

Silent prayers lead to another pro-life fine News, pg 5

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'Where's your compassion', PM asked as children vanish

Catholic agencies demand answers as more than 200 young migrants go missing from asylum hotels

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic leaders have joined political leaders and charities in speaking out against the "horrifying" failure of the Government's asylum policy after more than 200 migrant children were reported to have gone "missing" from Home Office hotels.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has been told to end the practice of housing young refugees in hotels, amid calls for an independent inquiry into how the situation arose.

Dr Sophie Cartwright from Catholic refugee charity JRS UK condemned the "dangerous" situation. "Hundreds of children have gone and remain missing from the UK's asylum hotels," Dr Cartwright told the *Universe*. "As a result they are now at risk of exploitation and serious harm. This is truly horrifying. It is likely they have been trafficked."

Catholic peer Lord Alton, speaking in the House of Lords on Tuesday, demanded clarification about the "deplorable" situation, specifically "the fate and the plight of those missing children."

"What were their countries of origin? What safeguarding is now in place at that hotel?" he asked.

For the Government, Lord Murray of Blidworth responded that 88 per cent of the missing youngsters were Albanian nationals, with 13 under the age of 16.

Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick confirmed in the House that more than 4,600 unaccompanied children have been accommodated

in hotels since July 2021, and that "200 children remain missing".

The House was left stunned when Tory MP Jonathan Gullis was heard to shout: "well, they shouldn't have come here illegally", when the issue was being discussed, leading Catholic political commentator Joshua Nichol to blast the Government response.

"That there are some politicians blaming those children instead of reacting with horror and empathy is a sad indictment of the Government's loose relationship with compassion when it comes to immigration," Mr Nichol told the *Universe*. "It seems the Government would rather pass on the other side than stop and listen to those in need."

Dr Cartwright said the issue "represents an utter failure to care for or protect children. It is compelling evidence that the practice of placing lone asylum-seeking children in hotels is dangerous."

"And it follows multiple warnings about this, which have gone unheeded. Change is needed."

Rebecca Stevenson, a trafficking policy expert at Christian charity CARE, also underlined the risks and dangers of trafficking for the unaccompanied children.

"The Home Office has a duty of care to these especially vulnerable children, and they are failing it" she said. "The risks posed by traffickers cannot be overstated. Children could end up in criminal exploitation, selling drugs, or sexual exploitation."

JRS UK has now signed an open letter, co-ordinated by ECPAT UK and the Refugee Council and signed by more than 100 organisations, to Rishi Sunak, urging him to end the practice of housing young refugees who have been separated from their families in Home Office hotels.

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BISHOP SPEAKS OUT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM



Bishop Declan Lang has spoken out against antisemitism, injustice and prejudice as the Church marks Holocaust Memorial Day (today, Friday, 27th January).

The Chair of the Bishop's Conference's International Affairs said: "On Holocaust Memorial Day, we pray for the six million people who were murdered and all those affected by the Holocaust."

"We also remember those who suffered and died in

the genocides that followed," he said.

His comments came as a new report suggested that the number of antisemitic incidents in the UK is increasing, with the situation in British universities a particular concern. 150 antisemitic incidents were reported during 2020/21 and 2021/22, it said, with the National Union of Students labelled 'hostile' to Jewish students.

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Where's your compassion, Sunak asked over missing children

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Instead, they have called for asylum-seeking children to be placed with specialist local authority teams who can protect them and help them settle themselves in the UK.

The letter states: "There is no legal basis for placing children in Home Office hotel accommodation, and almost two years into the operation of the scheme – which is both unlawful and harmful – it is no longer possible to justify the use of hotels as being 'temporary'."

Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council, described the loss of dozens of refugees as "a child protection scandal".

"The Government has a very clear legal duty to protect them but is failing to do so with the equivalent of several classrooms of children seemingly having disappeared into the clutches of those who will exploit and abuse them," he said.

"This is a child protection scandal that councils, the police and ministers must urgently address to ensure every single separated child matters and is kept safe."

Patricia Durr, chief executive of ECPAT UK, called for "an urgent commitment to end this practice immediately".

CAFOD anger as aid budget invested in global fossil fuels

Catholic aid agency CAFOD has told MPs that overseas aid is being spent on fossil fuels, taking away money from humanitarian programmes, including those for women and girls.

Graham Gordon, CAFOD's head of policy, told the International Development Select Committee that, despite promises in 2019 that fossil fuel investments would cease, there were around £700m ongoing direct investments in fossil fuels in 2021 by the UK government's development finance institution, British International Investment (BII).

That relates to 12.6 per cent of the overall portfolio.

BII also admit that they do not know their current exposure to fossil fuels through indirect investments in funds and financial intermediaries, so the real figure will be higher.

This undermines the government's legal commitments to reach net zero emissions and its "number one foreign international priority to tackle climate change".

"If the government is serious about its commitment to preventing global warming of 1.5c, then we must make sure no UK aid is invested in fossil fuels. Because it is currently going in the opposite direction to where we want aid money to go," Graham Gordon said. "It's bad investment and it's taking money away from essential



humanitarian aid, such as education and girls healthcare."

Graham Gordon was invited, alongside other NGOs, to provide expert advice on the Government's investment for development strategy.

The Committee were urged to pressure FCDO to close loopholes in BII's climate change policy and to mandate it to pull out of all legacy fossil fuel investments.

A third of BII's investments go through funds or financial intermediaries, where BII remains an arm's

length investor. The Government's own documents admit that BII has less control over these investments and is unsure where UK aid money goes.

Due to this lack of transparency, CAFOD recommended that FCDO instructs BII to drastically reduce its investments through financial intermediaries and instead redirects them to companies with an explicit focus on creating decent, green jobs in the poorest countries and communities.

Graham Gordon told the committee

that FCDO need to take back control of BII. "FCDO has chosen to operate at arm's length, while BII then operate at arm's length to many of its investments, then they have an even longer arm in terms of where their investments are reaching," he said.

Graham also recommended the FCDO should not give any more aid money to BII, in the light of cuts to the UK overseas aid budget.

"The aid budget's number one priority must be eradicating poverty," he added.

Pray for gunman says priest whose church was shot at

Andy Drozdziak

A priest has asked for prayers for the perpetrators of a shooting which left a seven-year-old girl in a critical condition outside St Aloysius Catholic church in Euston.

Mourners attending a memorial service for a young woman and her mother were shocked when they came under gunfire outside St Aloysius Church in Euston, central London, earlier this month.

As reported in last weeks' *Universe*, St Aloysius parish priest Father Jeremy Trood quickly ushered people in to the church for shelter until the police arrived and escorted them safely out. Some lingered longer in the church. Fr Trood, who was praised by Cardinal Nichols 'for the manner in which he handled this most difficult and tragic incident', reminded his parishioners of the importance of praying for both perpetrators and victims.

"As Christians, confident of the love and mercy of our heavenly Father, we pray for the perpetrators of the shooting that they may recognise the error of their ways and take responsibility for the consequences of their actions," he said.

A seven-year-old girl is in a critical condition after being shot, while a



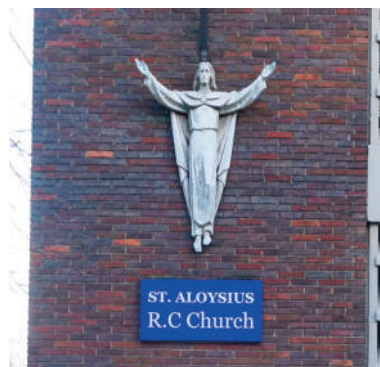
48-year-old woman suffered a potentially life-changing injury.

Another girl, 12, was hit in the leg, and three other women, 21, 41 and 54, were also hurt.

"It happened here in our community. However, we are not helpless, we are not powerless; there is much we can do and we will do. Above all we can pray for all those affected by the shooting, especially those who were injured and remain in hospital," Fr Trood added.

The memorial service was a requiem Mass for Sara Sanchez, 20, and her mother, Fresia Calderon, 50, who both died in November.

Fr Trood paid tribute both to the local community and to the "deep



roots of faith" in the parish.

"Our local community here in Somers Town is both strong and resilient-that has not changed," he said.

"We have faced challenges in the past and will undoubtedly face new challenges in the future. We remember that this was a single incident, shocking though it is. We are indeed fortunate to live in peace in such a diverse and vibrant part of London. As a local community, as a Catholic parish with deep roots, secure in our faith, we know what we will do: keep calm and carry on."

The Metropolitan Police said a 22-year-old man, who was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, has been bailed pending further inquiries.

Archbishop hit by criticism over same-sex blessings

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said he is getting "flak" from opponents of the Church of England's decision to allow the blessing of same-sex partnerships.

Justin Welby called the move a "huge step", although some criticised the Church for maintaining a ban on clergy marrying same-sex couples.

The plans, to be outlined to the General Synod, will allow same-sex couples to come to Anglican churches after a legal marriage ceremony for services including prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and blessings.

The Archbishop spoke to protesters including Peter Tatchell and Jayne Ozanne who had gathered outside his official London residence of Lambeth Palace asking for same-sex couples to be allowed to marry in church.

While he strongly welcomed the Church's decision, he has said that he will not personally carry blessings out due to his "pastoral responsibility for the whole communion".

He admitted to Sky News that he was in an uncomfortable position over his stance.

"It's not comfortable. But, you know, the Church is deeply divided over this issue. Every global Church is.

"And the Church in this country is, in every denomination. We have to face that reality – it's no use wishing the world was other than it is."

He told the programme that the decision had been "controversial".

"I'm getting equal amount of flak from the other side about having compromised traditional Christian standards."



Archbishop Justin Welby (centre) speaks with LGBT+ campaigners Peter Tatchell (left) and Jayne Ozanne (right) outside Lambeth Palace

Photo: Yui Mok

Bishop calls for Catholics to pause and reflect on Holocaust memorial

Andy Drozdziak

The Church's lead bishop on foreign affairs has spoken out "against anti-semitism, injustice and prejudice" on this year's Holocaust Memorial Day.

Bishop Declan Lang, Chair of the Bishop's Conference's International Affairs department, is encouraging Catholics to pause on Holocaust Memorial Day, (today, 27th January), to remember the millions who were murdered and pray that "love will triumph over evil."

"On Holocaust Memorial Day, we pray for the six million people who were murdered and all those affected by the Holocaust. We also remember those who suffered and died in the genocides that followed," he said.

Bishop Lang's call comes as a recent Community Security Trust (CST) report suggested that the number of antisemitic incidents at British universities has increased over the past two academic years.

The report said it had received 150 reports of antisemitic incidents affecting Jewish students, academics, university staff and student bodies across the UK during 2020/21 and 2021/22.



One of the anti-semitism billboards which have been placed in nine UK cities for a fortnight running up to and including Holocaust Memorial Day

people perpetrating evil acts, while so many ordinary people stood by. It was also the bravery and selflessness of ordinary people that helped to rescue others," he said.

"Each one of us has the capacity for both immense good and for evil. As we take a moment to pause from our daily lives, let us reflect upon our own responsibility to prevent future genocides and consider how we view marginalised people in our communities. We commit ourselves to stand against antisemitism, injustice and prejudice wherever it might be found."

"Together we remember the Holocaust and pray that love will triumph over evil."

The first UK billboard advert campaign against antisemitism has been launched by a leading Jewish charity to coincide with this year's Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism has put up posters in nine cities which show Jewish Britons alongside the words: "Why am I 500% more likely to suffer hate crime?"

The posters will remain in the nine cities for two weeks, including for Holocaust Memorial Day.

In addition, an independent investigation recently revealed that Jewish students have faced a "hostile" culture within the National Union of Students.

CST chief executive Mark Gardner said: "Antisemitism at our universities has been a running sore for decades

and these new findings show that far too many Jewish students suffer hatred and bias.

"Students' unions and university authorities need to better support their Jewish students, taking concerns seriously and acting against anti-semitism, whether it comes from stu-

dents or academics."

Bishop Lang spoke about this year's theme, 'Ordinary People', and the importance of "our own responsibility in preventing future genocides."

"This year's theme is Ordinary People, recognising that it was ordinary people who fell victim to ordinary



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In brief**Bots to decide who gets seen by doctors**

'Dr Robot' will decide who gets seen first as the NHS bids to clear waiting lists, said *The Telegraph*.

The NHS is reportedly planning to use automation in about 100 areas, with pilot schemes using automated calls to assess patients waiting for operations and prioritise their urgency.

There are concerns about how the elderly will react to automated calls and critics also noted that 1,800 patients were accidentally wiped from lists in one scheme at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospital NHS Trust because the robot's "memory capacity" became full.

North suffers most underinvestment

The north of England would rank second worst for investment if it were an OECD country, according to a thinktank.

Researchers at IPPR North, the northern branch of the influential Institute for Public Policy Research, said only Greece has lower levels of public and private investment in a ranking of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

The news comes a week after the government's second round of levelling up funding sparked accusations of favouritism towards Conservative seats.

Latest excess deaths figure up again

Official data shows that excess deaths have reached their highest number since the second wave of the pandemic, with 17,381 people dying in England and Wales in the week ending 13th January.

The Telegraph noted that the five-year pre-pandemic average for deaths was 14,544, meaning there were 2,837 excess deaths last week alone.

Fewer than five per cent of the excess deaths were from Covid, with high flu rates, record NHS waiting lists for routine operations, ambulance and A&E delays, and unmet needs from the pandemic year also blamed.

Pension age could be raised sooner

The Government is planning to raise the age at which people can claim their state pension sooner than initially planned.

The present threshold of 66 was due to be raised to 68 in 2046.

However, ministers are looking at bringing forward the change to as early as 2035, affecting those who are 54 and under today.

Experts said bringing the move forward would spare the taxpayer about £10bn but sceptics said it would disrupt the plans of those already planning for retirement.

Survey gives massive 'no' to assisted suicide plans

88 per cent reject plans – with most respondents asking for palliative care to be greatly improved

The Catholic Union has warned that introducing assisted suicide could lead to health and social care becoming 'no go' areas for Catholics and other people of faith.

The comments come as the consultation stage of a Parliamentary inquiry into the possible introduction of assisted suicide in England and Wales comes to an end.

Following the decision from the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee to launch an inquiry into assisted suicide at the end of last year, the Catholic Union ran an online survey of their members and supporters to ask for their views.

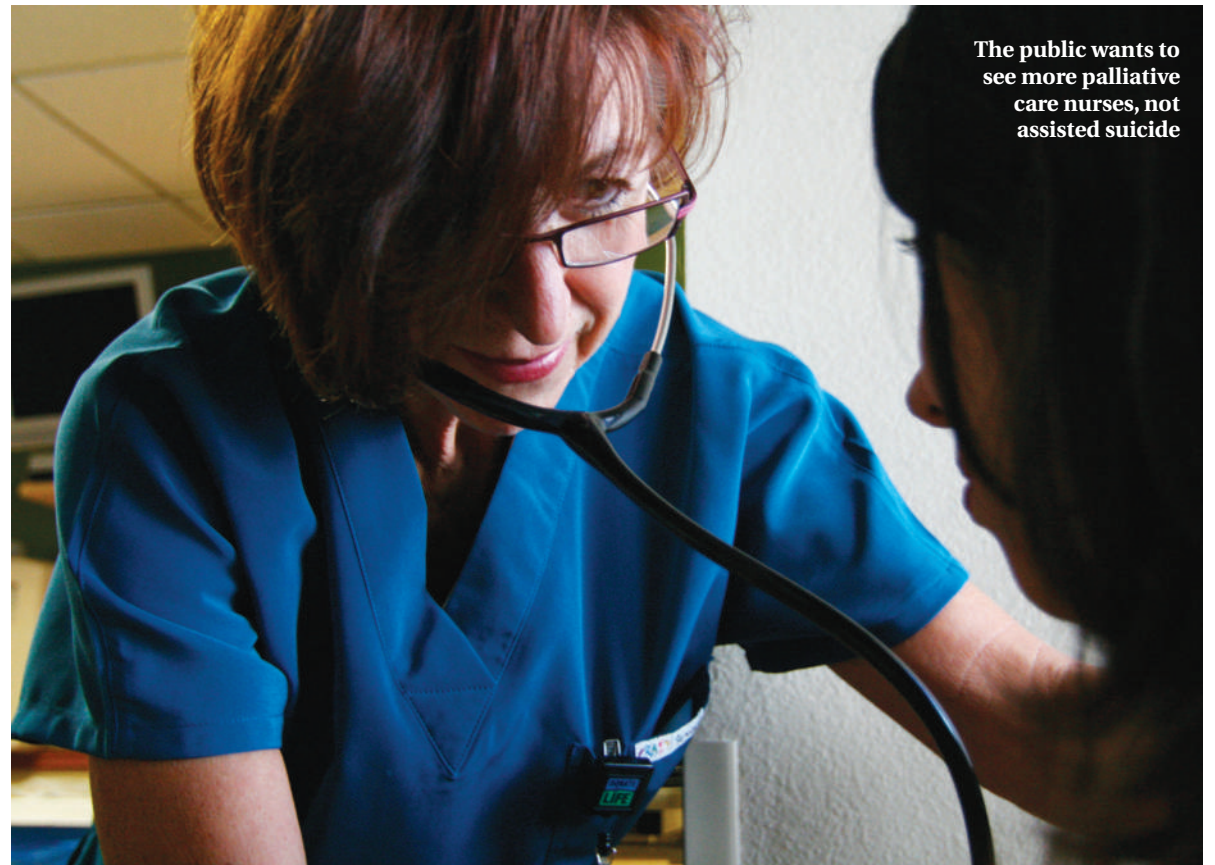
The results from the survey, published on 20th January, reveal that 88 per cent of responders thought that introducing assisted suicide would make it harder for Catholics and other people of faith to enter the medical profession.

The results also reveal the need to give greater support to people nearing the end of their lives, with only 13 per cent saying there is enough palliative care in England and Wales.

Catholic Union Vice President Baroness Hollins reflected on the "worrying" statistics.

"The results are extremely worrying and reflect what many of us in the medical professional have feared for a long time; that assisted suicide could lead to health and social care becoming 'no go' areas for Catholics and others of faith," she said.

"This could make existing staff shortages in these areas even worse



The public wants to see more palliative care nurses, not assisted suicide

and deprive the profession of talented doctors and nurses of the future."

The survey found that 88 per cent of responders said the law should not be changed or should be made tighter to act as a deterrent against assisted suicide in England and Wales.

Only five per cent agreed with changing the law to make seeking assisting suicide lawful, while only four per cent strongly agreed that assisted suicide should be a priority at the moment for MPs.

The Catholic Union used the results from the survey as the basis of their

written evidence to the Committee's inquiry. The Committee is expected to take oral evidence before producing a report and recommendations to Government later in the year.

The Catholic Union recently took part in a consultation in Jersey on plans to introduce assisted suicide on the island, and will be taking part in another consultation later this month on a possible change in the law on the Isle of Man.

Baroness Hollins commended the Catholic Union for taking up the issue in Parliament and underlined the im-

portance of "good quality palliative care."

"The debate around assisted suicide must be focused on the best way to care for those who are terminally ill," she said. "Good quality palliative care is essential, and this was recognised in the 2022 Health and Care Act. Until now in too many places and too many times this has been lacking. There is clearly a widespread desire to see palliative care improved.

"That is where we need to start. I'm pleased the Catholic Union is taking up this matter in Parliament."

Dioceses join child poverty campaign

Caritas Salford and Caritas Shrewsbury have joined the national End Child Poverty Coalition, as the cost-of-living crisis sees an increased demand for services to support families and young people locally.

The charities, which support people experiencing poverty, isolation, disadvantage and homelessness across the Dioceses of Salford and Shrewsbury, are joining the coalition to both increase awareness and to enable and encourage positive action to support children and young people in need.

Ben Gilchrist, CEO of Caritas Shrewsbury, explained the new move. "Our organisations work closely with families, young people, children and individuals and we see first-hand the huge impact poverty has on them.

"We've been calling for change for many years, and taking tangible action to support people – we want to work alongside families to help them trans-



form their own lives with dignity."

"Being part of the End Child Poverty Coalition means we're able to continue doing that, while being part of a much larger group – our voice can be heard alongside others who are just as passionate about driving forward real change, and hopefully we can have a greater impact together too."

The End Child Poverty Coalition is an alliance of around 80 organisations from civic society, including children's

charities, child welfare organisations, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and others. They are all united in working towards a vision of the UK being free of child poverty.

Patrick O'Dowd, director of Caritas Salford, said the importance of taking action to address the impact of the current crisis on children could not be stressed enough.

"With the cost-of-living crisis continuing to hit communities across our area – and indeed the UK – unbelievably hard, it's more important than ever that action is taken," he said.

"We are seeing every day the huge impact that poverty is having on children, whether that's the family who have to choose whether to have a meal or heat their home; or the parent who isn't able to buy shampoo or soap for their child to wash with.

"This simply shouldn't be happening in 2023 – or ever – and every one of

us has a responsibility to both call for immediate change and take action to support people in our communities ourselves too."

"We're proud to have joined the End Child Poverty Coalition and are looking forward to campaigning alongside other organisations across the UK to achieve real change together."

