Archaeologists have discovered a mummy wrapped in gold – here's what it tells us about ancient Egyptian religious beliefs

In January 2023, a group of archaeologists excavating tombs in the ancient necropolis of Saqqara, near Cairo, discovered the mummified remains of a man named Hekashepes, who lived circa 2300BC. Found inside a limestone sarcophagus in a burial shaft, the body and its wrappings are unusually well preserved for the period.

In the 5th century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus described the elaborate way Egyptians preserved their dead. The brain was removed through the nostrils with a hook, while the inner organs were removed through a cut in the abdomen.

The cut was then stitched up and the body rinsed with wine and

spices. The body was left to dry in a natron solution (a substance harvested from dry lake beds and used to absorb moisture) for up to 70 days. After this period, it was carefully wrapped in linen bandages and finally laid to rest inside a coffin.

By the time Herodotus wrote this, Egyptians had been practising mummification for more than two millennia, gradually perfecting the technique through experimentation.

The pre-dynastic mummies of the fourth millennium BC were so well preserved by the dry desert sands – without human intervention – that their tattoos are still visible. The earliest attempts to replicate this outcome by artificial means were less effective so Hekashepes represents an early example of successful preservation.

Why did ancient Egyptians mummify their dead?

Egyptians had long observed that bodies interred in graves without direct contact with the drying sands tended to decompose and sought to prevent this for religious reasons.

Without a physical body to which it could return, they believed the Ka (soul essence) could not partake in food offerings brought to the cemetery and was instead left to roam the world of the living as a harmful spirit.

Mummification techniques were

developed in order to preserve the body for the Ka. The earliest methods, which emerged no later than the time of state unification circa 3100BC, involved wrapping the body with resin-soaked linen bandages. However, as the intestines were left in place, the body eventually decomposed.

The lack of preserved human remains from this early period means that archaeologists have limited data on demographics, population health, life expectancy and diet. For this reason, the discovery of Hekashepes' remains is highly significant.

Scientific examination of the body will provide important insight into the mummification techniques used. Scientific analysis of the skeleton and teeth might also shed light on where Hekashepes grew up, what kind of food he ate, his health, his age and the cause of his death.

How was Hekashepes preserved?

Hekashepes' arms and legs had been individually wrapped to give the body a life-like appearance, and the head was painted with eyes, a mouth and dark hair. More striking, however, are the gold leaves that had been carefully applied to give the illusion of golden skin.

According to Egyptian beliefs, gold was the colour of the gods, and gilding the bodies of the dead

expressed the idea that they acquired divine qualities in the afterlife.

As such, Hekashepes' loved ones could take comfort in knowing that he would be reborn and rejuvenated in the afterlife, enjoying his favourite food and drink with the gods for all eternity.

What does the discovery teach us?

The archaeologists who uncovered Hekashepes' sarcophagus also discovered, in a nearby tomb, a group of well-preserved limestone statues depicting men, women and children. These images, which only the wealthy could afford, were made to accompany burials as "reserve bodies" for the Ka to inhabit.

The beautiful statues, on which paint is still visible, depict men with athletic bodies and reddish-brown skin. The women are curvy and pale. Both sexes are depicted with luscious dark hair.

The images reflect gender roles in which men took on active roles in the public sphere, while women stayed indoors and looked after the home. Some of the statues depict women engaged in domestic tasks like grinding grain and baking bread, demonstrating the importance placed on women's labour in the household.

The statues of married couples

depict the husbands and wives affectionately linking arms. Some are shown with their children standing or kneeling by their feet.

The images of married couples and families emphasise the importance of the family as the basic social unit in ancient Egyptian society. Kinship ties were maintained in death and the living had an obligation to provide food offerings to sustain their relatives in the afterlife.

The Egyptians believed that, in return for the offerings, the dead could be called on for assistance. They could also act as intermediaries between the living and Osiris, the divine ruler of the underworld.

Although it is easy to get the impression that the ancient Egyptians were obsessed with death, the care with which they treated their dead reveals a love for life and a sincere hope of continued existence after death.

The discovery of Hekashepes' body gives us hope that more well-preserved human remains from the period will come to light and increase our understanding of life in the age of the pyramids.