The Caritas Salford team has developed a resource to support parish communities that may wish to help people during the cost-of-living crisis: Called Cost of Living - Caritas Diocese of Salford it can be found at www.caritassalford.org.uk

To find out more about Caritas Shrewsbury, visit www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk

To find out more about the End Child Poverty Coalition, visit www.endchildpoverty.org.uk

Army veteran fined for saying silent prayers outside abortion clinic

‘Adam could now face prosecution for holding thoughts, and lifting those thoughts to God in prayer, within a censorship zone’

Bournemouth council officials have fined a man for standing motionless and praying near an abortion facility.

Adam Smith-Connor, an army veteran, was silently praying in a “censorship zone”, with his back to the clinic, mindful of the privacy of staff and attendees of the abortion facility, when he was approached by ‘community safety accredited officers’.

When asked what he was doing, Smith-Connor told the officers that he was “praying for my son, who is deceased”.

The council stated that the fine is based on the statement.

A censorship zone or “buffer zone” has been enforced since 13th October 2022 and was implemented by local authorities through a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO).

PSPO criminalise engaging in ‘an act’ or even ‘attempted act’ of ‘approval/disapproval with respect to issues related to abortion services ... including graphic,

verbal or written means, prayer or counselling’ within the area surrounding an abortion facility.

Smith-Connor’s arrest comes after charity volunteer, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, was arrested for silently praying near an abortion facility in Birmingham in December 2022.

Vaughan-Spruce was searched, interrogated, arrested and charged for breaking a Public Space Protection Order censorship zone (or “buffer zone”) four times.

Vaughan-Spruce condemned the arrest. “It’s abhorrently wrong that I was searched, arrested, interrogated by police and charged simply for praying in the privacy of my own mind,” she said at the time.

Alliance Defending Freedom UK (ADFUK) is supporting Smith-Connor to challenge his fine.

“Nobody should be criminalised for what they believe – especially not when they express that belief silently, in the privacy of their own minds,” Jeremiah Igunnubole, Legal Counsel for ADF UK, said.

“Just like in the case of Isabel Vaughan-Spruce last month, Adam could now face prosecution for holding thoughts, and lifting those thoughts to God in prayer, within a censorship zone.

“The rapid proliferation of orders criminalising volunteers such as Adam and Isabel

should be a wake up call to all those who value freedom of expression – even freedom of thought – no matter their views on abortion.”

In response to receiving the fine, Smith-Connor explained the background to the fine. “22 years ago I drove my ex-girlfriend to a facility and paid for her to have an abortion. It was a pivotal moment in my life,” he said.

“The consequences of my actions that day came back to grieve my years later, when I realised I had lost my son Jacob to an abortion I had paid for. Recently, I stood outside a similar facility and prayed to God for my son Jacob, for other babies who have lost their lives to abortion, for their grieving families, and for abortion clinic staff.”

“I would never have imagined being in a position to risk a criminal record for praying silently. In the past, I assisted with abortions in hospital as part of my army medical training, but now I pray for those who perform abortions because I realise how harmful abortion is to women and families, and that every single human life is valuable – no matter how small.

“Most of all, I’m moved to pray because of what happened to my son, Jacob.”

Caroline Farrow - see pg 8



Adam Smith-Connor was praying silently when he was charged

Charity underlines vital role of prison visits

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic prison charity Pact has underlined the importance of ensuring prison visits are as relaxed as possible after the Ministry of Justice announced that dozens of prisons will be fitted with new scanners for visitors.

The scanners are being introduced as an attempt to stop drugs, phones and other contraband entering prisons at the gates of the 44 “most challenging” prisons.

But the head of Pact, Andy Keen-Downs, said it was vital that visits to prisons do not become intimidating as a result of the new scanners.

“We agree that security must be paramount and we fully support proportionate measures to keep drugs and weapons out of prison,” Mr Keen-Downs said.

“However, we must ensure that visitors aren’t put off by an intimidating environment. People who receive visits during their time in prison are nearly 40 per cent less likely to reoffend. We’ll be working with the prison service to make sure that these new measures are implemented sensitively.”

In other Pact news, Pact’s Visiting Mum project, which supports Welsh mothers in prison to maintain positive relationships with their children, has had further funding confirmed.

Between June 2021 and August 2022,



Visiting Mum supported 68 Welsh women and their families. The project is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Both are contributing £90,000 in 2023-24 to ensure many more families can benefit from the scheme.

Nadia Emblin, Head of Service Delivery and Development in Wales and Western England, confirmed the scheme’s “positive impact” and welcomed the funds.

“Our evaluation shows the positive impact of this kind of holistic support on the mental health and wellbeing of the whole family. It is also vital in reducing reoffending,” she said.

“We are hugely grateful to our partners at Change Grow Live, and to the Welsh Government and HMPPS for ensuring the scheme can continue. One mum recently told us that it offered, “a light in the dark” for her during her sentence, and we hope that we can provide this hope for many more women in the future.”

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good



— COMMENT — Failings at the Probation Service puts public at risk

For the second time in a week, the Probation Service has been found seriously wanting in the supervision of violent criminals who have gone on to kill.

Justin Russell, the Chief Inspector of Probation, reported how a man with a history of violence had been wrongly assessed as “medium risk” by staff. Jordan McSweeney murdered Zara Aleena in June last year, nine days after his release on licence from prison. He should not have been on the streets.

Neither should Damien Bendall, a psychopath who killed his partner and three children in September 2021. He had been given a 24-month suspended sentence for arson and was under the supervision of the Probation Service. The Chief Inspector said the case was handled to an “unacceptable standard” and “critical opportunities” to correct errors were missed.

It is not just probation staff who are culpable, but also the entire criminal justice system. Why was Bendall, who had a string of convictions for violence, at large if he had been found guilty of arson? Why wasn't he sent to prison?

The court was apparently given a “very poor” probation report which “significantly misrepresented” the risk posed by Bendall, but it must have been apparent from looking at his record that he should have been put away. McSweeney had 28 previous convictions for 69 separate offences and could not by any measure be considered a medium risk.

Pressure to relieve prison overcrowding by releasing inmates early, or giving them the benefit of the doubt, can only be justified if they are properly supervised. Otherwise, they should be kept behind bars where they belong.

Refusing the nurses' pay deal won't end inflation problem

POLITICS

Paul Whiteley

The UK government has not yet resolved the thorny issue of on-going public sector pay disputes, despite the fact that these workers are suffering much more from the cost of living crisis than their private sector counterparts. The government is worried about wage increases pushing up inflation that is already sky-high, but recent data shows that giving these workers more pay is unlikely to have that effect.

In the year to October 2022, private sector pay increased by 6.8 per cent compared with only a 2.9 per cent increase for the public sector. This disparity has led to widespread industrial action in the UK in recent months. On a longer-term basis, a growing pay gap is contributing to acute labour shortages, which is seriously affecting the delivery of public services such as healthcare and education.

Voters largely support public sector workers in these disputes. A recent poll found that the 49 per cent of the public blamed the government for the strikes, and only 20 per cent blamed the trade unions. Another poll showed 55 per cent of the public support the current teachers' pay dispute – up from 33 per cent in a similar poll a decade ago. Voters seem to see years of falling real wages for public sector workers as a problem, even if the government is not acting to raise them.

So why is the government refusing to offer a better pay deal to these workers? It argues that it is merely following the advice of the various pay review bodies which make recommendations on pay in the public sector. However, these bodies are not independent of government. For example, when the government imposed a pay freeze for workers earning more than £21,000 a year in 2011 and 2012, these bodies followed this lead by making no



recommendations on pay for staff on higher salaries.

Since industrial action first started to gather speed last year, concerns have been raised about a wage-price spiral causing entrenched inflation. This happens when rising prices prompt increased pay settlements, which in turn produce further price rises, wage increases, and so on. It happened in the UK in the 1970s when, similar to now, the rate of unemployment was very low.

Indeed, the unemployment rate is key to this discussion. In the 1950s, a New Zealand economist called A.W. Phillips published research showing an inverse relationship between wage inflation and unemployment in the UK that had existed for nearly a century, from 1861 to 1957. During this period when unemployment was low, wage inflation was high, and vice versa. Since then the Phillips curve, as it has become known, has been widely used to measure price inflation.

If this relationship still holds, it would mean that the current low unemployment level of 3.7 per cent could trigger a wage-price spiral, particularly if public sector pay is increased. So it could be argued that the government's refusal to raise

public sector pay is a strategy to control inflation.

But the problem with this idea is that the Phillips curve no longer works in Britain. Using monthly data over the period from 2001 to 2022, it shows the relationship between inflation, as measured by changes in the consumer price index, and the unemployment rate. Below an unemployment rate of about 4 per cent, there appears to be a steep negative relationship between joblessness and inflation, in line with the original Phillips analysis.

But although this is happening right now – inflation is very high – it is the product of supply-side influences, not wage inflation. The UK (and many other countries) has been plagued by supply-side inflation in recent years due to the effects of Brexit, the pandemic and the war in the Ukraine on the supply of goods and services. Recent rises in energy costs in particular have boosted inflation over the past year.

At levels of between about 4 and 7 per cent unemployment, there is essentially no relationship between inflation and unemployment. The latter is expected to rise in 2023 as recession conditions set in, which means that raising wages in this

situation will not affect inflation.

When unemployment exceeds 7 per cent, inflation appears to increase alongside it, producing what is often described as ‘stagflation’. This occurs when prices and joblessness increase together – a difficult combination for any economy to recover from, since it produces low growth.

This indicates that reasonable pay settlements in the public sector to compensate for falling real wages over the years could easily solve the present impasse without triggering a wage-price spiral.

UK inflation outlook

This finding is reinforced by the widespread expectation that inflation has now peaked and will start to fall over the next few months. Indeed, the OECD is currently forecasting that inflation will fall quite rapidly across the world.

And for Britain in particular, it's also worth remembering that public sector employment is only a relatively small percentage of total employment, further reducing the prospects for a wage-price spiral caused by public sector pay rises. Private sector employment in the UK exceeded 82 per cent of the workforce in 2022, implying that “catch-up” wage settlements to compensate for declining real wages in the public sector would have much less impact on total labour costs than they would in the private sector.

All-in-all, the current government intransigence on public sector pay looks like it's based on both bad economics and bad politics. The former because there is little prospect of wage inflation at the same time as there is a serious labour shortage in the public sector. The latter because many voters think the government is basically hostile to the public sector.

This view could strengthen as the general election approaches. With the state of the NHS, in particular, set to loom large in voters' minds, this does not seem like a winning strategy.

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St Joseph's Matlock is latest in SVP's 'warm space' initiative

The St Vincent de Paul Society is working hard to help those who need it most during the toughest, and coldest months of the year, including setting up 'warm spaces' in churches across the country.

The latest one to open its doors is at St Joseph's church in Matlock.

SVP has worked with the parish priest, Fr Robbie O'Callaghan, in transforming the community hub into a warm space for those struggling with spiralling food and fuel costs.

St Joseph's church hall, which is usually used as an overspill area for Easter and Christmas Masses, is an ideal site to open a Warm Space, as it is accessible for everyone, with a canteen, toilets and large open spaces that can be utilised for workshops and events.

Lance Philpott, head of membership at the SVP, who is also a member of the St Joseph's Conference, said: "We are open all day, 9am until 5pm. We offer a very warm welcome to everyone who has come to use the warmth of the hall. We offer refreshments all day such as tea, coffee, biscuits, cakes, soup, warm bread."

Alongside offering a warm and welcome place, books, magazines and jigsaws are also available together with having numerous toys for children to use and play with. Tables are



scattered around the room to encourage people to sit and have a conversation and socialise with one another.

"There is enough space for a children's play area, we have a toilet with children's facilities, and we have plugs all around the room which people can use," Lance continues.

"People who are struggling can come and use what we have. We also have a pantry offering food and non-food goods. We have products with a long shelf life and we've recognised that people also need products like

pet food, cleaning materials and female hygiene products."

This project was made possible via the SVP's Cost of Living Support Fund and a grant from the local Council. Thanks to this, the project now has enough funding to stay open until March.

Mayor of Matlock Paul Cruise commended the initiative, saying that he was 'really pleased' and adding his thanks to 'volunteers who are giving their time to ensure this important provision is in place for the community.'

Compensation claims down in UK

"Compensation culture" appears to be on the decline in Britain as nearly half of the public shuns the idea of making a claim, reported *The Times*. The number of claims for road traffic incidents, accidents or illness at work, slips, trips or falls in public places and medical negligence was down more than 40 per cent last year.

A study found that the decline was linked to the stigma of having made a claim, deterred by a fear that claims take too long, or held a fear of lawyers or the legal system.

Pub boss warns of £27.50 pint

A brewery and pub chain boss has said that a pint of Punk IPA beer would cost £27.50 if prices were put up in line with rocketing energy bills.

James Watt, CEO of BrewDog, also claimed that a burger and fries would set back diners "about £48.75" if prices matched those of rising energy costs.

Calling for Jeremy Hunt to cut business rates, reduce tax and give a year long VAT holiday to hospitality, he said the chancellor would "make the situation worse when he rows back support for business energy bills from April".

Brits move summer holidays to spring

British families are reacting to the cost of living crisis by booking holidays in spring. The travel industry said it has enjoyed an "incredible start to the year", with bookings surpassing pre-Covid levels, but that there has been a change in when people book for.

"Spring is fast becoming the new summer" said *The Times*, as most bookings made this month were for trips departing in less than eight weeks or for the Easter holidays, for which demand has risen by 47 per cent. Fears of being caught up in summer queues is also behind the bookings.

Coronation to focus on volunteering

"Diversity, communities and volunteering" will be at the heart of King Charles' coronation, a number of newspapers have reported. Over three days of "joyful celebrations" in May, the King will highlight the importance of public service and community building.

The coronation weekend will include street parties, drone displays and a concert at Windsor Castle featuring "global music icons". Britons will be encouraged to spend a day volunteering in their communities to mark the coronation.

Kildare leads world on Pause for Peace

Into Kildare, the Tourism Board for County Kildare in Ireland and Solas Bhríde Spirituality Centre, and Hermitages, have jointly launched a global 'Pause for Peace' movement.

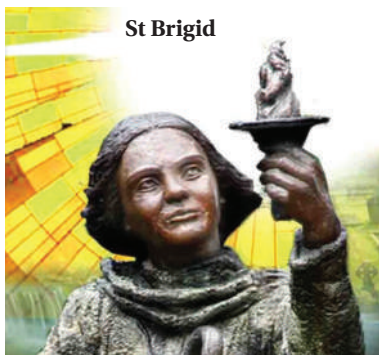
Pause for Peace will see the residents of County Kildare calling on people all around the world to stop for a minute's silence at 12 noon (local time) on St Brigid's day, 1st February 2023.

Solas Bhríde is a Christian Spirituality centre with a focus on Saint Brigid of Kildare. The vision of the centre is to unfold the legacy of Saint Brigid and its relevance for the world today.

Sr Rita Minehan of Solas Bhríde said the minute's silence was hugely significant. "This movement for a Pause for Peace sets the scene for marking the new national holiday in honour of Saint Brigid on 6th February. It reflects a spiritual underpinning to the holiday and is consonant with the value of peace which Brigid stood for in her time," she said.

"By pausing for peace, we send out a message that we actively oppose warfare and the proliferation of arms, which wreak havoc on human beings as well as on the natural world. This movement aims to awaken and build a spirit of global solidarity in our search for peace."

It would be a fitting tribute to Saint Brigid and to all our ancestors if it were marked with a Pause for Peace



on her feast-day, February 1st each year. Three ambassadors for Pause for Peace have been announced: Ewan Morris, Lily Tyrrell Kenny, Ben Ryan, senior students from Kildare Town Community School.

It is the first public holiday named for a woman and will take place each year on the first Monday in February.

Already the news has started to spread around the world about the Pause for Peace campaign through the Irish diaspora living abroad, through Tourism Ireland and through the international Solas Bhríde network. New Zealand will be first to start the Pause for Peace movement when they will have a minute's silence for peace at 12 noon, their time on 1st February.

A minute's silence for peace will then take place all around the globe to form part of the rolling Pause for Peace movement.



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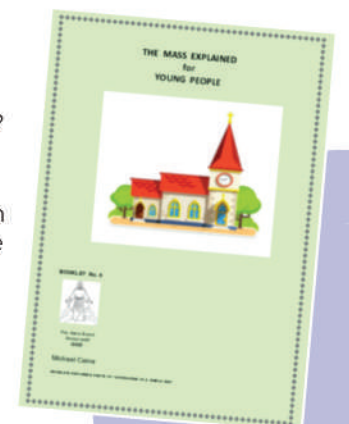
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Ecumenism and justice

Sir John Battle



Some will remember 1963 as the year of the deep snow winter. At that time I was in a junior seminary where we were excited by the documents arriving wet off a Gestetner machine from the Second Vatican Council, which had been launched by Pope St John XXIII to “open the windows of the Church and let in the Holy Spirit.”

The aim was basically to get the Church to “turn outwards”. Of the 16 final documents, Fr Austin Flannery rated the most significant *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, *The Decree on Ecumenism*, and the *Decree on Liturgy*.

Gaudium et Spes became the initiator of Diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions, and *Ecumenism* led to dialogue with other Christian Churches, but it was the one focused on *Liturgy*, in particular translating the Mass from Latin into difficult English, that attracted public attention. *Gaudium et Spes* opens with the words ‘The joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of this age especially those who are poor or in anyway afflicted are the joys and hopes the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ’. But it is actually the early paragraphs that spells this out: ‘Before the whole world let all Christians profess their faith in God... let them bear witness to our common hope.’

‘Co-operation among all Christians vividly expresses the bond which already unites them... such co-operation which has already begun in many countries should be ever increasingly developed, particularly in regions where social and technical evolution is taking place. It should contribute to a just appreciation of the dignity of the human person, the promotion of the blessings of peace, the application of Gospel principles to social life. Christians should work together in the use of every possible means to relieve the afflictions of our times such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty lack of housing and unequal distribution of wealth.’

Perhaps we have kept the document’s separate and left the work of ecumenism to high level theological exchanges and low level parochial social exchanges.

This week of ‘prayer for Christian unity should prompt us to work much closer together in practice and prayer for justice and peace. We need to celebrate the integration of the two documents. After all, it takes 100 years to implement a Council. We are just over half way there.

Adam is another modern martyr to the scourge of ‘prayer thought police’

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



Yet another person in the UK is guilty of a criminal offence for thinking the wrong thoughts in the wrong place. This time it’s the turn of army veteran Adam Smith-Cooper who was clocked by council officials as he stood silently on the street praying for his deceased unborn son.

This time the offence took place in Bournemouth, another council who has introduced a draconian buffer zone covering the area surrounding a BPAS abortion facility, which as many of these centres are, is situated in a suburban residential area.

As you might remember from a column I wrote in October, Bournemouth has imposed one of the most draconian zones in the entire country, whereby any display of religiosity is in breach of the law. Signs erected outside the zone, specifically state that anyone caught ‘crossing themselves, reading from Scripture or sprinkling holy water’ will face a fine or possible court prosecution.

It is an appalling assault on religious freedom. It may be dying out as a habit, but I cross myself every time I see a hearse or an ambulance in public and will recite a prayer for either the soul of the departed or for whoever is inside the ambulance. An ambulance parked outside an abortion facility is not an uncommon sight. If you were to see one and say a prayer for those in need of medical assistance, you’d better make sure that nobody is watching.

Just as with Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, who is facing charges for an identical offence in Birmingham, Adam Smith-Cooper was not caught doing nefarious things with holy water or, Heaven forfend, reciting scripture. Like Isabel, Adam was not displaying any kind of signage, offering leaflets or expressing any kind of opinion whatsoever about abortion. He was just stood there with his back to the abortion facility, in quiet contemplation.

According to Adam, he drove his ex-girlfriend to an abortion facility in Bournemouth and paid for her to have an abortion, 22 years ago. As so often is the case, this decision later came back to haunt him and he experienced a sense of deep loss and regret, which is what has led him to

Adam Smith-Cooper: Another victim of the ‘prayer thought police’



go and pray for his son near to where it happened.

Adam was approached by council officials who asked him what he was doing. Had he answered that he was thinking about global warming or admiring the local horticulture he would have been off the hook, however, being mindful of the ninth commandment, he told them the truth, namely that he was praying. The response from Bournemouth council’s ‘prayer patrol’, the video of which is in wide circulation, was chilling: “May I ask as to the contents of your prayers”.

Adam’s 20 years in the army has obviously imbued him with an unlimited forbearance for idiots, as instead of telling them to get lost, he patiently informed them that he was praying for his dead son. “I’m sorry for your loss, but ultimately I have to go along with guidelines”, said the official before promptly issuing Adam with a fixed penalty fine.

It was a response that was not only staggeringly insensitive, but also indicated that the official knew on some level, that she was engaged in an unconscionable act, unless she really didn’t care about the fact that a man was grieving for his dead son and was just uttering platitudes.

I don’t like to chuck about Holocaust comparisons lightly, but this really does have shades of the ‘just following orders’ defence used by Nazi officers in the Nuremberg

trials. While we aren’t in the territory of Nazi atrocities, there is still nevertheless something deeply unsettling about proscribing religious activities and criminalising someone on account of practising their faith, especially when, as in this case, the religious activity consisted of a private conversation inside a man’s head with his God. These aren’t the actions of a free and democratic society and not something that any religious community should turn a blind eye to.

It does not matter whether or not you agree with the actions or behaviour of Adam or Isabel, who were both clearly engaging in a form of activism. The fact remains that they weren’t causing any harm to the public, risking the safety of others or causing any kind of breach of the peace. It’s not like they were scrambling up gantries in the middle of a motorway, glueing their hands to the roadside or chucking paint at works of art. The only reason why their presence and the act of silent prayer is prohibited in these zones is in case passers-by or users of the abortion facility are possessed with the ability to read thoughts, can tell that prayers are being silently said and take offence.

It doesn’t matter whether you are praying for a deceased loved-one, for the situation in Ukraine, or for any issue you want to bring to the

Lord – if you are doing this in a zone the size of a professional football pitch that covers an abortion facility, then I am afraid you will need to hand yourself in at the local police station. If you stop for a sip of water, to adjust your clothing, consult a map and get lost in thoughts about what to have for lunch or where to go on date night – these are all fine. It’s just private conversations in your head with the Lord that are banned.

As ADF, the organisation which is defending both Isabel and Adam points out, we can assume that if either of them had knelt in prayer to God next to a campaigner doing the same for the Black Lives Matter movement, only they, not the Black Lives Matter protester, would have been arrested. These are literal arrests for people thinking the wrong thoughts in the wrong place.

One can obfuscate over whether or not it might be better to pray at home, although Christ’s warning not to pray like the hypocrites, was all about those who were seeking praise and adulation for prayer; one can hardly accuse pro-life volunteers of being in it for the glory. At the end of the day this is about the state attempting to ban Christianity in certain places, in case it hurts the feelings of others, irrespective of whether or not any criminal offences have been committed.

It is a reminder of the fleeting nature of temporal freedoms.



Darts champ thanks Catholic club for help

A darts world champion has revealed that his winning style was created at a popular Catholic parish centre in Liverpool.

Michael Smith from St Helens hit the headlines at the start of the year by winning the PDC World Darts Championship title at London's Alexandra Palace. He immediately paid tribute to his daily training at one of the Archdiocese of Liverpool's parish centres - St Anne and Blessed Dominic in Sutton.

Michael's mum Sandra Woods has been the manager of the centre since 2011. When he is not competing, Michael can be found at the centre training.

"I come here when the club is closed to practice, I do the school run and then train for about four hours a day before picking my two boys up on the way home. I don't have a dart board at home, as I want to keep work and home separate, so the club is where I do all of my training," he said.

Since the win, proud mum Sandra has been displaying the trophy in the club, allowing local people and sports fans to see it.

"It's such a great opportunity for local people to come and see the trophy. We have had lots of interest, and it's lovely to see so many people, including children, coming through the doors to see it," she said.



St Anne and Blessed Dominic is Michael's training base, where his mum, Sandra, is manager

bought everyone a drink when he won," she added, laughing.

Unsurprisingly the club has two darts teams who meet weekly, as well as dominoes teams, a chess club, snooker teams, pensioner bingo and baby classes. The centre also serves as a warm and cosy hub every Tuesday between 1-3.30pm for anyone to keep warm and make friends in a safe space.

"We are proud to be a hub of the community and I love seeing people benefit from the centre," Sandra added. "There is a young boy from Ukraine who comes along to our chess club and it is so lovely to see him settling into a new community and getting involved in something he loves doing," Sandra said.

Family is at the heart of St Anne and Blessed Dominic's. Sandra has worked for the archdiocese of Liverpool for 25 years and her partner, Ian, is the assistant manager, while daughter Claire is part of the bar staff. Michael even pops behind the bar to help his mum out occasionally!

The Guvna's ready to light up Flame '23

Andy Drozdziak

Award-winning rapper Guvna B is inviting young people to experience joy and happiness at the largest Catholic youth event in the UK after the pain and difficulties of covid lockdowns.

Flame, the largest Catholic Youth event in the UK, will take place on 4th March 2023 at OVO Arena, Wembley, where Guvna B will attend.

"My favourite thing when I came to Flame last time (in 2019) is to see so many young people from different backgrounds, different life experiences, all together in one room with so much joy and happiness and love," he said.

"It's been a tough two years," he added, referring to the lockdowns.

"I'm pretty sure that people can expect some great speakers, great music and they're going to meet some great people."

Guvna B's 2008 debut album *The Narrow Road* led to the rapper winning best gospel act at both The Gospel Music Awards and The Urban Music Awards in 2009, followed by another win at the MOBO Awards in 2010. Two more albums, 2013's *Odd One Out* and 2015's *Secret World*, led to further wins at the Urban Awards and MOBO Awards. His first book, *Unpopular Culture*, was published in 2017, before he released two more, 2018's *Hands Are Made for Working* and 2020's *Everywhere + Nowhere*.

The theme of Flame 2023 is inspired by the theme of this year's World Youth Day in Lisbon: 'Mary arose and went



with haste' – and crystallises it into the theme: "Rise Up."

Flame said the theme was telling young people to "Rise up after the pandemic, Rise up as young Catholics, Rise up – as Mary did – for the surprising and beautiful adventure that is our Catholic faith."

8,000 young people gathered at the last Flame event in 2019 at SSE Arena, Wembley, as Guvna B and US preacher Robert Madu joined Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Eamon Martin from Ireland.

It is hoped that 10,000 young people will fill OVO Arena Wembley for 'an inspiring day of prayer, adoration, catechesis, reflection, celebration and praise.'

Other artists booked include UK worship band One Hope Project, youth worker Jenny Garzón Saavedra from the Colombian Amazon and Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB from Australia. World renowned speaker and leader Cardinal Tagle from the Philippines will also attend Flame for the second time.

• For more information, including how to book tickets, visit <https://cymfed.org.uk/flame/>

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In brief

Labour calls for closer EU ties

Labour would put closer co-operation with Europe at the centre of its plan to reconnect “a tarnished UK” with its closest allies, David Lammy, the shadow foreign secretary, said. “Ideological leadership and reckless choices have left Britain increasingly disconnected from its closest allies, an economy in crisis, and a tarnished international reputation,” he told Chatham House. He suggested regular bilateral meetings should be held between the UK and the EU, with a focus on negotiating a defence security pact with Brussels.

Probation service in dock over Zara

Government ministers and the probation service have “blood on their hands”, the family of murdered law graduate Zara Aleena has said after a report found a catalogue of errors in the service’s handling of her killer Jordan McSweeney. McSweeney was not treated as a high-risk offender on release from jail and was left ‘free’ to commit this ‘most heinous crime’.

McSweeney, 29, killed Zara nine days after his release on licence from prison. “Government bears responsibility too, it is not just the probation service,” said Farah Naz, Aleena’s aunt. “They have blood on their hands.”

China ‘can spy on UK via light bulbs’

Ministers have been warned that Beijing has the ability to spy on millions of people in Britain by “weaponising” microchips embedded in cars, domestic appliances and even light bulbs.

A report warned that the Trojan horse technology poses a “wide-ranging” threat to UK national security. Modules collect data and then transmit it via the 5G network, “giving China the opportunity to monitor the movements of intelligence targets”, said *The Telegraph*. It is believed the tech could be used to track China critics living in exile.

Witchcraft fears at New Forest church

Animal hearts surrounded by candles have been discovered near a church. A walker found the hearts laid on top of a triangulation station with candles in a circle around the stone landmark at the top of Stagbury Hill in the New Forest. In 2019, someone stabbed a sheep and sprayed it with pentagrams as well as painting occult markings on the village’s church. Last year, a dead cat and a dead fox were discovered near St Peter’s Church, raising fears of witchcraft.

China’s failed family planning policy will harm its economy – and the world’s – for decades

SOCIETY

Christina Maags

China’s population has fallen for the first time in 60 years and some believe could reduce by half by the end of the century. After declining for some years, China is now in what a government official called an “era of negative population growth”, with the birth rate hitting a record low of 6.77 births per 1,000 people.

China has long been the most populous country in the world. Apart from the famine years (1959-61) caused by Chairman Mao’s Great Leap Forward political campaign, China’s population has rapidly increased over the past decades.

China’s rapid population growth started to slow in the 1970s when the Chinese government introduced family planning measures because of fears of “overpopulation”. The most far-reaching measure was the one-child policy adopted in 1980 that restricted each household to only one child (with certain exceptions, such as members of ethnic minorities, rural households and later children of two single children).

According to the government’s logic at the time, reducing population growth would free up scarce resources needed to increase the standard of living and boost economic growth. The rate of growth in China’s population accordingly slowed for several decades. But now, for the first time in decades, the population is beginning to shrink.

But whether China’s population really has peaked, and when and how fast this shrinkage will be, is not clear cut and is subject of some debate. The UN World Population Prospects from 2022, at first estimated that China’s population will only start declining in around 2030.

Data on China’s population is notoriously unreliable and varies depending on who is doing the counting. According to China’s National Bureau of Statistics, the country had 1.4117 billion people at the end of 2022, compared with 1.4126 billion a year earlier. But the United Nations Population Fund has estimated the number of people in China at 1.4485 billion and the World Population Review estimates it at 1.426 billion people.

The variation in projections of population trends are based on different assumptions and data sources, leading to different expectations as to how China’s

For many years, analysts have predicted dire consequences of China’s failed family planning experiment – and now, with an ageing population that some believe could halve in the next few decades, those fears are being realised



society will develop over time.

The further forward in time these projections are made, the more difficult they become. Many factors affect how fertility rates develop over a decade – let alone half a century. So predictions that China’s population will be cut in half by 2100 need to be read with some caution. They depend on assumptions of how societies develop over time.

For decades the Chinese government has attempted to actively manage population development by influencing its fertility rate. After the one-child policy led to a rapid decrease in China’s fertility rate (1.3 in 2020), the end of this policy in 2016 allowed families to have two, then three children.

The Chinese government has also begun to support families in other ways, for instance, by promoting longer maternity leave and tax incentives for having children.

But these policy changes appear to be too little, too late. Many experts – in China and elsewhere – have argued that the scrapping of the one-child policy came a decade too late to influence the rapid

slowdown of its population growth.

Uptake of the new family planning policies has also been scarce. After decades of promoting a nuclear family of three, this image has become deeply ingrained in Chinese society. Not only that, but costs for education, housing and marriage have increased. Having more children is simply considered to be too expensive for many families.

Yet, for some forecasters, this population decline has come at a faster pace than expected. One reason may be the COVID pandemic which has discouraged families from having more children. But COVID’s effects are hard to judge. For instance, data on China’s COVID-related deaths is unreliable.

What does it mean for the world?

When more people live longer – and fewer people are born – it has two consequences: a shrinking workforce and increased costs for people in old age. China’s rapid economic growth has been a result of its large and cheap workforce. With fewer workers available and global moves to de-couple from China, companies are moving their production elsewhere.

This threatens China’s economic growth model at a time when it is transitioning from a labour-intensive to a knowledge-intensive economy.

Another growing concern has been how to care for a rapidly growing ageing population. Projections estimate that by 2079 there will be more Chinese people outside than inside the workforce. Even if population ageing proceeds slower than expected, pension, health and social care costs will become a heavy strain on economic development unless productivity increases.

China is not alone in facing such issues. Other East Asian countries, such as in Japan and South Korea, are also facing rapid population ageing. Similarly, many European nations, including Germany and Italy, have faced population decline for decades.

But China’s situation is different. First, it is facing population ageing and decline while it is still a middle-income country, making it harder to finance socio-economic change.

Second, from an international standpoint, China has assumed a central position in global supply chains – so anything that affects China will have knock-on effects for the world economy.

So this story of China’s population decline has immense implications for China’s position in the world and the global economy at large.

Christina Maags is a Lecturer in Chinese Studies, University of Sheffield



From an international standpoint, China has assumed a central position in global supply chains – so anything that affects China will have knock-on effects for the world economy.

Catholic schools are leading the way on diversity, says new CES report

Pupils in Catholic schools and academies are significantly more diverse than the England average, according to the latest data in a new report.

Overall, 44% of pupils at Catholic state-funded primaries and secondaries are from an ethnic minority background, compared to 36% nationally.

A total of 11.4% of the 820,994 pupils in England's 2,090 Catholic schools and academies are either Black or Black British, compared to 5.8% nationally. The percentage of black teachers is also slightly higher, at 2.6%, above a national average of 2.4%.

There are more than three times the proportion of White Irish pupils (1%) than in other state-funded schools and academies (0.3%).

Sixty per cent of pupils in Catholic schools and academies are Catholic, as are just under half of the 47,662 teachers employed. Of the 316,070 non-Catholic pupils, just under half are from other Christian denominations. The largest non-Christian religion represented is Islam, with more than 34,000 Muslim pupils.

Only 0.03% of all pupils, or just 277 of them, in Catholic schools across England are withdrawn from acts of



collective worship such as Mass and prayers in assemblies.

The figures come from the annual census of Catholic schools and academies conducted by the Catholic Education Service (CES), released this week. The CES acts on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Paul Barber, CES Director, said: "Catholic schools have led the way on diversity since the 19th century, when many were established to meet the needs of immigrants from Ireland.

"Today they outperform national

GCSE averages for English and Maths by five percentage points, with more pupils from the most deprived areas, and from ethnic minorities. Parents and pupils of other faiths and none rightly value this success and the distinctive, all-inclusive ethos of Catholic education."

Due to a 50% admissions cap for new religious schools, only two new Catholic ones have been built in England since 2010. The cap means a new Catholic school could be put in the position of turning away a pupil

for being a Catholic, which is against canon law.

Catholic schools continue to convert into becoming Catholic academies, with a 17% increase in the past year. There are now 814 Catholic academies in England, run by 77 multi-academy trusts.

Altogether, Catholic schools and academies make up 9% of the national total of the state-funded sector, making the Catholic Church the biggest provider of secondary education and the second-largest provider of primary education overall.

The situation in England is mirrored in Wales, where Catholic schools are significantly more diverse than the national average and are 'leading the way on diversity'.

More than 30% of pupils in Wales's 82 Catholic state-funded primaries and secondaries are from an ethnic minority background, compared to 12.5% in all other Welsh schools.

Wales's Catholic schools also have more than four times as many black pupils, with 4.5% of the 28,176 pupils being Black or Black British, compared to 1.1% elsewhere. There is also more than twice the proportion of pupils from an Asian or Asian British back-

ground (6%), compared to 2.6% in other Welsh schools.

Just over half (50.3%) of pupils in the sector are Catholic, as are 43.6% of the 1,644 teachers employed.

A total of 73.4% of pupils in Welsh Catholic schools are Christians, and 80% are from a faith background. Of the 13,992 non-Catholic pupils, 46% of these are from other Christian denominations, 36.8% have no religion, and 5.7% are Muslims.

The figures come from the annual census of the 2,175 Catholic schools, colleges and academies in England and Wales, conducted by the Catholic Education Service (CES), called Catholic Education Service Digest of 2022 Census Data for Schools and Colleges in Wales, released this week.

Angela Keller, CES Wales Adviser, said: "Catholic schools are leading the way on diversity in Wales, with parents and pupils of other faiths and none valuing this as well as our distinctive ethos. The Welsh government has made closing the disadvantage gap within education a priority – this too has always been our mission."

Catholic schools make up 6% of the national total of maintained schools across Wales.

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CATHOLIC UNION

Evil exists when good men fail to act

James Somerville-Meikle
Catholic Union

I remember an MP once telling me that politics was about “the art of the possible.” In many ways, he was right. For those in elected office, problem solving and practicalities are part of the day job.

But there is another ‘p’ which sometimes gets overlooked in politics, and that is principle.

A new year is bringing new challenges for the Government, and negative headlines about our politicians are filling our papers. But this week I have also been reminded of the good work taking place in politics, and the men and women who are prepared to take a stand for principle.

This week has seen the launch of the Catholic Union’s new ‘Pub Talk’ series, which brings together people with an interest in politics or public affairs. Our inaugural speaker, Lord Alton, spoke to a packed room at the Windsor Castle pub near Westminster Cathedral about his work campaigning against genocide.

Even on a matter such as genocide – where the need for action seems so obvious – there are practicalities and problems for legislators to grapple with. Hearing Lord Alton speak, it’s clear he is determined not to let these undermine the basic principle of being able to name the horrific actions we are seeing in places like Xinjiang, and elsewhere, as genocide.

His Genocide Determination Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, is designed to spur the Government into action. Please encourage your MP to support the Bill and ask that it be given time for debate in Parliament.

This week has also seen the Catholic Union back in Downing Street for a meeting chaired by Fiona Bruce MP, the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. Fiona is a brilliant advocate for people persecuted for their faith, including calling out the recent atrocities in Nigeria.

Elsewhere in Westminster, I joined a cross-party group of pro-life MPs and peers who are supporting those who find themselves on the wrong side of the law simply by praying silently outside abortion clinics. It’s a terrible situation, but there are parliamentarians who are willing to take a stand and oppose a new law that could make the situation even worse.

As Lord Alton said in his Pub Talk, Parliament is only as good as the people who go there. There are good people in Westminster, but we need to encourage even more principled people to get involved in politics. After all, evil enters into the world just as easily when good men do nothing as when bad men act.



East Anglia’s historic churches praised as testaments to faith

Four historic Catholic churches in the Diocese of East Anglia have been listed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England, bringing the total listed churches in the diocese to 28.

Our Lady of The Assumption and The English Martyrs, Cambridge, has been relisted at Grade I. It is one of the largest 19th century Catholic churches in the country.

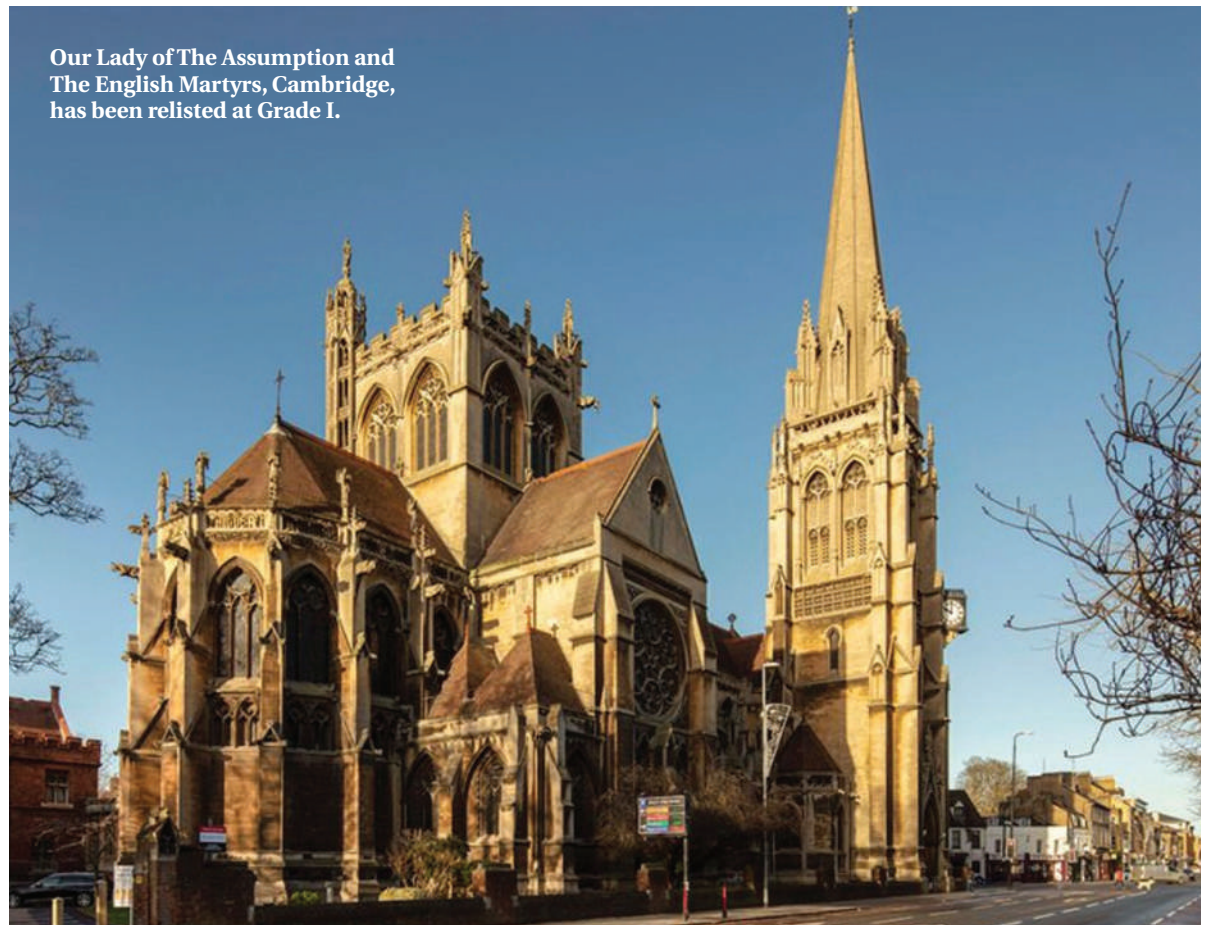
Three churches have been newly listed at Grade II. Our Lady of the Annunciation in King’s Lynn was built with the support of the future King Edward VII. This 19th century church featured designs by renowned Anglo-Catholic architects A W N Pugin and William Lunn.