Maiken Mosleth King is a Lecturer in Ancient History, University of Bristol



The ancient necropolis of Saqqara, near Cairo

Positive outlook and thanking God

FAITH IN SPORT

Fr Vlad Felzmann

Life is like a chessboard with black and white squares. Unless we are suffering from depression – and with it anxiety, caused by sub-conscious childhood trauma, grief, the loss of job, status, finance, values, looks, fitness, job-satisfaction, meaning, control and love – we are free to decide on which squares to concentrate. The pessimists – with their glass half-empty – choose to be gloomy and concentrate on the black. The wise, those who want to enjoy our God-given life to the full, aware of what there is in the black, focus on the white.

Given our global climate problems, our dodgy government performances, long Covid in its increasingly myriad guises, optimism – defined as ‘hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something’ – is currently in short supply. However, as Peanuts put it years ago: “Worrying won’t stop the bad stuff from happening. It just stops you from enjoying the good.”

Without a positive outlook, in sport – as in life, of which it is a metaphor – successes are unlikely.

Among athletes, optimism is associated with approach-oriented coping, mental toughness, persistence following failure, and reduced burnout risk.

“It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up,” said George Herman ‘Babe’ Ruth, an American professional baseball player whose career in Major League Baseball spanned 22 seasons, from 1914 through to 1935.

“Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way,” said legendary baseball pitcher Satchel Paige (1906-1982) and inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1971. By many judged to have been one of the greatest pitchers ever to have lived, Paige would never quit, and never let his emotions take over.

When, in October 2015, Jurgen Klopp arrived at Anfield, he asked for supporter optimism. He said: “This would be a really good moment for a restart.” “If someone wants to help Liverpool, they have to change from doubters to believers. “It is important we let the players feel the confidence and the trust of the people. They have to think they can reach the expectations of all the people, of all the fans, of the press.”

When asked what he thought about Jose Mourinho’s ‘Special One’ quip, the self-deprecating Klopp referred to himself as ‘the Normal One’. Normal? Under Klopp, Liverpool has won six major trophies. Since his appointment on 8th October 2015, the silverware includes the Champions League, UEFA Super Cup, FIFA Club World

A monument of New York Yankees legend Babe Ruth at the Monument Park section of the new Yankee Stadium. “It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up,” he said



Cup, Premier League, Carabao Cup and FA Cup.

Once optimism evaporates – even in a great club like Man United, performance and results – as Ole Gunnar Solskjær learned so painfully – take a dive.

As in so much in life, if you really want something, you can acquire optimism. Create some positive mantras, such as “Falling down is not as important as getting up.” Focus on your past successes – no matter how trivial.”

How about that great optimist Michael Jordan who said: “I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” His biography on the official National Basketball Association website states: ‘By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time.’ Born in 1963, he is now worth \$1.6 billion.

Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager from 1996 to 2018, was the longest-serving and most successful in the club’s history. Explaining why his optimistic nature is so important in the role of a footballer manager, he said it’s his job to pick up everybody at the club when things don’t go well.

In 2016, speaking to Roger Bennett in the USA, the Arsenal manager talked at length about his career, his life at Highbury and the Emirates, the ups, downs, trials and tribulations created by being 20 years at one club.

“Honestly, in my job the main quality is to be an optimist,” he said. “If you see the future in a negative way, you commit suicide in my job. You are responsible for the

motivation of all the people around you. You have to pick up everybody inside the club. You should see what the club is like after a big defeat-it’s like a lost war and everybody is on the floor. You have to be an optimist to say: ‘Come on, my friends, we are good enough to pick up and win our next game. We can do this together. Remember how good you are.’ Everybody forgets quickly in life how good he is and how good he can be when things go wrong. I believe my job is to be an optimist.”

Don’t try to predict the future. Surround yourself with positivity –

people who bring light into a room rather than dampen down any passion. Focus on solutions not problems. I believe we Christians have a duty to be cheerful.

Attached to the side of my computer, I have a little piece of paper with Frederick Nietzsche’s famous quote: “I might believe in the redeemer if his followers looked more redeemed.”

It helps me to keep on keeping on with a positive view on those white squares.

Rather than going with our natural instinct, we should try

smiling and laughing more and speaking in a more positive tone. Acting the way we want to feel will help us on your way to becoming an optimist.

Don’t dwell on the past. If bad things have happened, look at tomorrow as exactly what it is-a new day-in which good things can happen, if you let them.

Julian of Norwich, in her Revelations of Divine Love, wrote that Jesus had told her: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well. ‘This was said so tenderly, without blame of any kind toward me or anybody else.”