The Minster Church of St Benet, Beccles is described as ‘a gloriously decorated Minster Church in Beccles, chosen by the architect as his final resting place.’ St Felix church in Felixstowe is an Arts and Crafts-inspired church built as an architectural labour of love to accommodate the town’s growing Catholic community.

Rt Rev Peter Collins, Bishop of East Anglia, welcomed the news as “a true testament to the faith of our communities.”

“As a new arrival in East Anglia, I have been delighted to discover the wealth of styles and variety offered by Catholic churches across the region. From our great stone minsters, to the more modest country chapels, the region boasts so many truly fascinating churches,” he said.

“These historic churches represent a true testament to the faith of our communities in past centuries and are a key part of the Catholic legacy of East Anglia that we hold in sacred trust for the many generations yet to come.”



Our Lady of The Assumption and The English Martyrs, Cambridge, has been relisted at Grade I.

Paul Raynes, director of operations and finance for the diocese, said: “Our church buildings are a very visible vehicle for the diocese’s witness to the world. The latest listing decisions give us cause for joy that the whole nation recognises the value of those ‘prayers in stone.’”

With the addition of the latest churches, the diocese now boasts 28 listed churches, as well as a host of other listed buildings, in its care. His-

toric churches support officer, Matthew Champion, said: “The recognition of these churches as being worthy of listed status by Historic England is a real recognition of all the hard work, both past and present, by the Catholic community to care and preserve these amazing structures.”

“They are a real testament to the strength of faith in the region, and a jewel to pass on to future generations.”

Caroline Skinner, Historic England listing team leader (East of England), praised the diocese for ensuring “these beautiful Catholic churches have been at the heart of their local communities for generations.”

“The very distinctive, and individual, style of each building tells the story of the development of the Catholic faith over the centuries, and they continue to offer a calming and inspiring space in our busy world today.”

Catholic charity praised – by its own employees

Andy Drozdzak

A Catholic anti-slavery charity is celebrating after being recognised as one of the UK’s outstanding organisations to work for in 2023

Best Companies conducted a staff survey in December 2022, after which the employee engagement specialist gave Medaille Trust a two-star rating – the second highest rating – to put it in the “outstanding” category.

The outstanding rating follows very positive employee feedback, which revealed that 85% of staff feel engaged or satisfied. The survey reported on how staff felt about eight factors: Leadership, My Company, Wellbeing, Fair Deal, My Manager, My Team, Personal Growth and Giving Something Back. The survey revealed that, in some areas, Medaille Trust was performing better than the minimum level required for the highest, three-star, “world class” companies.

Medaille CEO Garry Smith expressed satisfaction with the results-but also a desire to improve.

“I am obviously happy that 8 out



OUTSTANDING
Medaille Trust employees rated it as an ‘outstanding’ place to work

of 10 of our staff feel engaged and satisfied and that we are rated as an outstanding organisation. However, I want 10 out of 10 staff to feel engaged and satisfied, so we will keep working to achieve this,” he said.

“The jobs of so many of our staff can be particularly challenging because of the very nature of the work we do, protecting and supporting victims who have experienced severe trauma in their lives. We recognise these challenges and have worked extremely hard over the years to make

working conditions as good as possible.”

Staff gave Medaille an 87% rating to say the organisation is run on strong values and principles. 84% said they love working for Medaille Trust, 81% of them were excited about where the organisation is going and 81% of them felt their manager helps them to fulfil their potential.

Medaille Trust’s mission is to provide refuge and freedom from modern slavery. Founded by Sister Ann Teresa SSJA in 2006 to house women traf-

ficked into prostitution, Medaille has grown into a national network supporting all people trapped in modern slavery – women, men and families.

Medaille shared staff quotes on why the charity is a good place to work. Comments included praise for how ‘the company actually cares about its staff’, and the leadership team and the leader of the Medaille taking ‘a personal interest in both the teams and the clients we work with.’

Praise was given to the way in which Medaille works, with ‘outcomes actioned quickly and support provided with compassion and empathy,’ according to one. Another said: “Everyone is friendly and will always take time out of their schedule to teach you new things and show you how it’s done.”

One worker reserved specific praise for CEO Garry Smith, saying: “The CEO is brilliant and takes a keen interest in all of his employee’s welfare. He takes the time to speak with all staff and is well respected in the organisation.”

Spring is coming...

So it's time to start thinking about how to get the garden into shape!

It might be cold outside and the evenings are dark, but we're past the Winter Solstice and that means only one thing: Spring is on its way! Don't leave it until the last minute to get your garden into shape. Start planning now with these fantastic **Universe Reader Offers** and you'll have a picture-perfect garden to enjoy by summer.

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This amazing hardy Hibiscus standard tree actually does have 3 colours on the same tree, and will stay that way too. 3 individual different colours – blue, pink and white – to the top of the standard stem.

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BUY NOW



BUY NOW

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A large, very tough and durable planter that is perfect for bulbs, bedding, shrubs, houseplants and more, it is made to last from heavy duty polypropylene, with a dramatic, gold-topped finish. Stands 43cm.

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In brief**There's no pressure or guilt on converts**

Christians must not put pressure on others to convert or induce in them feelings of guilt but take a weight off their shoulders through joyfully sharing the Gospel, Pope Francis said.

At his general audience this week the pope explained that Jesus frees people from all forms of oppression and that this freedom is cause for joy.

"Oppressed is the one who feels crushed by something that happens in life: illness, struggles, burdens on the heart, feelings of guilt, errors, vices, sins," said the pope. "Let us think, for example, about feelings of guilt. How many of us have suffered from this?"

"If someone feels guilty about something they did and they feel bad, the good news is that with Jesus this ancient evil of sin, which seems unbeatable, no longer has the last word."

In fact, "God forgets all of our sins, he has no memory of them," the pope said. Even if someone repeatedly commits the same sins, God also "will always do the same thing: forgive you, embrace you."

Wage peace each day in life to beat monster of war

Even though war seems to be an "invincible monster," everyone is called to be a peacemaker, Pope Francis told a group of people severely wounded in the line of duty.

"What can we do, beyond prayer?" he asked. "We can try, in daily life, to face conflicts, avoiding any form of violence and oppression, even verbal," he said, "because at times it takes just a word to hurt or kill a brother or a sister."

The pope was speaking to Italian government employees – including those in the police, the military, civil service, the judicial system and firefighters – who were disabled on the job.

"Faced with a war that seems to be an invincible monster, what can we do, beyond prayer?" the pope asked during an audience in the Apostolic Palace.

The Gospel says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God', he said, and this "commitment to being peacemakers applies to everyone, regardless of each person's history."

When individuals who try to avoid all forms of violence and slander in their daily lives get together with others, he said, their "association can and must become a force for peace in society, helping to resolve conflicts peacefully, seeking the common good and drawing attention to those who are least protected."

Pope hits out at anti-gay laws: 'Homosexuality is not a crime'

Gay people must be welcomed, respected and should not be marginalised or discriminated against

Pope Francis has branded laws criminalising homosexuality "unjust" – saying God loves his children just as they are – and called on Catholic bishops supporting the laws to welcome LGBTQ people into the church.

"Being homosexual isn't a crime," Francis said during an interview with the Associated Press on Tuesday.

He acknowledged Catholic bishops in some parts of the world support laws criminalising homosexuality or discriminate against the LGBTQ community – and referred to the issue in terms of "sin".

But he attributed such attitudes to cultural backgrounds and said bishops in particular need to undergo a process of change to recognise the dignity of everyone.

"These bishops have to have a process of conversion," he said, adding that they should apply "tenderness, please, as God has for each one of us".

Some 67 countries or jurisdictions worldwide criminalise consensual same-sex sexual activity, 11 of which can or do impose the death penalty, according to The Human Dignity Trust, which works to end such laws.

Experts say even where the laws are not enforced, they contribute to harassment, stigmatisation and violence against LGBTQ people.

In the US, more than a dozen states still have anti-gay laws on the books despite a 2003 Supreme Court ruling declaring them unconstitutional.

Gay rights advocates say the antiquated laws are used to harass homosexuals, and point to new legislation, such as the so-called "don't say gay" law in Florida, which forbids instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity from nurseries through to school year four, as evidence of



Pope Francis visits the tomb of St Paul during an ecumenical evening prayer service marking the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls in Rome

continued efforts to marginalise LGBTQ people.

The United Nations (UN) has repeatedly called for an end to laws criminalising homosexuality outright, saying they violate rights to privacy and freedom from discrimination and are a breach of countries' obligations under international law to protect the human rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Declaring such laws "unjust," Francis said the Catholic Church can and should work to put an end to them.

"It must do this. It must do this," he said.

Francis quoted the Catechism of the Catholic Church in saying gay people must be welcomed and respected and should not be marginalised or discriminated against.

"We are all children of God and God loves us as we are and for the strength that each of us fights for our dignity," Francis said.

Such laws are common in Africa and the Middle East and often date from British colonial times or are inspired by modern Islamic law.

Some Catholic bishops have strongly upheld them as consistent with Vatican teaching that considers homosexual activity "intrinsically disordered", while others have called for them to be overturned as a violation of basic human dignity.

In 2019, Francis had been expected to issue a statement opposing criminalisation of homosexuality during a meeting with human rights groups that conducted research into the effects of such laws and so-called "conversion therapies".

In the end, the pope did not meet with the groups, which instead met with the Vatican number two, who reaffirmed "the dignity of every human person and against every form of violence".

Pope Francis said there needs to be a distinction between a crime and

a sin with regard to homosexuality.

"Being homosexual is not a crime," he said. "It's not a crime. Yes, but it's a sin. Fine, but first let's distinguish between a sin and a crime."

"It's also a sin to lack charity with one another, or to gossip," he added.

Catholic teaching holds that while gay people must be treated with respect, homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered".

Francis has not changed that teaching but he has made reaching out to the LGBTQ community a hallmark of his papacy.

Starting with his famous 2013 declaration, "Who am I to judge?" when asked about a purportedly gay priest, Francis has gone on to minister repeatedly and publicly to the gay and trans community.

As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he favoured granting legal protections to same-sex couples as an alternative to endorsing gay marriage, which Catholic doctrine forbids.

WYD message urges youth to lift their horizons

Pope Francis told young people to always "look to the horizon" and open their hearts to other peoples and cultures.

In a video message to the 400,000 participants registered for World Youth Day 2023, the pope encouraged young people not to "put up walls" that close them in but to "thirst for the horizon" that makes them grow.

World Youth Day is scheduled to take place in Lisbon, Portugal, from 1st-6th August with Pope Francis in attendance.

To highlight this he publicly registered as a participant with the help of two Portuguese college students after praying the Angelus in St. Peter's Square in October.

The pope said that even if some

young people say they are going to Lisbon "only for tourism", each person attending World Youth Day is going "because deep down, they are craving to participate, to share, to tell their experience and receive the experience of others."

"Open your heart to other cultures, to other young men and women attending World Youth Day," he told them.

The motto for this year's World Youth Day is from Luke's Gospel: 'Mary arose and went with haste.' Pope Francis said that Mary shows young people "the path of closeness and encounter" at a time when "our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war."



A still from the pope's message to WYD

Power struggle has hurt Knights - pope

Conflict and division hurt the mission of the Knights of Malta, and craving for power creates distance from Christ, Pope Francis told members of the chivalric order.

“Firmly strengthen your unity, otherwise you will not be credible in your work,” he told an extraordinary chapter general of the sovereign order.

“Conflicts and opposition harm your mission. Lust for power and other worldly attachments create distance from Christ; they are temptations to be rejected,” he said.

The pope had called for the extraordinary gathering to be held on 25th January, the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, as part of a process of renewal for the Sovereign Order of Malta. He called the gathering “to safeguard the unity and greater good” of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

The order has been involved in a process to revise its constitution and to promote its spiritual renewal since 2017. All members of the Knights of Malta together with its volunteers are

being called to receive and implement its new constitutional charter.

Founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century, the Knights of Malta helps to facilitate humanitarian missions around the world and maintain diplomatic relations with over 100 countries. It has around 13,500 members, as well as 80,000 volunteers and 25,000 medical professionals providing relief and humanitarian aid in 120 countries.

However, a series of rows led to the pope removing the order's leader amid concerns it was acting in a unilateral manner divorced from Church teaching, and since then it has been more closely overseen by the Vatican.

“Focus on your key goals,” the pope said. “There is no other way to build a more just world than that of the Gospel; and we are called to begin with ourselves, practicing charity where we live,” he wrote.

The Knights must also forgive whatever offences or indignities they have suffered. “Mutual forgiveness is vital after tensions in the recent past.”



Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kyiv, head of the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, left, and Ukrainian Catholic Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, right, show Pope Francis a gift during a meeting with members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religions at the Vatican Jan. 25, 2023. During the meeting Pope Francis thanked the Ukrainian Church for staying close to its people during the conflict with Russia, adding that all religions must be united behind “mother Ukraine.”

Vatican tells German Church: you can't set up a new ruling body

Germany's bishops do not have the authority to establish a permanent decision-making body of bishops and laypeople that supersedes the authority of the country's bishops' conference, the Vatican has said.

The message, to Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops' conference, challenged German Catholics' plan to set up a 'Synodal Council' to advise the Church in Germany 'on major developments in the Church and in society' and 'take fundamental decisions on matters that go beyond the diocesan level'.

Traditionally this role is covered by a nation's bishops' council

The German council was approved in September by bishops and lay members of the country's Synodal Assembly. The assembly is responsible for discussing, amending and voting on documents related to concerns addressed by Germany's Synodal Path, which was launched in 2019 in response to the country's clerical abuse scandal.

But the Vatican was clear: “Neither the Synodal (Path), nor any body established by it, nor any episcopal conference has the competence to establish the 'Synodal Council' at the national, diocesan or parish level,” said Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. The statement was approved by Pope Francis.

“The most weighty doctrinal concern” raised by the approval of the



Synodal Council is how it relates to a bishop's responsibility for teaching and governance, which can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the pope and the whole college of bishops, as taught by the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” Parolin added.

The German Church rejected the Vatican's view, however, saying its concerns were “unfounded”. Bishop Bätzing explained that the Synodal Council would not “stand over the bishops' conference or undermine the authority of individual bishops.”

“No one questions the authority of the episcopate,” he wrote.

Bishop Bätzing added that while “the Holy See sees the danger of a weakening of the episcopal office,” he instead sees “synodal consultation as a strengthening of this office.”

This is not the first time the Vatican has voiced its concern over the direc-

tion the German Church was heading in. During an ‘ad limina’ visit to Rome in November the heads of Vatican dicasterie told German bishops that allowing participants in the Synodal Path to adopt positions in contrast to the faith of the Universal Church, particularly regarding sexuality and women's ordination, was not allowed.

Germany's Synodal Path “is not empowered to oblige the bishops and the faithful to adopt new forms of governance.”

The president of the German bishops' conference said the letter from the Vatican will hopefully prompt Germany's Synodal Path to “think much more intensively about the forms and possibilities of synodal consultation and decision making,” but he insisted the letter ultimately does not call into question the formation of the Synodal Council.

Bishops from five German dioceses – Cologne, Eichstätt, Augsburg, Passau and Regensburg – had asked the Vatican in December if they could be compelled to participate in the Synodal Committee, in a move interpreted as putting space between them and more radical members of the Church.

The Vatican officials said they do not have to participate since decisions of the Synodal Assembly “cannot limit the authority of the bishops' conference and are not binding on individual bishops.”

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In brief

Pope's South Sudan visit 'key to peace'

Pope Francis's visit to South Sudan at the beginning of February, is key to peace and stability in the region, a local Church leader has said.

Preparations for the visit have been overshadowed by deadly inter-ethnic clashes. The pope will visit South Sudan's capital, Juba, along with Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, from 3rd-5th February after spending four days in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Christians are the majority in what is the world's youngest country, which gained its independence in 2011. However, in 2013, a political dispute triggered a deadly conflict which left an estimated 400,000 people dead. While large-scale fighting has ended, deadly interethnic clashes and militia attacks still continue.

Bishop Stephen Nyodho Ador Majwok of Malakal, South Sudan, said the pope's visit had a special significance for him: "This visit has a great meaning for us. My diocese is most affected by the fighting and needs the peace most. The visit is key to bring peace."

Pro-life unease over abortion access

President Lula da Silva has been criticised by Brazilian pro-lifers after he loosened control on abortion in Brazil. da Silva's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, had told health professionals to report women who were looking to procure an abortion after rape – one of the few ways an abortion can legally be obtained, along with where the mother's life is in danger, and if the fetus is anencephalic.

The National Conference of Bishops of Brazil said the cancellation of Bolsonaro's decree made it easier for women to have an abortion. "We do not agree with this move; we express our disapproval of any and all initiatives that signal to loosening control of abortion," the bishops said.

The decree's revocation looks almost "like a kind of vengeance. It is a measure to please the part of the people who electorally supported such ideas, but it is not an act which seeks the common good," Bishop Ricardo Hoepers of Rio Grande, president of the bishops' pastoral commission for life and family.

Bishop Hoepers affirmed that the Church considered the decree to be positive, given that it incentivises the denouncement and therefore the detention of sexual offenders.

Archbishop left shaken by gun attacks as he calls for God to return to US society

The Archbishop of San Francisco has called on his fellow Americans to "reclaim God at the centre of our lives," after two mass gun attacks left 18 people dead and scores wounded over last weekend.

Archbishop Cordileone led prayers for the victims, their families and the perpetrator – but he also called for prayer at all times, "not just during these moments of great tragedy."

"We need to reclaim God in the centre of our lives.... only He can grant us the peace we all seek."

The archbishop admitted later that news of the two attacks had left him shaken and bemused by the continuing cycle of gun-related violence in US society and culture.

Eleven people were killed and nine more injured at a dance hall in Monterey Park, California, last Saturday, followed two days later by a second deadly gun spree at two garden nurseries near Half Moon Bay which left seven dead. All the victims were Chinese-Americans, as were the two gunmen.

The attacks occurred as the Chinese community was celebrated the Lunar New Year.

The suspect for the second attack, 67-year-old Chunli Zhao, is in police custody after he was found in his car in the parking lot of the Half Moon Bay sheriff's office substation. He is believed to have acted alone.

The perpetrator of the first attack was identified as 72-year-old Huu Can Tran. He died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound during a stand-off with police the next day.

Archbishop Cordileone said both



Members of California's Chinese community come together at a memorial service for victims of both shootings

shootings were a reminder "of how fragile human life is, but also how precious human life is."

"We must never take life for granted. We must never take out our aggressions and our frustrations on others, especially in any form of violence."

The Half Moon attack took place at two garden nurseries. Police found four people deceased with gunshot wounds and another with life-threatening injuries at one site, before three additional victims were found deceased with gunshot wounds at a second site nearby. All victims are believed

to have been workers at the nurseries. The suspect is believed to be a worker at one of the farms and it is believed a work-related argument was behind the fatal incident.

The dance hall attack took place 400 miles south in Monterey Park, California. Huu Can Tran's motives for this attack remain unclear.

"We pray for those killed and injured in this shooting, and we ask that God stay close to their families and loved ones," said Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez in his Sunday Mass homily at St. Bridget Chinese Church.

He added that he had prayed for God to give "wisdom and prudence to law enforcement and public officials working to make sense of the violence and keep our communities safe."

He was also praying for peace: "Peace in the hearts of those who are troubled. Peace in the hearts of those who are afraid and hurting today, and peace for those whose faith has been shaken."

"We pray also for peace in our own hearts," he said. "We pray that we might feel God's love and know that he will deliver us from every evil."

Peru's bishops plead for peace after political violence

Peru's bishops pleaded for peace as violent protests claimed the lives of dozens of people.

"We deplore the violence because violence only begets more violence," they said. "The death of more than 50 Peruvian brothers and sisters is a deep wound in our hearts."

"This demands a decisive change of course: We want peace!" they said.

The bishops' appeal for peace received support from Pope Francis who called on pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square to "pray that the acts of violence in Peru might cease."

"I encourage all the parties involved to undertake the path of dialogue as brothers of the same nation," the pope said during his Sunday Angelus address. "I join the Peruvian bishops in saying: 'No a la violencia, venga de donde venga! ¡No más muertes!' (No to violence wherever it comes from! No more deaths!)," he said.

Violence has raged in Peru since



Protests in Lima have turned violent

early December after then-President Pedro Castillo was impeached by the country's Congress after he expressed his intention to dissolve it.

Castillo's election in 2021 was seen as a rejection of Peru's political establishment and was widely supported by its indigenous Andean peoples, who believe they have been consistently marginalised since the country

was part of the Spanish empire.

His term as president saw improvements in living standards of the poorest, and he was widely praised for his honesty in handling the Covid pandemic, but was marred by accusations of corruption.

After his impeachment, Castillo attempted to flee Peru but was detained by police and remains in custody.

His supporters are now calling for the removal of Dina Baluarte, the former vice president who is now the country's leader, as well as for the dissolution of the current congress.

Violent clashes have erupted across the country, blocking transport and forcing the economy to close down. Hundreds of tourists are still trapped at the world famous Machu Picchu after transport to and from the isolated ancient ruin was stopped.

In their message, the bishops of Peru said the violent protests are a source of "great pain" and called for a "new homeland to be built."

"Let's stop hurting each other! No more confrontations! This situation demands dialogue, listening and resolve."

The bishops also called for unity and for those on both sides to stop "promoting polarization," and offered themselves as mediators "if both sides agree to talks."

Ukrainian Church leader warns Zelensky against introducing ban on Orthodox

Jonathan Luxmoore

The head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church has warned President Volodymyr Zelensky not to outlaw Orthodox communities linked to Moscow, and urged his countrymen to “give Russians a chance to repent.”

“I don’t wish to give prescriptions to our politicians but we were once banned as well, and we survived underground,” said Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych. “Our own moral authority was saved by becoming a martyred Church which did not collaborate with the Soviet authorities. It’s important to understand that banning a Church doesn’t mean ending its existence.”

His comments came after Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told Ukraine’s parliament that he would introduce legislation to prohibit “activities by religious organisations” affiliated with centres “in a state carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine.”

The archbishop admitted that he understood why the state wanted to act against “dangerous traitors”, amid concerns that Ukrainians who had remained loyal to the Russian Orthodox Church were supporting Russia’s invasion of the country.

However, banning the Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) also could also give it “the palm of martyrdom,” and said the natural instinct of “righteous anger” needed “transforming and framing.”

“A Church isn’t just a religious structure – it’s also people with constitutional rights, and while there are people in Ukraine oriented toward Moscow’s Orthodoxy, this Church will exist even if it’s illegal under state



law,” Archbishop Shevchuk said.

“You shouldn’t be persecuted for belonging to some Church structure, but for crimes against our country, and here we are all equal.

“The point is that our northern neighbour, who is killing us today, shouldn’t be able to use any Church for his political ends.”

The UOC has been losing clergy and parishes to the new independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which was founded in December 2018. However, its existence is bitterly opposed by Russia’s Moscow Patriarchate, which is headed by Patriarch Krill – a major supporter of President Putin.

Government hostility to the UOC increased after Russia’s invasion in February of last year, and at least two bishops face prison for inciting religious enmity and collaborating with occupation forces. Sanctions have



An apartment block in Dnipro is left virtually destroyed after a Russian missile hit. 30 people died in the incident

also been imposed on other senior UOC clergy in the wake of security raids on their premises.

However, some Ukrainians have warned the government’s draft law lacks precision, and say a blanket ban on activities by the UOC, which also claimed independence from Moscow last May, could fuel accusations of religious persecution.

UOC members have urged Zelensky’s government to protect their freedoms, saying that many Orthodox Church members were fighting with the Ukrainian army against “Russia’s aggressive invasion.”

Archbishop Shevchuk has said that Russia’s Orthodox Church had been used as an “instrument of the state”

since Soviet rule, and had stolen Ukrainian Catholic properties when his Ukrainian Catholic Church was “forcibly liquidated by Stalin” in 1946.

He added that Ukrainian Catholics had tried to “heal past wounds” by seeking dialogue and “normal relations,” but said neither the Moscow Patriarchate nor the UOC’s current leader, Metropolitan Onufriy (Berezovsky), had wished to talk.

“When we hear the word ‘Russians’ in Ukraine today, images of mass torture, destroyed cities and villages appear before our eyes. Ukrainians naturally feel Russians are foreigners and murderers, who came to take everything from us,” Archbishop Shevchuk said.

“On the other hand, we also wish, in a Christian way, to give everyone a chance to repent. Right now, this is very difficult, and anger is a natural human instinct – indeed, if all the crimes we see did not make us angry, this would make us complicit in evil. ... But anger needs transforming and framing. In the Christian sense, righteous anger provides material for the virtues of courage and resilience.”

He said he feared the conflict would leave Ukraine a “wounded society” after the war, bringing “aggressiveness and conflict,” and making “transparency and openness” difficult.

“I urge everyone to remember and understand that the war in Ukraine is a war for democracy and values.”

Germany to send tanks as West steps up support

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has confirmed he will send a squadron of Leopard II tanks to bolster Ukraine’s defence, and gave a green light for other nations to do the same. Poland, Norway and Finland have all said they were willing to send small numbers of tanks to Kyiv.

The decision comes after weeks of hesitation which prompted growing impatience among the country’s allies, and is a major shift in Germany’s foreign and defence policy.

The US is also looking to send M1 Abrams tanks to help Kyiv prepare for an expected spring offensive from Russia. The UK Government has already said it would send 14 Challenger II tanks to help Ukraine.

The decision comes after Mr Scholz got his wish in linking the supply of Leopard 2s to similar moves by its allies, chiefly the United States. By getting Washington to commit some of its own tanks, Berlin hopes to spread the risk of any backlash from Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described German and US intentions with the tanks as a “rather disastrous plan”. “I am convinced that many spe-



A British Challenger II tank. 12 are being sent to boost Ukraine’s defence, with Germany now also agreeing to send its Leopard II tanks

cialists understand the absurdity of this idea,” Mr Peskov told reporters.

Other Kremlin supporters suggested the news meant that “Germany’s ‘Reichstag’ is now a legitimate target for Russian attacks.”

Mr Peskov predicted “these tanks will burn down just like all the other ones. ... Except they cost a lot, and this will fall on the shoulders of European taxpayers,” he added.

Ekkehard Brose, head of the German military’s Federal Academy for Security

Policy, said tying the United States into the decision was crucial to avoid Europe facing a nuclear-armed Russia alone.

But he also noted the deeper historic significance of the decision.

“German-made tanks will face off against Russian tanks in Ukraine once more,” he said, adding that this was “not an easy thought” for Germany, which takes its responsibility for the horrors of the Second World War seriously.

“And yet it is the right decision,” Mr Brose said, arguing it is up to Western democracies to help Ukraine stop Russia’s military campaign.

Members of Mr Scholz’s three-party coalition government welcomed the news ahead of the official announcement on Wednesday afternoon. “The Leopard’s freed!” said German politician Katrin Goering-Eckardt, a senior Green party member. The response was strange as throughout their history, the Greens have been overwhelm-

ingly pacifist in outlook.

Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, a member of the Free Democratic Party said the news is “a relief for a mistreated and brave Ukraine”.

Two smaller opposition parties criticised the move, however. The far-right Alternative for Germany called the decision “irresponsible and dangerous”, saying “Germany risks being drawn directly into the war as a result.” The party, known by its acronym AfD, has friendly ties to Russia.

The Left party, which also has historic links to Moscow, warned of a possible escalation in the conflict.

“The supply of Leopard battle tanks potentially takes us closer to a third world war than in the direction of peace in Europe,” the party’s parliamentary leader, Dietmar Bartsch, said. Recent opinion polls show German voters split on the idea.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the news but said he hopes to get a more substantial number from western allies. “It is not about five or 10 or 15 tanks. The need is greater,” he said, adding that “we need 300 tanks.”

We're not done yet, shouts the US's revitalised pro-life generation



The USA's March for Life was held in Washington last weekend, the first such national event since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* signalled a tightening of restrictions on abortion. Kate Scanlon joined the marchers and found a new-found confidence that the US could yet see a total ban on abortion

Tens of thousands of pro-life advocates descended upon the nation's capital for the 50th March for Life on 20th January – the first national march since the overturn of the US Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that initially prompted the annual demonstration.

Standing on the event stage at the National Mall, with the U.S. Capitol visible in the background, Jeanne Mancini, March for Life president, told attendees at a rally prior to the march that “the country and world changed” when *Roe* was reversed in June 2022. But she said the annual March for Life would continue in Washington until abortion is “unthinkable.”

“While the March began as a

response to *Roe*, we don't end as a response to *Roe* being overturned,” Mancini said. “Why? Because we are not yet done.”

The national March for Life first took place in Washington in 1974 in response to the *Roe* decision legalising abortion nationwide the previous year. The protest has taken place in Washington each year since, with a smaller-in-scale event during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

The 2023 event was the first national March for Life since the high court's June 2022 ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that overturned *Roe* and returned the matter of regulating or restricting abortion to state legislatures.

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life



At the pre-march rally, the Christian band We Are Messengers performed, followed by a number of speakers, including Jonathan Roumie, known for his role as Jesus in the television series *The Chosen*, former Indianapolis Colts Head Coach Tony Dungy, Democratic Connecticut State Representative Trenee McGee, and Gianna Emanuela Molla, the daughter of St.

Gianna Beretta Molla.

Canonised in 2004, St. Gianna gave her life for Giana Emanuela, choosing to move forward with her fourth pregnancy even after doctors discovered a tumor in her uterus.

Molla told the rallygoers that she thanks her “Saint Mum” for the gift of life. “I would not be here now with all of you if I had not been loved so much,” she said.

Roumie took a picture of the crowd behind him from the stage, telling marchers to tag themselves on social media, and quipping he is the “TV Jesus,” not the real one.

“God is real and he is completely in love with you,” he said, adding that each person is individually loved by God.

“Remember my dear friends, we know how the story ends: God won,” Roumie said.

The rally also featured some lawmakers from the US House of Representatives. Chris Smith of New Jersey, a Catholic Republican and co-chair of the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus, told the rally, “Future

generations will someday look back on us and wonder how and why a society that bragged about its commitment to human rights could have legally sanctioned abortion.”

“The injustice of abortion need not be forever, and with your continued work and prayers, it will not be,” Smith said.

Prior to speaking to the sea of pro-life marchers on the National Mall, Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch, who argued the *Dobbs* case before the Supreme Court, told OSV News that “empowering women and promoting life” were the next steps post-*Roe*.

“Some of the things that we're talking about in Mississippi and promoting legislation on are workplace flexibility options, particularly for mothers,” she said. “We lose young mothers because they don't have any options. They don't have that flexibility.”

“We've got to have childcare. It's got to be affordable, accessible and quality.”

Continue reading on next page



Fitch said she wants to see the pro-life movement do “some heavy lifts” to push laws enhancing child support enforcement and reforming the adoption or foster care systems.

“(These systems) are failing our children; they’re broken,” Fitch said. “We’ve got to make those (changes) happen and put those children in these loving families.”

Kristan Hawkins, president of the pro-life group Students for Life of America, said the next front of her organisation’s activism will focus on fighting the spread of medication abortion. Hawkins said the pro-life movement should also focus on broadening the social safety net and its remaining goals at the federal level, such as stripping Planned Parenthood, the nation’s largest single abortion provider, of taxpayer funds.

“There is a lot for us to do as a nation, especially raising awareness among its citizens,” Isalyn Aviles Rodríguez, who came to the march from Miami, said, adding that she was motivated to march because “the nation needs to know that children are part of God’s plan from conception until natural death.” Teenage pro-life advocates were very much to the fore. Angeline Moro, 14, from Trenton, New Jersey, attended the event to learn how to raise her voice in defence of the most vulnerable.

“We all need to have a chance to live,” Moro said.

At various events leading up to the march, pro-life advocates joined together in prayer and solidarity.

At Mass at the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life, held the night before the march, Bishop Michael E. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, said in his homily that the pro-life movement has “much to celebrate” because *Roe v. Wade* “is no more.”

But, he added, a “new important phase for the cause of life begins now.”

“Our efforts to defend life must be as tireless as ever not only to change laws but also hearts with steadfast faith in the grace and power of God to do so,” said Bishop Burbidge, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The event, held at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, drew between 6,000

and 6,500 people, with most of the congregation filling the Great Upper Church. Many more viewed the Mass via screens in the lower level of the basilica.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the US, read a message from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, issued on behalf of Pope Francis, who imparted his blessing on all those participating in the March for Life.

“His Holiness trusts that Almighty God will strengthen the commitment of all, especially the young, to persevere in their efforts aimed at protecting human life in all its stages, especially through adequate legal measures enacted at every level of society,” the message said.

“The law has changed ... (but) hearts need to change toward advancing a culture of life in this nation,” Sister of Life Mariae Agnus Dei told OSV News. “Some of the biggest battles are in front of us.”

Celebrating “the gift of life and the beauty of the human person is essential to that task,” she said.

With the overturn of *Roe*, organisers had planned for a

reworked march route, resulting in a new final destination: the East Front of the US Capitol, symbolizing the movement’s new goals. However, restrictions on the use of sticks for signage put in place by the Capitol Police after the 2021 January riot at the Capitol resulted in the route instead passing by the West Front. For the 50th time, the national march ended in the same spot: before the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Morgan Ehlis, a student from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, said that being in Washington with “like-minded people” was an “overwhelming experience.”

“I’m grateful to be pro-life,” said Ehlis. “It’s swimming upstream for sure, but (this is a) big support group we have.”

Pope is watching the US – Parolin

As the Biden administration and state governments look at ways to expand or restrict access to abortion after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, so Pope Francis prayed that God would strengthen people’s commitment to protecting human life at every stage.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said Pope Francis is “deeply grateful for the faithful witness shown publicly over the years by all who promote

and defend the right to life of the most innocent and vulnerable members of our human family.”

The message was read out at a vigil held the night before March for Life. “The building of a truly just society rests upon respect for the sacred dignity of every person and the welcome given to each one as a brother or sister,” Cardinal Parolin wrote.

“In this regard, His Holiness trusts that Almighty God will strengthen the commitment of all, especially the young, to persevere in their efforts aimed at protecting human life in all its stages, especially through adequate legal measures enacted at every level of society.”

“To those taking part in the March for Life, and to all who support them by their prayers and sacrifices, the Holy Father gladly imparts his blessing as a pledge of strength and joy in the Lord,” the message said.

Currently in the US, 24 states have either a total ban on abortion, or a near total ban with a few exceptions or a much lower gestational limit.

Of the other 26 states, many are operating ‘open door policies’ to women who live in a state where abortion is banned. Under these policies such women can travel to another state and procure an abortion under the same terms as a local resident.

A number of states have challenges in place that may increase the number restricting access to abortion in the future, though any new bans will probably include the right to a termination under strict rules.

Jonathan Roumie, known for his role as Jesus in the television series *The Chosen*, addressed the rally, telling pro-lifers that “God is real and he is completely in love with you... each person is individually loved by God.”



HEART OF THE MATTER

End of life companionship: a path of true vocation and privilege

At some point in life, most of us will find ourselves alongside someone who is coming to the end of their life. It may be a parent, partner, close friend or a child.

All of us will, at some point, arrive at our own death, however much we may push that inevitability to the back of our minds. However, there is a recognition, within the Christian tradition and in other faiths, that reflecting on our own mortality can be beneficial to the way we lead our lives and to the way we will finally approach our own death. It gives us a sense of perspective. It helps us to frame our priorities more clearly. It helps us live better.

The art of dying well and the art of living well are deeply intertwined. Even so, when the shadow of death falls on someone we know, it is not unusual to feel woefully unprepared. Uncertain of what we should say or how we can help, it can be tempting to withdraw, maybe at the time when they need us most. The Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St. Mary's University has been working with The Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) to help more people navigate these challenges.

End of Life Companionship is about being there for another person who is facing death. They may have only hours, days or weeks; they may have months or years. Frailty due to age, serious and chronic illness often means that people are less able to get out and about. They may be housebound or confined to one room leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation, even depression and despair. Family members may have other calls on their time; they may not live nearby. A Companion can offer regular visits, friendship and, most importantly, a listening ear. By their presence a Companion can help to alleviate the loneliness. By giving time and attention, they can help the other person to voice and address, fears and concerns. By their compassion and practical care, they can communicate love which, in turn, can bring greater acceptance, peace and a better death.

Companionship is offered in different ways by different agencies



and programmes, many of which were represented at the first End of Life Companionship Conference held at St Mary's University, Twickenham in September 2022. Schemes in hospitals, hospices and community settings have been developed and have evolved according to local need. Common themes run throughout: compassionate, person-centred support offered by volunteers in a way which is complementary to the care of the healthcare professionals and family and friends.

Present at the conference were staff and members of the SVP which now offers End of Life Companionship as part of its diverse portfolio of services. The work of the SVP is well known. With a membership of nearly 10,000 across England and Wales, SVP Conferences are integral to many parishes. They are the go-to group when a pastoral or practical need arises.

With the Gospel message of Matthew 25 at heart, SVP Members run foodbanks, care for the homeless, support refugees, prisoners and befriend the lonely and isolated, they visit the sick and comfort the bereaved.

In 2019 the SVP joined forces with the Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St Mary's University to develop

the End of Life Companionship training course. Over three online sessions participants learn something of the understanding of death and dying in our post-pandemic society, they reflect on how it is to be alongside a dying person and what are the desirable personal qualities for companionship.

Session two explores some of the core values of Vincentian spirituality and Catholic teaching around end of life issues. In session three, they consider their suitability as companions and where and how they might feel called to serve.

To date, over 250 SVP members have completed the course. Not surprisingly, a few have decided that end of life companionship is not for them at this time, but the vast majority have expressed a real enthusiasm for this service and some a deep sense of calling to what is a demanding yet rewarding ministry.

Some members have applied to volunteer in a hospital or hospice. Over the two years, Membership Development officer and Programme Co-ordinator Alejandra Dubeibe Fong has forged connections with chaplains and voluntary services managers enabling her to match trained companions with their recruitment

of Life Companionship course". Others have found that their learning on the course has helped with personal relationships when a family member has become seriously ill.

Lead trainer, Dr Lynn Bassett identifies the key transferrable skills, "This course is not about what you can do for another person but rather how you can be with that person.

"To give your full attention, if only for a short time, to listen, to affirm, to show acceptance can be the greatest gift. It is a gift that some are called to share with the seriously ill and dying but it is also a gift that we can offer to our children and families, our older relatives and friends, even to those we meet as we go about daily life.

"Learning to be comfortable with ourselves, with our own frailty and mortality, and to be comfortable in our being with another person and their situation takes generosity and practice. It is a vocation and a privilege; perhaps the most important thing we can do."

Dr Lynn Bassett (below) on behalf of the Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St Mary's University)
More on this at www.artofdyingwell.org, and <https://www.svp.org.uk/>



In 2019 the SVP joined forces with the Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St Mary's University to develop the End of Life Companionship training course. Over three online sessions participants learn something of the understanding of death and dying in our post-pandemic society, they reflect on how it is to be alongside a dying person and what are the desirable personal qualities for companionship.

VATICAN LETTER

GINA CHRISTIAN

What's Lourdes' secret? The Eucharist, reveals shrine's chief medical officer

The “secret of Lourdes is the Eucharist,” the renowned shrine's chief medical officer has said in an interview.

“The fabulous part of Lourdes is that we are invited, convened (here) by our Blessed Mother, but we end up discovering and possibly making friends with Jesus Christ, who is very present in Lourdes,” said Dr. Alessandro de Franciscis, president of the Lourdes Office of Medical Observations (Bureau des Constatations Médicales), a post he has held since 2009.

Each year, some three million pilgrims – many with terminal medical conditions – are drawn to the shrine in southwestern France, site of 18 Marian apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous, who was a young teenager in poverty and could neither read nor write at the time.

During the course of the visions, which took place between 11th February and 16th July 1858, in a Lourdes grotto, Mary identified herself as the Immaculate Conception, a dogma that had been proclaimed just four years earlier by Pope Pius IX. She also directed St. Bernadette to an underground spring at the grotto, the waters of which have prompted miraculous cures in some.

Pope Pius IX declared the apparitions authentic in 1862. St. Bernadette, wishing to avoid further public attention, joined the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. She died in 1879 at the age of 35 and was canonised in 1933.

Both the saint and the shrine have been the focus of numerous films, but the 2019 documentary *Lourdes*, directed by Thierry Demaizière and Alban Teurlai, and set to open next month in a select number of cinemas and online – takes a closer look at some of those who journey to the shrine seeking relief.

De Franciscis told reporters that a miraculous cure – only 70 of which have been officially recognised at the shrine – is “a Church judgement.”

A medical assessment, in contrast, would simply state the phenomenon as “an unexplained cure according to medical knowledge,” said the Italian-born paediatric specialist and epidemiologist, who is also a devout Catholic.

A team of doctors collaborates with de Franciscis to rigorously investigate claims of the miraculous at Lourdes, relying on a process and a rubric that blend historical precedent and cutting-edge medical knowledge.

Once a pilgrim brings an alleged cure to his attention, de Franciscis conducts a preliminary review, administering tests and discussing



The grotto at Lourdes has been linked to 70 miraculous cures over the years... ‘Faith and medicine find a place in Lourdes in which there is a very fruitful dialogue, but the true transformations that take place among pilgrims are more profound...’

the case with colleagues and experts who are affiliated with his office, which was established in 1883.

If it merits further scrutiny, the claim is placed before the International Medical Committee of Lourdes (or ‘CMIL’, as it is abbreviated in French), which was created in 1954 and has about 30 members. As president of the shrine's medical office, de Franciscis is also the committee's secretary, with the bishop of Tarbes-et-Lourdes (now Bishop Jean-Marc Micas) jointly presiding – though without a vote – in his role as custodian of the shrine.