As I thank friends – which happily include my family – for a present before opening it, I thank God for the new day as I start my daily exercise routine (Sunday, being a day of rest, excluded), before taking my early morning shower. How about you?



“

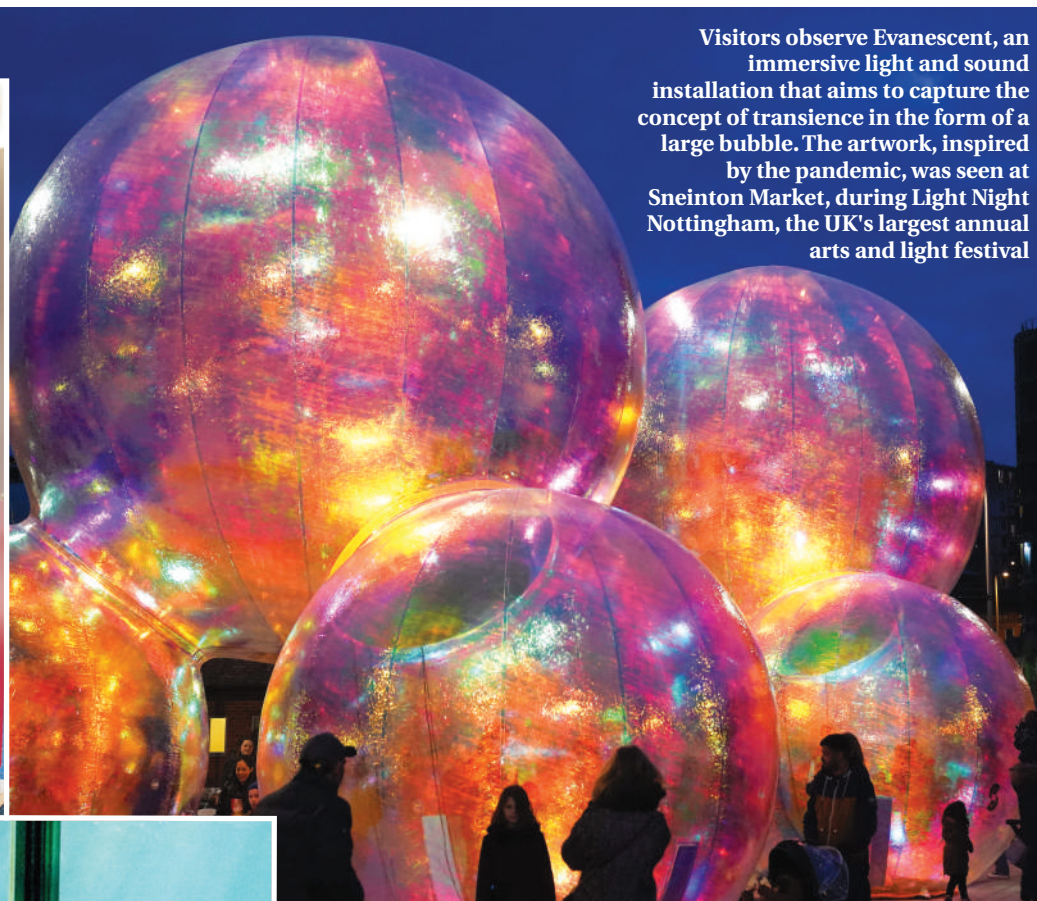
‘In my job the main quality is to be an optimist. You are responsible for the motivation of all the people around you. You have to pick up everybody inside the club’

Arsène Wenger (left)

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days...