De Franciscis said that at every stage the investigation is governed

by seven criteria, which were developed by Cardinal Prospero Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV) in his 18th-century work *On the Beatification of the Servants of God and the Canonization of the Blessed*, and which are still used by the Holy See for canonisation causes.

The first task is to establish a correct diagnosis, one that, as part of the second criteria, must have a severe prognosis, he said.

Four criteria demand that a cure be sudden and unexpected, complete, instantaneous and lasting, said de Franciscis.

The cure must have “no known possible explanation,” and “then it's all about the Church,” he said.

If a case clears all seven hurdles, the bishop notifies the pilgrim's diocesan bishop, who can arrive at his own judgment on the matter, said de Franciscis, who has seen three cases of a shock cure or recovery since 2009 become recognised as Lourdes' 68th, 69th and 70th official miracles.

Faith and medicine “find a place in Lourdes in which there is a very fruitful dialogue,” but the true transformations that take place among pilgrims are more profound, he said – as he himself knows firsthand.

“Lourdes has had a very great impact, not only for my faith but my entire life,” said de Franciscis, who

first visited as a teen and was “very impressed” with the opportunity to assist those with sickness and disabilities.

Other medical professionals who have traveled to Lourdes have been similarly touched, he said.

Among the examples he cited were an “absolutely non-practising Christian” who left military service, reconnected with his faith and became a nurse; a pharmacologist whose time in Lourdes inspired him to walk the Camino de Santiago in Spain; and a proudly agnostic medical officer who annually travels to Lourdes “to find (his) motivation for being a doctor.”

Lourdes is “a place of joy” in which pilgrims feel welcome, no matter their condition, said de Franciscis – and the shrine's daily processions, Masses and times of Eucharistic adoration are the reason, he added.

With millions encountering Christ in the Eucharist at Lourdes, “perhaps (even) only just a few minutes,” the reason for Mary's apparitions become clear, said de Franciscis.

“I believe there is the True Presence of Jesus, true man and true God, the real physical Presence of Jesus in that piece of bread,” he concluded. “This is a miracle that we believe in the Catholic Church. I think this is the essence of the reason why she appeared. It's to encourage us, as a mother would do with her children, to go back to Jesus, to become friends with Jesus her Son.”



The elevation of Arthur Cardinal Roche to the Sacred College brings the number of Yorkshire-born cardinals to three. In this, the second in a three-part series on the Yorkshire 'red hats', Dr James Hagerty explores the journey of Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, who was lauded by Winston Churchill and made a huge impact on the spiritual life of the nation in World War II.

Cardinal was a man that the Church – and Churchill – came to trust

On 3rd April 1935, Archbishop Arthur Hinsley, the recently-appointed Archbishop of Westminster, attended the last solemn public consistory for the canonisation of Cardinal John Fisher and Sir Thomas More. It was a momentous occasion for English Catholicism and for Archbishop Hinsley, who took the martyrs as the model pastor and layman.

Arthur Hinsley was born at Carlton, between Selby and Goole in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on 25th August 1865. His father, Thomas, was a joiner and the Hinsley family had lived in the area for generations. His mother, Bridget (nee Ryan), was from Cloonascragh near Tuam, County Galway.

Arthur was the second of four children and his early years were spent in a village of about 750 inhabitants noted for its recusant past. The Catholic Stapleton family of Carlton Towers had built the village church of St Mary's where Arthur was baptised.

In 1876, Hinsley entered St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, to begin training for the priesthood and in 1890 he proceeded to the Venerable English College, Rome, for further theological studies. He was ordained to the priesthood on 23rd December 1893 and appointed to teach at Ushaw where he undertook higher academic studies and acted as librarian.

In 1897, he was appointed curate at St Anne's, Keighley, and in 1900 he became the founding headmaster of St. Bede's Grammar School, Bradford. He worked hard to establish the school but in 1904, after a disagreement with Bishop William Gordon, he left the Diocese of Leeds and was incardinated into the Diocese of Southwark.

From there he ministered at Amberley and Withdean and from 1905 at Sutton Park near Guildford, where the energy and enthusiasm which had characterised his time at St Bede's was again evident. He developed the parish, opened a new school and taught at St John's College, Womersley, Southwark's Diocesan seminary.

Like other seminaries, Womersley

was shaken by the Modernist controversy and Hinsley's vigorous and unflinching response to the critics of Pope Pius X enhanced his reputation.

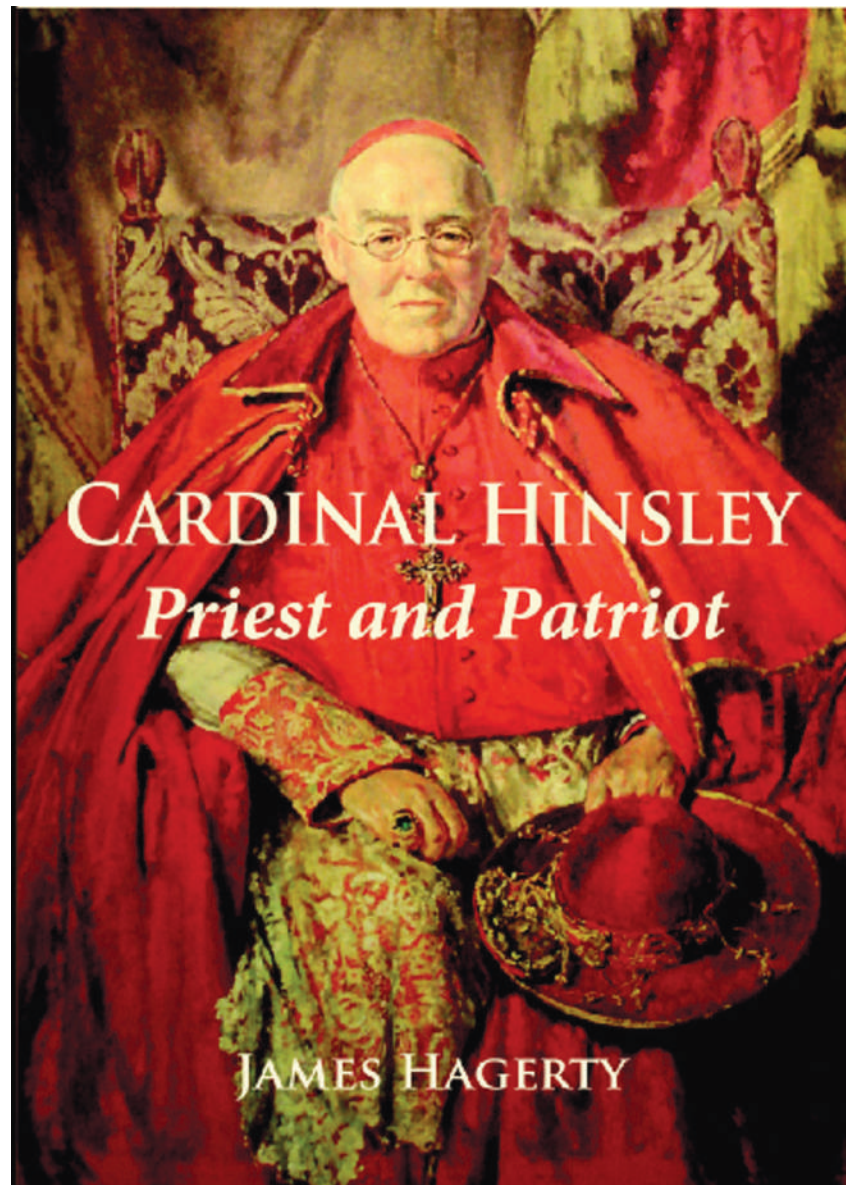
In 1911, Hinsley was appointed rector of Our Lady and St Philip Neri, Sydenham, a suburban mission which had opened in 1870. Energetically, he set about establishing confraternities and took a great interest in education but parochial developments were hampered by the Great War. His teaching commitment at Womersley was reduced but Bishop Peter Amigo of Southwark had already begun to use him as his Roman agent dealing with Vatican departments.

In 1917, against some episcopal opposition, Hinsley was appointed Rector of his *alma mater*, the Venerable English College, Rome. The same dynamism which had characterised his priesthood thus far was to be to his advantage in Rome as he set about reviving the fortunes of the college. With the support of Cardinal Aidan Gasquet, Cardinal Merry del Val and episcopal sponsors in England, he breathed new life into the Venerable, creating a vibrant esprit de corps. Eleven of his students were to become bishops of English and Welsh dioceses.

In 1927 Hinsley, now titular Bishop of Sebastopolis, was appointed Apostolic Visitor to British colonies in Africa with the task of imposing Vatican policy on missionary education. It was an



The coat of arms of Cardinal Hinsley



Dr James Hagerty's book on Cardinal Hinsley. Archbishop William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, described him as "a most devoted citizen of his country ... [and] a most kindly and warm hearted friend," while *The Daily Mail* described him as 'the greatest English Cardinal since Wolsey ... and probably the best loved Cardinal England ever had.'

important post for Pope Pius XI, regarded as 'the Pope of the missions', and Anglo-Vatican relations, and one which brought Hinsley into contact with missionary institutes ministering to a million African Catholics.

Three years later, Hinsley was given more authority when he was made titular Archbishop of Sardes and Apostolic Delegate to British colonies in Africa with the responsibility of re-organising missionary education in conjunction with the British government. Importantly, he was to oversee the development of an African priesthood. In 1934, after an attack of paratyphoid, he returned to Rome and accepted what he regarded as retirement – a canonry of the Archbasilica of St Peter's. He was in sepulchro.

'Lazarus, come forth' – with these dramatic words Pius XI called Hinsley out of retirement and sent him home in 1935 to succeed

Cardinal Francis Bourne who had been Archbishop of Westminster since 1903. He was elevated to Cardinal on 13th December 1937. His translation to Westminster was as much a surprise to Hinsley as it was to everyone else yet his impact was to be astonishing.

In diocesan affairs he acted prudently and sought advice. Time had taught him to be discreet but on schools, marriage, the priesthood, economic and social justice, welfare, fascism and communism he spoke and acted forcefully.

During the Second World War, Hinsley's patriotism was outstanding, his leadership of the English and Welsh Church forceful and his radio broadcasts made him the ecclesiastical equivalent of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. It is alleged that Churchill said 'There are only two men I trust to speak to the nation on the aims of this country at war; they are Cardinal Hinsley and myself'. Through the

Sword of the Spirit movement, Hinsley sought to restore a Christian basis for public and private life through the armed services. His Cardinal's Cross was readily accepted by thousands of fighting men and he developed close links with other Christian denominations.

Cardinal Hinsley died at Hare Street House near Buntingford on 17th March 1943, aged 77. He was buried at Westminster Cathedral. At his requiem were Cardinal Spellman of New York, General Sikorski of Poland, General de Gaulle leader of the Free French and Sir John Anderson, Chancellor of the Exchequer. 6,000 people paid their respects.

Archbishop William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, described Hinsley as "a most devoted citizen of his country ... [and] a most kindly and warm hearted friend." *The Daily Mail* described him as 'the greatest English Cardinal since Wolsey ... and probably the best loved Cardinal England ever had.'

Cardinal Heenan later recalled that Hinsley was "admirable, lovable and, above all, unpredictable" while Bishop Wheeler wrote that "no more distinctively English a character could have been chosen to succeed [Cardinal] Bourne."

Hinsley's cardinal armorial motto was 'Such are the Defenders I Need' – a reference to St John Fisher and St Thomas More.



"There are only two men I trust to speak to the nation on the aims of this country at war; they are Cardinal Hinsley and myself" (Winston Churchill, talking about the cardinal)

A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

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



Jealousy and vengeance

During my long lifetime, I've noticed two emotions that do not result in the satisfaction expected by the person who uses them. These are: jealousy and vengeance.

Jealousy

This emotion wastes an awful lot of time and never accomplishes anything, except generating envy, spite and resentment, yet many people pursue all these without realising they are accomplishing nothing, not even self-satisfaction. I found out all this the hard way by doing them, only to realise the futility.

In simple terms, jealousy is being angry at people who show they can do things more effectively than ourselves.

Jealousy can result in us becoming envious, spiteful, and resentful. If these emotions are not ignored, they could cause anger, murder, and wars. Jealousy never causes contentment, happiness, or love, but could destroy any type of happy relationship.

When it leads to envy, spite, and resentment the result can be the same.

Envy is desiring something other people have that you don't. This too could cause theft, jealousy, murder, and wars. The time spent being envious, which gains nothing positive, could have been spent on more beneficial activities which bring us happiness.

Spite is an activity that is aimed at causing someone discomfort. This is another time-wasting exercise that accomplishes nothing but can generate animosity and conflicts.



Resentment is a self-imposed feeling of animosity to another person. As it's self-imposed it's a truly stupid feeling, but again one that can cause misery to others, and never peace or happiness to the person being resentful.

I was really upset when I looked back and realised how these

emotions had caused me so much unhappiness and misery and made me wonder why I'd ever considered them at all. They had not only caused me to experience unhappiness and misery, but they'd led others to seek vengeance against me.

Since then, I've learned that love

and compassion can always defeat these human traits, and these never fail to bring happiness and contentment.

Never consider using the above emotions as they can be the cause of great unhappiness leaving people with no real friends. A truly awful way of life.

Vengeance

This emotion is a thing most people wish for against others who have offended them. They want to get their own back, causing the offender pain or at least discomfort. When people use vengeance, they find that it:

- Can lead to serious bullying.
- Affects not only the offender, but those near the offender.
- Can waste an awful lot of time for the person who wants vengeance.
- Very rarely achieves anything for the person wanting vengeance.

I found a simple definition of vengeance as being: *Retribution exacted for an injury or wrong.*

One can also be vengeful. This is causing an injury, humiliation, or some harm on one person by another who has been harmed by that person. To take one's vengeance is the desire for revenge.

If someone hurts you, you might be inspired to plan an act of vengeance: some type of payback to settle the score, but remember, this might lead someone to take vengeance on you in return. It's a downward spiral of pain and betrayal, one person hurting another, who hurts another, and so on.

Someone who wants revenge usually pursues it with a vengeance.

It's all an activity that wastes an awful lot of time and very rarely achieves its aim or satisfies the person taking revenge; it's not worth the effort.

God himself knew this and it's probably why He said "Vengeance is mine." (Romans 12:19). In other words, leave it to God.

A mother's love, and forgiveness, can change everything

Four years ago, I watched a video on YouTube of a woman who was doing impressive work caring for underserved children in downtown Columbus, Ohio, USA. She'd started a centre for after-school activities, where young people could come and have a snack, do their homework, learn about Jesus Christ and spend time with one another in a safe environment.

What a great initiative, I thought. And then I kept watching. There was a reason she was doing this work. Isn't there always a reason? But Rachel Muha's was nothing short of astounding.

In 1999, Rachel had lost her younger son, Brian, when he was violently murdered after he and his roommate were abducted from their off-campus apartment at the Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio.

Brian, a bright, caring 18-year-old from Westerville, Ohio, had his life ahead of him. He had wanted to be a doctor -- to work

with, you guessed it, underserved children.

But there is an even more incredible part of this story, and it's that Rachel publicly forgave her son's killers before his body had even been found.

And it's that act of forgiveness that has gone on to change life after life in the 20 years since.

How do I know this? Because I got to tell her story. After watching the YouTube video (on a tip from Kevin Lowry, a member of OSV's Board of Directors), I spoke with book editors at OSV and volunteered to work with Rachel to make her story -- and the work of The Brian Muha Foundation -- better known.

For the next three years, I spoke and visited with Rachel, talking to her about Brian's kidnapping and what it was like to search for him (even looking in dumpsters); about dealing with grief and her decision to forgive; about the two young men who had murdered her son;

about her older son, Chris, and his own heartbreak; about the terrible criminal trials that occurred and then occurred a second time; on grief, racial tensions and the death penalty; and finally, on how she has been an inspiring one-woman agent of change in her community and beyond.

The result was a new book, published in November, called *Legacy of Mercy: A True Story of Murder and a Mother's Forgiveness* (OSV, \$19.95).

Through those pages, I do my best to introduce the reader to the woman who had first captivated me in that YouTube video -- the woman who had spent her life in the service of others and, in doing so, in service to God. And who has experienced this best but the young people who she has served over the years? One of my favorite examples of the success of Rachel's work is how people who first came to the centre as children are now returning to help the next generation.

Daniel Houston, 22, is one of those 'Racers' who is now working full-time with the day school. He told me, when I recorded him for an interview, "If Miss Rachel is hearing this: I love you, man. I appreciate everything you've done for me."

His comments bring me to tears this day.

Thanks to Rachel's tireless effort and hard work, "Legacy of Mercy" is already outdated. There are more students at the day school (complete with new uniforms!), and a gym expansion is underway. And watching over it all is a big photo of Brian, hanging on the wall outside the centre's office. Thanks to his mum -- to her tremendous faith, her love for others and her decision to forgive against all odds -- he will not be remembered just as a boy who died.

He will be remembered as a boy whose untimely and tragic death helped change the world.

CREDO

FR HUGH DUFFY

Spotting 'true' Christians can be challenging

It's amazing where you can find Christian inspiration. This is an example of that: it is a story about a man and a woman who ordered two fried chicken dinners from a takeaway restaurant.

The girl at the counter mistakenly gave them a bag of money, the entire day's proceeds, instead of fried chicken. The man and woman drove to their picnic site and sat down to enjoy their chicken dinner. To their surprise, they discovered that it was a bag of money, totalling almost £2,500. They put the money back in the bag, drove back to the restaurant and returned the moneybag to the restaurant manager. The manager was overwhelmed, and declared both the man and woman heroes, even saints. He wanted to call the local press to put the story and the couple's picture in the local newspaper. But the man refused to co-operate. Instead he leaned over the counter and whispered in the

ears of the manager, "You see, the woman I'm with is not my wife... she's uh, somebody else's wife."

The man and woman scored high in justice and concern for others but they scored low in self-denial. The Gospel challenges us to score high in both self-denial and concern for others. This is the mark of a true Christian.

Many Christians, it seems, often belong to one of two camps. Either they score high marks in their commitment to serve their fellow man, but are low in self-denial. Or they score high in self-denial but are low in their commitment to serve others. St James, the apostle of practical Christianity, teaches us that a true Christian must score high marks in both (concern for the welfare of others and self-denial) in order to be truly acceptable before God. He teaches the importance of faith combined with action or love for others, and he explains this in his letter.



"The Gospel challenges us to score high in both self-denial and concern for others. This is the mark of a true Christian."

Jesus emphasises this teaching when he states: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." A true Christian does not merely make sacrifices, attend church, read the scriptures or celebrate inspiring liturgies: wonderful though these may be. The litmus test of the true Christian is how he or she lives out the word of God in their lives. "Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves," says St James. "If any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like (James 1:22-24).

The analogy of a man who looks in the mirror and sees his dirty face and dishevelled hair and goes away without doing anything about it is very appropriate. The word of God is as a mirror which shows us how dirty our faces are and how dishevelled our hair is. A wise person would immediately take steps to wash his face to improve his looks.

That is the purpose of the mirror which is an image of the word of God. Hearing the word of Jesus alone does not make us Christian. It is when we take steps to put into action what Jesus teaches us that we become Christian.

It is not easy today to tell a true

Christian from a false Christian when so many are divided in their understanding about what it means to be a Christian. Jesus makes it clear that the true Christian is one who "denies himself and takes up his cross to follow him" (Mark 8 : 34). This kind of Christian is a true follower because he is prepared, by denying himself, to act like Christ, to find Christ in himself. The false Christian, on the other hand, finds himself in Christ by paying lip-service while refusing to deny himself.

Strive, therefore, to put on Christ by denying, in yourself, whatever conflicts with Jesus's example of love.

Why are the Beatitudes so important?

The Beatitudes are important because they are the heart and soul of Jesus's teachings. They are what make His teachings unique, and set Him apart from all other teachers, Rabbis, Imams or Gurus in the history of mankind.

Yet, you hear precious little about the Beatitudes when you turn on the radio or television and listen to preachers and televangelists talk about Jesus.

Why is this? Do they regard the Beatitudes of lesser importance than Armageddon, the ten commandments, or the rapture? Or is it possible they don't understand the importance of the Beatitudes and their significance in the lives of Christians?

There are eight beatitudes (Matthew 5 : 1-10). These beatitudes are habits of the heart. Unlike the Ten Commandments, the beatitudes are not new laws to live up to, but a new way of living that completes the commandments, complete what you do in life. These new habits of the heart form the core of the gospel which ushers in the reign of God.

In the beatitudes, Jesus speaks the language of benediction where, for example, humility means more than pride (first beatitude), where mourning our own sins and who we once were means more than self-importance (second beatitude).



This is also where meekness is more important than haughtiness (third beatitude), where generosity counts for more than success (fourth beatitude), where mercy tempers justice (fifth beatitude).

You will also discover that truthfulness puts the lie to deviousness (sixth beatitude), where waging peace is superior to waging

war (seventh beatitude), and where courage, in the face of persecution, overcomes complacency (eighth beatitude).

These wonderful attitudes of Christ urge us to look beyond appearances to find real spiritual substance within us by changing our hearts.

The cynic may say that only winners, not

the meek as in the third beatitude, will inherit the earth. This assessment of life's purpose is entirely wrong even if it is very common today. It stops at appearances and misses the real point in living.

To be a good winner means achieving what you want out of life with meekness and integrity of spirit, not by lording it over others, or getting ahead in life at other people's expense.

The eight beatitudes impart the proper attitudes in your dealings with one another. They are an invitation to strive to put on the spiritual attitudes of Christ that change the heart from within.

Jesus gave us these eight blessed attitudes so that we may conduct our lives in the proper spirit. Your attitude is important because it affects the WAY you do something.

A bad attitude breaks a family, a church or a business, but a good attitude renews a family, a church or a business. That's why the beatitudes are so important. They renew the WAY we act; they bless us and others by what we do because they spring from the right, interior attitude.

The wonderful thing is that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to adopt the right kind of attitudes in all that we do each day.

Cherish the Beatitudes of Jesus by the way you live.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Jesus's Sermon on the Mount is the perfect tonic for your soul

29th January 2023 – 4th Sunday, (A)

Theme: The beatitudes are the basic Christian ideals, not a moral code or a set of rules to avoid God's punishment. They aim to raise our perspective above the constraints of self-interest and gain.

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

For I will leave among you a people humble and lowly

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the Lord's wrath.

For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord – the remnant of Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.

Responsorial: Psalm 145:7-10

R.: Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed.

It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R./)

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down, the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan. (R./)

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked.

The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age. (R./)

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is



The mosaic of Sermon on the Mount in Kotel Church, Prague.

written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12
The spirit of the Kingdom: the Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Soul-searching

If hearing the Beatitudes from St Matthew's Gospel cause us to feel a little uneasy, they are probably meant to do so. They are like a spiritual tonic, to help us probe and

clear our conscience. If taken quite literally they seem to be too idealistic, too unworldly for us. But Jesus meant them as words of life, to bring out the best in us.

They make no strictly enforceable demands, they are not a set of laws, they are not meant to lay a burden of guilt on our shoulders. What they do is describe in eight striking sentences of the marvellous freedom we can enjoy, if we are not too tied to ownership. Jesus speaks from experience, because he himself lived the Beatitudes fully.

Although laid down as commandments, they are revolutionary ideals, going well beyond the beatitudes found in the Old Testament Wisdom books. The Wisdom writers describe as happy the man who has a good wife, docile and obedient children, faithful friends, and prosperity in all his undertakings. But according to Jesus, the happy and blessed are not those who are currently enjoying wealth and success, but rather the poor, the hungry, the mourners, the despised and persecuted. Naturally we wonder just what he meant by the "poor in spirit." Was it people in material poverty, or rich people who were not overly attached to their money, or spiritual-minded people who for whom God meant everything? In practice the majority of the population of the Graeco-Roman world in those times were in material poverty.

Certainly the "poor in spirit" must include people in humble circumstances who made do without complaint. Their lives were in sharp contrast to the arrogant

spirit of the upper-class minority who owned most of the wealth and controlled the lives of others. Long before Christ the Psalmist wrote, "This poor man called, and the Lord heard him, and saved him from all his distress" (Ps 34:6).

The poor could not rely on wealth for their security, so they relied on God, who alone was their hope and strength. Jesus did not praise material poverty but taught that a humble disposition draws us near to God.

Paradoxically, He did not agitate for social reform, or call for a coup d'état. Later he says, "Lay up treasures for yourselves in heaven" (Mt 6:19+). He utterly refused to be a part of any violent rebellion but was called the friend of publicans or tax collectors. Despite his miraculous feeding of the multitudes, His concern seems never to have focused on agitation for economic reform.

It was on people themselves, the human person in relation to God, that he focused his mission. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt 6:33). Certainly his sympathy went out to the humble, the toilers and heavily laden. He blessed those who have only God to turn to, the powerless, those who mourn, those who are persecuted. All these will be comforted. They will have mercy shown them. Theirs will be the kingdom of heaven. To them the love of God will reveal the meaning of life. They will be called children of God and shall see God face to face.

A condensed Gospel

The beatitudes offer a summary of Jesus' teaching. They are the condensed gospel and need some teasing out to apply them to life. We are aware of political manifestos, statements of what a party stands for, what they intend to achieve if you elect them. This gospel is Jesus' manifesto. It is a manifesto that he promises will bring us near to God.

People who are detached and show gentleness to others, are blessed. Even if they are rich, their money does not make them boastful or proud. Grief is the price we must eventually pay for having loved. If you are determined never to cry at a funeral, don't ever love anyone. The meek and the gentle are the most resilient of people. Good people deeply respect justice and fair play, and try to win them for others. As you treat others, so you will be treated. If we want to receive mercy and compassion, we must show mercy to others. A pure heart is not devious, deceitful, selfish or cunning. Jesus did not say we should be passive. Rather he urges us to build bridges of peace with others.

Jesus warns those who follow him will be treated as he was. There is a cost in Pentecost, and following him means sharing his cross. Right from the beginning when Simeon saw him in the temple, he said that Jesus would be a sign of contradiction. Everything he said and did was a challenge to this world's values. Those with power, prestige, and control felt undermined by his message. The religious leaders who were the arbiters of right and wrong, were so threatened by him that they planned his death.

There is a cleansing power in the beatitudes. They are about letting go of things that are not life-giving, and about becoming truly free. They offer guidelines for living, for inner peace and happiness. Formal religion can be too tied to rules and regulations and be authoritarian. Spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is about letting go, so as to be free in God's sight.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH FR DOYLE

Silence is golden – and that’s why your priest is keen to use it as part of Mass

Q. My wife and I are in our mid-70s and have bought cemetery plots and made our funeral arrangements. We selected immediate burial, without any rites, ceremony or embalming. But after talking to family members, we are worried that perhaps, in not having a Catholic funeral Mass, we are sinning gravely and making an irrevocable mistake. Please advise us about this decision, which now weighs heavily on our hearts.

A. First, to relieve your burden: You are not sinning. A funeral Mass is not an absolute requirement for the burial of a Catholic, and so if you proceed with your present plan, you may do so without guilt. But you might want to give this some further thought.

The Eucharist is the centre of Catholic life. It is there that we celebrate the dying and rising of Jesus, there that we celebrate our own hope of resurrection; and it is there, at the time of death, that family and friends gather to pray for the deceased and to commend that person to the mercy of God through the strongest prayer they know – and that prayer is the Mass.

Q. So much of the Mass we attend is sung that the Mass lasts more than an hour. Before the readings, the lector walks all the way up from a pew in the congregation, which creates further delay. Then there is a minute of silent reflective time after the readings, which I find tedious. My husband and I (who are both of retirement age) have no patience for such deliberate delay. Many parishioners have complained, but the pastor has dismissed our voice. What can we do, short of joining another parish?

A. Your question is a frequent one, reflecting the feelings of many parishioners, especially older ones. Therefore, I think that it merits a longer-than-usual response.

While I understand your concern and trust that it flows from a deep Catholic faith, I have to tell you honestly that your pastor is being faithful to the thinking of the Church. The Church’s official ‘guidebook’ on celebrating the Eucharist, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), makes a strong plea for periods of quiet within the liturgy.

In the Mass, the GIRM tells us, we are invited to silence at five particular times: in the beginning, at the penitential rite; at the start of certain prayers when the priest says, ‘Let us pray’; after each of the Scripture readings; after the homily; and after all have received Communion.



A detail of a painting of Adam and Eve by Peter Wenzel, Vatican Museums. ‘Due to the sin of Adam and Eve, ‘the whole of human history was altered by the fault committed by our first parents.’

There is no ‘rule’ as to how long each of these silences needs to be, and certainly discretion is in order. The ordinary congregation at Sunday Mass is not a contemplative monastic community.

The GIRM directs that, at the conclusion of each reading and of the homily, ‘all meditate briefly on what has been heard’ (No. 23). I would say that perhaps 30 seconds is appropriate at each of those points, with an even shorter period after the priest’s ‘Let us pray’, so that all present can call to mind their own prayer intentions before the celebrant ‘collects’ them.

The periods of silence, then, need add no more than about three minutes to a Sunday Mass, which seems a small price to pay once a week to ensure that the Eucharist receives the reflection it deserves. After all, we are encountering the living God in real and tangible ways – an awesome privilege – so it does seem appropriate to prepare

ourselves and, like Our Lady, to ‘ponder these things in our hearts.’

There is a proverb that says: ‘The quieter you become, the more you hear.’ Incorporating even these short periods of silence invites members of the congregation to hear with both their hearts and ears.

As for music at Mass, what the GIRM (No. 40) says is this: ‘Every care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.’

It is hard to escape the conclusion that at least some congregational singing is expected at every Sunday Mass, but the extent of that singing is discretionary.

Priests would be well-advised to follow an earlier recommendation in that same section of the GIRM (No. 40) that states that there should be ‘due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly.’ The goal should

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There is a proverb that says: ‘The quieter you become, the more you hear.’ Incorporating even these short periods of silence invites members of the congregation to hear with both their hearts and ears.

be to encourage as many people as possible to attend Sunday Mass and to have them worship productively.

Aware that a fair number of Catholics prefer a quieter celebration, many parishes have at least one weekend Mass where the hymns are fewer and shorter.

If you don’t find that in your own parish, it is entirely proper to seek another Catholic parish.

Whereas, at one time, Catholic parishes were strictly territorial (you went to the closest church), now parishes are largely ‘intentional’ (you go where you’re comfortable with the priest, the congregation and the liturgy).

Celebrating the liturgy should challenge you to learn and to grow. It should comfort you, too, and bring you peace.

Q. Our son and his wife-to-be are not practising Catholics. They have a little girl, now 20 months old, who needs to be baptised. How do we as parents approach the subject – without turning them against the faith completely or against us?

A. Let me say first that I admire very much your love for Catholicism and your desire to pass on the benefits of the Catholic faith to your granddaughter. My goal is the same as yours: to bring her parents back to regular practice of the faith so they can offer strong religious support to their child.

The wording of your question, though, may be significant. You say that your granddaughter ‘needs to be baptised.’ Is it possible that you think that is her only chance for Heaven? I raise the question because some people believe that.

So let me clarify that first. In 2007, the Vatican’s International Theological Commission, with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, said that the concept of limbo reflected ‘an unduly restrictive view of salvation’ and that the mercy of God offers good reason to hope that babies who die without being baptised can go to Heaven.

Now, on to your question. Canon 868 of the Church’s Code of Canon Law states that ‘for an infant to be baptised licitly ... there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion.’

Right now, as you describe the situation, that sounds doubtful. If you see an opportunity in a quiet way to speak to your son about the religious path he might be considering for their daughter, then do it.

But be careful not to force it. To strongarm your son about his religious responsibility could have a negative effect, including jeopardising your relationship with him for a long time.

Do you think it might be better for now simply to pray for them, that they will reach the choice of baptism on their own? And remember that God cares about the baby’s salvation even more than you do.

Q. In your column about Our Blessed Mother’s Assumption, you wrote ‘Some theologians feel that, since death is a consequence of sin, Mary would not have had to die.’ I have never thought of sin as causing death. Can you explain this a little more?

A. At the dawn of creation, the very first human beings were made to live forever and that was the divine intention and desire. The sin of Adam and Eve, however, changed that, and the whole of human history was altered by the fault committed by our first parents.

This is reflected in the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Because of original sin, harmony with nature is broken and ‘creation is now subject to its bondage to decay ...’

The consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: Man will ‘return to the ground,’ for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history.

The good news is that Jesus has come and defeated death through His cross and resurrection, and has opened up the gates of Heaven and eternal life. He calls us into a loving relationship with God, our loving Father, which will never end. In Jesus’ own words: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!’ (Revelation 1:17-18).

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

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



The school of Divine Love

I don't know what T.S. Elliot meant when he wrote that 'the end of all our travelling is to end up at the place where we started and to know that place for the first time', but I do know what these words mean for me.

For the end of all my travelling, the end of all my speaking, the end of all my writing, ends up where I started many years ago. It is where the Church first started on the first Pentecost Day almost 2,000 years ago. It is the place where I have continually restarted after I have lost my way. I have come to know the place quite well.

The Place where we first started.

In case you do not know the place to which I am referring as well as I do, let me set the scene for you. Although Jesus had risen from the dead and they had seen him rise up and pass through a cloud on his way back to Heaven, the Apostles were still afraid.

They were still afraid that what their own leaders did to him would be done to them, so they were gathered together in the 'Upper Room' waiting for Jesus to send them the Love who would cast out fear. This love would fill them with the wisdom that would enable them to begin building his Kingdom of Love on earth.

When they received this love through the person of the Holy Spirit, they could not contain themselves. They rushed out into the street to tell all and sundry what they had experienced.

Three thousand or more Jews who had come from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate the anniversary of the day when Moses gave the old law to his people, were enthralled. They were not only enthralled by what they saw, but what was said and whom they were about to receive. For they were about to receive the new law which was not given so that it could be written on tablets of stone, but onto, and into hearts of flesh and blood. This new law was God's love poured into all hearts that were open to receive it enabling them to accept Christ and be taken up into him. They would be taken up into his mystical body and onward ever more deeply into his mystical loving. By that I mean into his mystical loving of his Father, to receive his loving in return, as well as the gifts and fruits of his love.

The true Meaning of Repentance

When the 3,000 saw what the Holy Spirit did for the Apostles they asked St Peter what they too should do to receive what the Apostles had received. The answer they were

given was that first and foremost they should repent to have their sins forgiven, and then they should be baptised. They were fellow Jews so they knew what repentance meant. It was the recurrent clarion call of the prophets when calling God's people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would follow his arrival.

For the Jews and therefore for Christ and the first Christians there was no word for someone who had repented. There was only a word for someone who is repenting because it is a continual ongoing process of turning back to God.

The love received in return is given to the measure of the love they have been offering to God. This love will eventually enable them to become one with Christ – one in heart, one in mind, and one in body, or more precisely with his mystical body and with his mystical loving of his Father. So that this union that nobody even dreamed about in the Old Testament could be brought about, the first converts were told to be baptised. Then in, with, and through Christ their continual repentance would be spiritually enriched beyond all their hopes and dreams.

Into Christ's own contemplation

Once drawn up into the mystical body of Christ, their continual repentance would draw them ever more deeply into the prayer of Christ and into his contemplation of His Father. It was because they had been made in the image and likeness of God that both the Jews and the first Christians yearned for God with a love that, as St Augustine insisted, would be restless until it would rest in God.

Prayer is the place where repentance is practised as we continually turn to God in order to be open to receive all that God gives us. The different forms of prayer that changes as we grow and develop in our spiritual journey is to help us to keep repenting – to keep raising our hearts and minds to God, enabling us to be at all times open to receive his love in return.



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Left: "For the end of all my travelling, the end of all my speaking, the end of all my writing, ends up where I started many years ago. It is where the Church first started on the first Pentecost Day almost two thousand years ago."

Painting of Pentecost by an unknown artist in the Chiesa Collegiata dell'Assunta at Arco Italy.

Distractions and temptations

Whenever we try to pray we will always be tormented by distractions and temptations that will threaten to prevent us from trying to raise our hearts and minds to God.

However, rather than preventing us from praying they actually help facilitate prayer. Why? Because the very essence of prayer is the repentance that is learned each time we turn away from a distraction or a temptation in order to turn back to God.

Each time we turn away from a distraction to open our hearts to God in prayer, we have practised repentance. That is why St Angela of Foligno called prayer the 'School of Divine Love', because it is the place where by practicing a series of selfless acts, the habit of selflessness is gradually learnt that leads to a habit of selflessness.

This in its turn eventually generates an inner disposition of heart and mind that puts self-second and others first, most particularly in prayer where selflessness is learnt in trying to love God.

This is the time and place where we first open ourselves to receive the love that will eventually transform us into the image and likeness of God.

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

The Asceticism of the Heart

What I have called the Asceticism of the Heart is the asceticism by which a person freely chooses to give quality space and time each day to practise repentance.

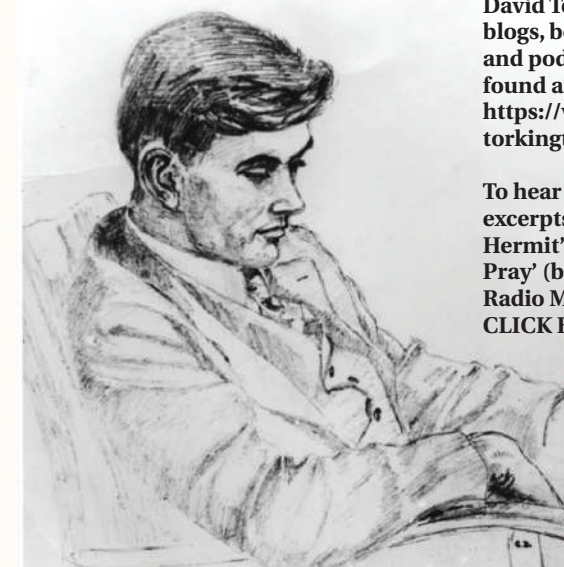
In continually turning to God, this habit of repentance in its turn leads to the continual mutual loving that finally leads to union with God. Means and methods of prayer, from reciting prayers and practising devotions at the beginning, to the prayer generated in the meditation that leads to contemplation, are like the props that at all times keep a person's heart and mind open to God.

When Moses was watching his army from the mountainside, he opened his arms to pray for God's help. Noticing that the moment his arms dropped the enemy began to

thrive, bystanders propped his arms up so that he would at all times be open to God whose power would guarantee the victory that finally came. The props represent the means of prayer that at different times in a person's spiritual journey help keep the heart and mind at all times open to receive God's grace.


David Torkington reads from The Hermit – Episode 1

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




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

To hear David read excerpts from The Hermit' and 'How to Pray' (broadcast on Radio Maria England), [CLICK HERE](#)



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION



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

Archbishop blesses college's new health education suite

New facilities including a mock hospital ward to benefit T-Level nursing students at CTK Emmanuel have been opened and blessed by the Archbishop of Southwark, John Wilson.

CTK Emmanuel secured the funding from the Department of Education, to open the new state-of-the-art vocational facility, which is used to train and support Health T Level students who are studying to become adult health nurses.

Archbishop Wilson was delighted to bless the new facilities, which included the aptly named St Theresa's Ward. He said: "It was a joy to witness the tremendous work and dedication of the teachers, along with the remarkable enthusiasm of the students towards their studies. The Lord Jesus teaches us to bring the Gospel message of His love into our daily lives, and into our world. It is my continued prayer that the CTK



community will continue to flourish in this mission; and thus, I give thanks for their exceptional contribution to the Catholic Education of our young people in the Archdiocese of Southwark, and invoke God's blessing upon all the staff, students."

The ward is named St. Theresa's in homage to the secondary school,

which was originally at the CTK site, before it became a sixth form in 1993.

The new facilities have been designed by employers to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of employers to train up future nurses and medical professionals. The ward features a range of equipment, such as



The archbishop officially opens the new unit and below, tours the new facilities

specialised prosthetic patients, across a range of ages and with a variety of illnesses, hospital beds and an observation room.

Students will be able to learn tasks such as taking swabs, blood pressure readings, vital statistics and temperatures, and to gain experience in treating patients and diagnosing symptoms across a range of illnesses from child to adult.

St. Theresa's Ward is the third project to be completed for students studying at CTK Emmanuel, with

earlier projects creating a contemporary business space and revolutionising the engineering space into modern technology labs.

CTK Emmanuel, located on Belmont Hill, close to Lewisham and Blackheath, is a successful sixth form serving 16-19 learners from in and around Southeast London.

It offers the widest range of vocational courses locally in a Catholic sixth form environment and has recently added T Levels to the curriculum.



**Saint John Henry Newman
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Teacher of RE - Impact Lead

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Start date: Easter 2023 or sooner if possible

We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic, highly motivated and inspiring individual to the role of **Teacher of RE - Impact Lead**. The successful candidate should be well qualified, with the vision and energy to engage and empower young people and colleagues alike.

We are looking for applicants who have:

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What we can offer you:

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Find out more at <https://www.newmanrc.oldham.sch.uk>

About Newman Catholic College

Newman Catholic College is an inclusive 11-16 voluntary aided school located in Oldham, 10 minutes from Manchester city centre and the breath-taking Pennines. The school is situated in a modern building with state-of-the-art facilities and enjoys excellent transport links.

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



Coventry schools score top marks with CSI team

A pair of Coventry Catholic schools have been awarded top marks from a leading national education framework.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School and St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, part of the Romero Catholic Academy, were classed as 'outstanding' in all report categories by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI).

The schools, which are based in Wood End and Wyken respectively, were awarded Grade 1 across the board in the latest round of inspections, receiving stellar feedback for their work across 'Catholic life and mission', 'religious education' and 'collective worship'.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School improved on their overall score of 'good' awarded in the last inspection in 2016, claiming maximum scores of one in all nine

sub-categories. Pupils received glowing feedback on their religious education, with inspectors claiming that 'pupils view their religious education books as their 'gift to God''. Inspectors also praised St Patrick's 'inclusive, welcoming community deeply rooted in following the teachings of Christ in day-to-day life'.