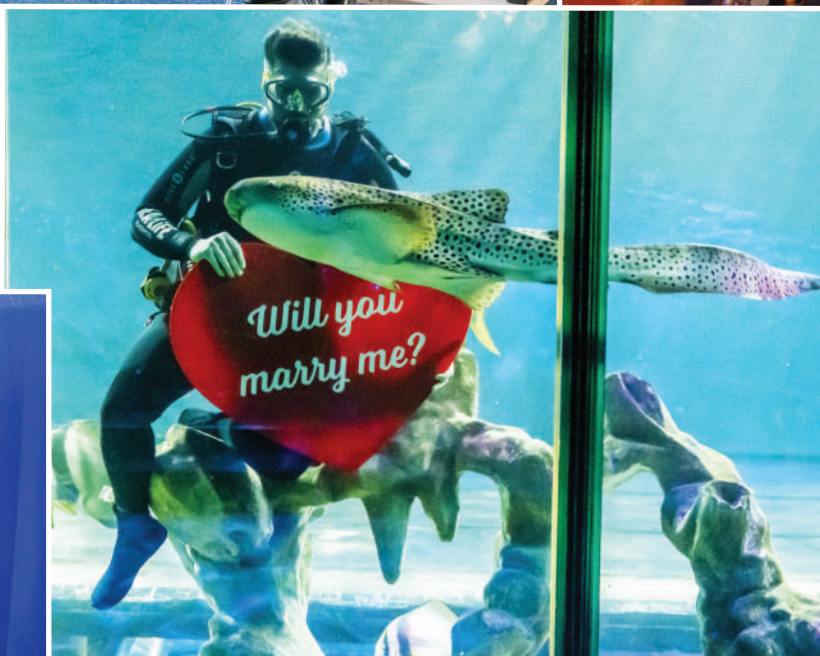


Scottish Chamber Orchestra's principal cellist, Su-a Lee, plays to an audience of construction workers on the first day of work to clear the site near St Andrew Square, Edinburgh, ahead of building the Dunard Centre, the city's new world-class concert hall.



Visitors observe Evanescence, an immersive light and sound installation that aims to capture the concept of transience in the form of a large bubble. The artwork, inspired by the pandemic, was seen at Sneinton Market, during Light Night Nottingham, the UK's largest annual arts and light festival

Right, Michael Bond, from the animal care team, holds a giant red heart bearing the words 'Will You Marry Me' at a dress rehearsal for an forthcoming Valentine's Day proposal, which will take place in the ocean tank at SEA LIFE in Blackpool, Lancashire.



Left, a wheelchair from the Florence Nightingale Museum that was used by the nursing pioneer in her London home after her return from the Crimean War.



Photo issued by Royal Commission for AlUla of what is believed to be the first known reconstruction of an ancient Nabataean woman's face. It will be displayed in Saudi Arabia after years of work from archaeologists, anthropologists and academics.



One of the first sheets of the 1st class definitive stamp featuring King Charles III is unveiled at the Postal Museum in central London, before they enter circulation later this year. The image used of the King, which shows him facing to the left, is an adapted version of the portrait created by Martin Jennings for the Royal Mint for the obverse of the new UK coinage.



Clowns during the Clowns International annual Joseph Grimaldi memorial service at All Saints in Hackney, London.

LITURGICAL
CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, 12th February: 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Ecclus. 15:16–21; Ps. 119:1–2, 4–5, 17–18, 33–34 r. 1; 1 Cor. 2:6–10; Matt. 5:17–37

Monday, 13th February: Gen.4:1–15,25; Ps. 50; Mk.8:11–13

Tuesday, 14th February: Ss Cyril, monk, and Methodius, Bishop, Acts 13:46–49; Ps.117; Lk.10:1–9

Wednesday, 15th February: Gen.8:6–13,20–22; Ps. 116; Mk.8:22–26

Thursday, 16th February: Gen.9:1–13; Ps. 102; Mk.8:27–33

Friday, 17th February: The Seven Founders of the Order of Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gen.11:1–9; Ps. 33; Mk.8:34–9:1

Saturday, 18th February: Heb.11:1–7; Ps.145; Mk.9:2–13

Extraordinary Form Calendar

Extraordinary Form Calendar according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

Sunday, February 12: Sexagesima, 2 Cor. 11:19–33, 12:1–9; Lk. 8: 4–15

Monday, 13th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Tuesday, 14th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Wednesday, 15th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Thursday, 16th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Friday, 17th February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Saturday, 18th February: Celebration of Our Lady, Eccli. 24:14–16; Lk. 11:27–28

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Dear Heart of Jesus

In the past I have asked for many favours, this time I ask for this special one. Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken heart where your Father will see it. Then, in His merciful eyes it will become your favour, not mine.

Amen.

Say prayer for three days, promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail

– AJO



PRAYERS/THANKSGIVING

‘Grateful thanks to St Jude for favours granted’

(MW)



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OUR TEARS...

Two survivors embrace in the wreckage of their homes following the devastating earthquake that ripped through southern Turkey and northern Syria on Monday. Thousands of buildings have been reduced to rubble and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. The death toll makes this the worst 'quake to hit Turkey in nearly a century.