St Gregory's maintained its Grade 1 status awarded in 2015, receiving praise for the school environment, which 'enhances Catholic life and mission' as 'pupils learn and grow in a vibrant, faith-filled atmosphere'.

Megan Scullion, Principal at St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, was identified as 'an excellent role model for pupils and staff and effectively demonstrates Catholic virtues.



Children from St Patrick's receive their school's grade

Keeping the light burning for young worship in East Anglia



The East Anglia Diocesan Youth Service started the year with a bang with a special candlelight Mass for young people, followed by hot dogs, a bonfire and fireworks.

Bishop Peter Collins celebrated the Mass, joined by Fr. Luke Goymour (chaplain to the Youth Service) and Fr Andrew Eburne (parish priest of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Poringland and chaplain to UEA). Music was provided by a group ably led by Alex Savage, the lay chaplain at Notre Dame High School.

Over 100 young people joined the celebration: children and teenagers with their families, many of the

'Ignite Lite' volunteers, the full-time Ignite team, as well as the prayer group that meet together every month to pray for youth ministry in the diocese.

During Mass, people were invited to place a candle at the foot of the altar as a sign of recommitting themselves to the Lord. Then, as they left to go into the Bishop's garden, everyone was given a glow stick – a reminder to let the light of our faith keep on shining. It was cold, but the bonfire warmed everyone up as they ate hot dogs and watched the fireworks.

The event also had a collection of items for the 'Welcome Rucksack



Appeal' that supports children who are refugees and asylum seekers in Norwich.

Director of the Youth Service, Hamish MacQueen, said: "It was great to be back running this event again as we hadn't been able to do it

for the past three years because of the pandemic. Thanks to everyone who made it possible, especially Daniel Anderson and the catering and logistics volunteers."

• Pictures by RC Diocese of East Anglia

Tell your parish or school's story to the Universe Catholic Weekly!

Let's see your good news stories and celebrations in your Universe Catholic Weekly.

Just email the story to **Andy Drozdziak** at

News@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

And we love great pics – so send them too!

School wins award for building better lives focus

A South Tyneside primary school has won an award for improving the physical and mental health of staff.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, has been awarded the Better Health at Work Bronze Award.

Teacher Maureen McMillin, who is the BHAWA lead at the Jarrow primary school, started the process to improve the lives of all of our staff and build a happier, healthier team.

From exercising with Joe Wicks via his Body Coach app to enjoying Fruity Friday, the staff members have participated in a range of activities over the last year aimed at improving their physical health and wellbeing.

Other areas of focus included women's health, work-life balance, managing stress, cancer awareness and advice on quitting smoking.

"Taking part in the Better Health at Work Award has been a great opportunity to reflect on how we support and take care of each other," Mrs McMillin said.

"We have initiated many new events, such as Fruity Friday and book swaps, while signposting staff to colleagues for specific support. This support has come through staff at St Joseph's, as well as colleagues within our Trust.

"We now look forward to applying for and completing the silver award, with the added bonus of even better health for our community."



Headteacher Paul Craig said: "As a school community, we try to make sure we take care of each other. This includes our wonderful staff.

"It is fantastic that we have achieved the bronze award, which recognises the value we put on our colleagues.

"We are now extending this as the first 'Kindness Matters' school in South Tyneside. This promotes an even more positive approach to life, both in school and at home. Our children and community are encouraged to reflect on how they have been kind, and how we can improve our 'kindness'.

"Our 30-day Kindness Challenge will culminate in a 'Kindness Matters' week, with a programme around positive self-worth."

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AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION



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

Twinning celebrates a shared devotion to Our Lady

The Westminster diocesan Rosary Shrine, St Dominic's in Haverstock Hill, has been officially twinned with the Rosary Basilica in Guatemala City.

To celebrate this, on Saturday 7th January a candle-lit Rosary procession took place with Fr George Pittalis OP, Rector of the Rosary Basilica, who presented an image of the much-loved statue of Our Lady of the Rosary from Guatemala City printed on tiles.

These tiles are matched with a set of tiles bearing the image of the Lady of the Rosary Altar in St Dominic's.

The image was installed in the 4th Glorious Mystery chapel of the church.

After the blessing and veneration of the image, Fr George Pittalis gave an address on behalf of his Dominican community and brothers of Central America, thanking the London friars for their welcome, and for "undertaking this celebration of the spiritual link, a 'twinning' between The Rosary Shrine in London and the Basilica of the Rosary in Guatemala City where (in both) the devotion and veneration of our beloved Mary, the



Virgin Mother of God, is carried out and attended to by the praying and preaching of the holy rosary."

"Through this spiritual link", he added, "we would like to join forces for us both to be able to live with a particular enthusiasm our love and devotion to our sweet Lady, the Queen of the Holy Rosary, and Mother and Queen of us all. This

twinning is to join forces to spread the Gospel of peace and salvation where it is possible by praying and preaching the Holy Rosary, and to commit ourselves to spending our life as true Christians."

Both England and Guatemala have a history of rich devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary, said Fr Pittalis, "and now we have the

privilege and responsibility to continue in this tradition," he added.

"With the words of Pope St John Paul II, we can say we are part of one of the most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation, that reminds us that our true devotion for Mary our Queen of the Rosary is a possession of a spark of Heaven"

A-level results put St Gregory in England's top 25 schools

St Gregory's Catholic Science College, Harrow, has been ranked by *The Times* in the top 25 non-selective state schools in the country for its A Level results.

In 2022, 79 per cent of St Gregory's students achieved A*-B grades in their A Level examinations. These results were the best in the history of the school, a performance which is particularly notable considering the disruption to education caused by numerous national lockdowns over the previous two years.

Commenting on the school's recent A Level success, St Gregory's Headteacher, Andrew Prindiville, said: "These fantastic results are testament to the incredible hard work and dedication of our teaching staff, the support of our parents and governors and the diligent determination of our pupils."

In addition, St Gregory's GCSE results placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally for progress.

Milton Keynes Christian Churches unite to send prayers for end to racial injustice

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Milton Keynes began with a powerful service of prayer and worship at St Mary's Church Bletchley. The service was led by Pastor Ferdinand Tambwe from Rehoboth PEFA Church and a group of talented musicians.

Bishop of Northampton David Oakley issued a reminder that there is no "denominational Heaven" – and thanked the choir for leading us in worship that was both passionate and deeply meaningful.

Bishop David, who attended the inaugural service of the Milton Keynes Churches Together, said: "God does listen to our prayers and we should not be afraid – we should simply have faith. Together we can journey towards a moment when our brotherhood and sisterhood as Christians is more apparent".

The week of Christian Unity is traditionally observed during the octave of St Peter and St Paul, 18th-25th January.

This year a focus has been placed on working together to contribute to



Bishop of Northampton David Oakley with other Church representatives at the event to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

the promotion of racial justice. This theme has been presented under the guidance of the churches in Minneapolis. They chose this theme: "Do good; seek justice" (Isaiah 1:17).

The week of Christian unity has history dating back to 1740, when in Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links,

whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all Churches.

Rev Helen Cameron, the Moderator of the Free Churches Group, spoke movingly about the importance of seeing God in all people – and said that the event was a fulfilment of the hopes that denominational leaders had for

Christian unity in the city.

The Chair of Trustees for CTMK, Tim Norwood, called the event a "historic moment" which built on the rich heritage of Christian unity in Milton Keynes – but took things in a new and exciting direction, with an emphasis on diversity and local leadership.

Forensic science goes under the microscope

Forensic science was put to the test by students from St. Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe when they took part in a Forensic Science Week, a celebration of science, engineering, maths and technology.

The objective of Year 7 Forensics week is to link some of the practical skills which they learned in their first half term to the 'real world' and potential careers they could pursue.

Year 7 students had the opportunity to be Crime Scene Investigators during the week full of activities.

There were also activities that focused on the diversity of knowledge, through to STEM careers and subjects.

The students were given a 'real' crime to investigate and evidence to analyse in order to present a case against the suspects. The scenario was that the suspects were caught speeding away from the bank, which had just been robbed. The students had to analyse fingerprints, ink and blood as evidence.

Lead Practitioner of Science Charlotte Dewhurst explained about the purpose and content of the



week. "The week's programme aimed to inspire the next generation of scientists with fun and participative activities. The activities highlighted how science relates to

St Paul's Year 7 pupils get to grips with forensic science (pictured right and left)

our everyday lives. The pupils learnt about taking samples, fingerprints and DNA to use as evidence and also about the role of the forensic scientists and Crime Scene Investigators," she said.

"There were lots of exciting activities happening throughout our school. We are very keen to inspire and engage the students in the wonder and excitement of science."

Deputy Headteacher Mike Whiteside underlined the importance of science and 'the next generation.'

"Science is vital to the future of our country and involvement in projects such as this are a great way for us to encourage our students to enjoy the subjects and see them as both interesting and accessible," he said.

"We need to do everything we can to inspire the next generation."



Catholics all over the world marked 'Sunday of the Word of God' on 22nd January, a day instituted by Pope Francis which is devoted to the celebration and study of Sacred Scripture.

To celebrate the day, parishioners in Ilkeston, Stapleford, and Eastwood were offered Matthew's Gospels which were blessed during Mass. Fr Paul Newman invited all parishioners to collect one at the end of Mass, inviting them to perhaps – as a family or

individually – to read a chapter a day throughout Lent which begins on February 22nd.

When instituting the commemoration back in 2019, Pope Francis said, "Devoting a specific Sunday of the liturgical year to the word of God can enable the Church to experience anew how the risen Lord opens up for us the treasury of his word and enables us to proclaim its unfathomable riches before the world." (Pope Francis, *Aperuit illis*)

Tell your school's story to readers of the Universe Catholic Weekly!

Just email your stories to **Andy Drozdziak** at

News@universecatholicweekly.co.uk



DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

From April 2023 or September 2023

Ratcliffe is an outstanding day and boarding School for over 900 students from age 3 to age 18. Set in almost 200 acres of beautiful grounds the College is seeking to appoint an inspirational, creative and well-qualified teacher to lead and co-ordinate academic and co-curricular Music throughout the College.

The post presents an exciting opportunity for an ambitious candidate to develop this thriving department. The College Chapel, Music Recital Hall, Old Library, Drama Hall and Lockhart Garden are amongst the College's inspiring venues for music concerts and events. The refurbished Music department, boasts state-of-the-art Mac suite and touch screens, 10 individual practice rooms, 3 music classrooms, a departmental office and the Director of Music's office.

The department staffing comprises two further full-time and one part-time Music teacher who assist with the curriculum delivery across the College. The Music Administrator supports the Director of Music with event planning as well as the co-ordination of the peripatetic staff. The Music Department also benefits from the support of other high calibre musicians amongst the teaching staff, including the leader of the Leicester Symphony Orchestra.

Application is via the School's website:
www.ratcliffecollege.com/about/vacancies/

The closing date for receipt of applications is Tuesday 31st January at midday.

Ratcliffe College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check.





Want to get the most out of your seeds? Give 'em a good soak first

Why you need to soak seeds before planting – and the best way to do it

Soaking seeds before planting is an old-time gardener's trick that many new gardeners are not aware of. When you soak seeds before planting, you can significantly decrease the amount of time it takes for a seed to germinate. Let's look at the reasons for soaking seeds and how to soak seeds.

Why should you soak your seeds?

The short answer is because your seeds were designed to be abused. Mother Nature is not kind to a little seed. In the wild, a seed can expect to encounter harsh heat and cold, very wet or dry conditions and may even need to survive the acid-filled digestive tract of an animal. In short, seeds have developed over millions of years with defences to survive awful conditions.

But in your modern day garden, a seed is relatively pampered. Soaking seeds before planting helps you to break down the seed's natural defences against what it expects from Mother Nature, which then allows it to germinate faster.

Another reason is that while Mother Nature actively assaults seeds, she also gave those seeds an internal gauge to help them know when they should grow.

For most seeds, moisture levels play a big role in alerting a seed to optimal grow times. By soaking the seeds, you can quickly boost the moisture content around the seeds, which signals to the seed that it is now safe to grow.

And lastly, for some types of seeds, they actually contain germination inhibitors that are designed to prevent a seed from germinating inside the fruit. These inhibitors must be leached away before a seed can germinate. In nature with natural rainfall, this process can take some time. But when you soak your seeds, the process is sped up.

How to soak seeds before planting

Seed soaking, at a basic level needs two things: seeds and water. Some methods for seed soaking may substitute the water for slightly acidic solutions, such as weak tea or coffee or even acidic chemicals. These acidic



solutions are meant to imitate loosely the stomach acid of an animal.

But these solutions are not necessary in most cases. For most seeds, water will work just fine. Take a small bowl and fill it with water from your tap, as hot as your tap will allow. Some seeds can tolerate boiling water, but as the tolerance for heat can vary greatly from species to species, hot tap water is safest for seed soaking.

Once your bowl is filled with hot water, place your seeds inside the bowl, then allow the seeds to stay in the water as it cools down.

Common questions at this point

include "How long should seeds be soaked?" and "Can you over soak seeds?" Yes, you can over soak seeds. Too much soaking in water and a seed will drown. It is recommended that you only soak most seeds for 12 to 24 hours and no more than 48 hours. The seeds of some species of plants can survive longer soakings, but you should only do this if the specific instructions for this species recommend so.

There are things you can do to improve how well your seeds react to soaking. Large seeds or seeds with particularly hard coats can benefit from scarification before soaking. Scarification means to

damage the seed coat in some way so that the water is better able to penetrate the seed.

Scarification can be done through several methods. These include rubbing the seed on fine grain sand paper, nicking the seed coat with a knife, and even gently tapping the seed with a hammer to help crack the seed coat.

After soaking your seeds, they can be planted as directed.

The benefit of soaking seeds before planting is that your germination time will be reduced, which means you can have happy, growing plants faster.

"Your seeds were designed to be abused. Mother Nature is not kind to a little seed. In the wild, a seed can expect to encounter harsh heat and cold, very wet or dry conditions and may even need to survive the acid-filled digestive tract of an animal..."



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Breaking up your working day with a short walk is boost to your health

HEALTH

Keith Daz



Sitting all day is terrible for your health – but the good news is that a new study has found that there is a relatively easy way to counteract it

To reduce the harmful health effects of sitting, take a five-minute light walk every half-hour. That's the key finding of a new study that my colleagues and I published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

We asked 11 healthy middle-aged and older adults to sit in our lab for eight hours – representing a standard workday – over the course of five separate days. On one of those days, participants sat for the entire eight hours with only short breaks to use the bathroom. On the other days, we tested a number of different strategies to break up a person's sitting with light walking.

For example, on one day, participants walked for one minute every half-hour. On another day, they walked for five minutes every hour.

Our goal was to find the least amount of walking one could do to offset the harmful health effects of sitting. In particular, we measured changes in blood sugar levels and blood pressure, two important risk factors for heart disease.

We found that a five-minute light walk every half-hour was the only strategy that reduced blood sugar levels substantially compared with sitting all day. In particular, five-minute walks every half-hour reduced the blood sugar spike after eating by almost 60 per cent.

That strategy also reduced blood pressure by four to five points compared with sitting all day. But shorter and less frequent walks improved blood pressure too. Even just a one-minute light walk every hour reduced blood pressure by five points.

In addition to physical health benefits, there were also mental health benefits to the walking breaks. During the study, we asked participants to rate their mental state by using a questionnaire.

We found that compared with sitting all day, a five-minute light walk every half-hour reduced feelings of fatigue, put participants in a better mood and helped them feel more energised. We also found



that even walks just once every hour were enough to boost mood and reduce feelings of fatigue.

Why it matters

People who sit for hours on end develop chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, dementia and several types of cancer at much higher rates than people who move throughout their day.

A sedentary lifestyle also puts people at a much greater risk of early death. But just exercising daily may not reverse the harmful health effects of sitting.

Because of technological advances, the amount of time adults in industrialized countries like the US spend sitting has been steadily increasing for

decades. Many adults now spend the majority of their day sitting. This problem has only gotten worse since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the migration to more remote work, people are less inclined to venture out of the house these days. So it's clear that strategies are needed to combat a growing 21st century public health problem.

Current guidelines recommend that adults should "sit less, move more." But these recommendations don't provide any specific advice or strategies for how often and how long to move.

Our work provides a simple and affordable strategy: Take a five-minute light walk every half-hour. If you have a job or lifestyle where you have to sit for

prolonged periods, this one behaviour change could reduce your health risks from sitting.

Our study also offers clear guidance to employers on how to promote a healthier workplace. While it may seem counterintuitive, taking regular walking breaks can actually help workers be more productive than working without stopping.

What still isn't known

Our study primarily focused on taking regular walking breaks at a light intensity. Some of the walking strategies – for example, one-minute light walks every hour – did not lower blood sugar levels. We don't know if more rigorous walking would have provided health benefits at

these doses.

What's next

We are currently testing over 25 different strategies for offsetting the health harms of prolonged sitting. Many adults have jobs, such as driving trucks or taxis, where they simply cannot walk every half-hour.

Finding alternative strategies that yield comparable results can provide the public with several different options and ultimately allow people to pick the strategy that works best for them and their lifestyle.

Keith Diaz is an Associate Professor of Behavioural Medicine, Columbia University

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FOOD

ROASTED PORK WITH THYME

Pork infused with fresh thyme and served with cider sauce – what's not to love? Ideal for a Sunday meal or as a dinner party dish, served with fresh vegetables and roast potatoes.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless pork loin (1.5kg rolled)
- sea salt
- small bunch of fresh thyme
- 6 large parsnips, peeled, diced and parboiled
- 150ml dry cider
- 100ml double cream

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200 deg C
2. Rub salt into the skin of the pork to help create a crisp crackling.
3. Place the thyme on the base of a roasting tin with the pork on top; roast for 45 minutes before adding the parsnips.
4. Roast for a further 45 minutes.

5. Remove pork and parsnips from oven and leave to rest while you make the cider sauce.

6. Do this by removing the thyme from roasting tray along with any excess fat. Add cider to the meat juices, and boil for 2-3 minutes.

Stir in the cream, heat through without boiling and then serve with slices of the pork loin and parsnips, with green veg and roast potatoes.



“Pork infused with fresh thyme and served with cider sauce – what's not to love? Ideal for a Sunday meal ...”

And to follow... banoffee style Pavlova

When you can't decide between banoffee pie and Pavlova – have both! This combination is deliciously indulgent and ideal for a special occasion.

INGREDIENTS

- 200g caster sugar
- 2 teaspoons cornflour
- pinch of cream of tartar
- 4 egg whites (at room temperature)
- pinch of salt
- dash of vanilla extract
- 1 tsp white wine vinegar
- 1 or 2 bananas
- 230ml caramel sauce
- 120ml double cream, whipped
- grated chocolate to decorate

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 180 C and then line a baking tray with greaseproof paper. Draw a 20cm diameter circle on the paper.
2. Stir together the sugar, cornflour and cream of tartar.
3. Whisk the egg whites with salt, vanilla and vinegar until soft peaks form. Gradually sprinkle in the sugar mixture and continue to whip until stiff and shiny.
4. Mound the mixture into a circular shape on the baking sheet, inside the circle you have drawn. Flatten the top and smooth the sides using a metal spatula.
5. Place in the preheated oven, and immediately

reduce the heat to 150 C. Bake for 1 to 1½ hours, until a pale golden brown. Turn off the oven, and leave the door slightly ajar with the pavlova inside until completely cooled.

6. Just before serving turn out the cooled pavlova onto a serving plate, and top with slices of banana. Cover banana with caramel sauce. Top that with whipped cream and sprinkle with grated chocolate.

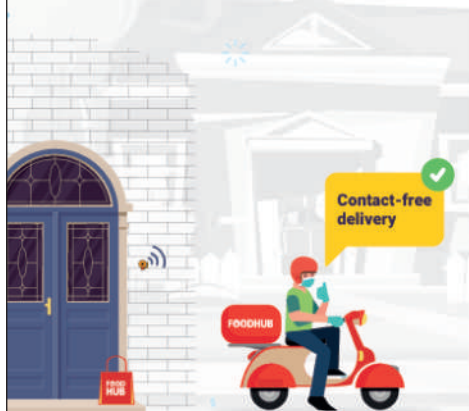
“When you can't decide between banoffee pie and Pavlova – have both? This is deliciously indulgent...”



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CINEMA

Who are you calling a knucklehead ... Plane takes the action genre to 11

Fans of Scottish tough guy actor Gerard Butler and action movies may find director Jean-François Richet's aviation adventure *Plane* (Lionsgate) appealing in some respects.

But for anyone other than a total fan of the 'action and violence first, plot and dialogue second' genre should be aware that much of this hard-edged film's running time is devoted ultimately to ratcheting up the mayhem from the plain nasty to the very gruesome.

Butler stars as veteran airline captain Brodie Torrance. After lightning strikes his plane, disabling its electronics, Torrance finds that crash-landing the vessel is only the first daunting difficulty he must overcome.

Other challenges include the fact that the Philippine island to which he was forced to divert is controlled by outlaws, led by ruthless villain Datu Junmar (Evan Dane Taylor). Additionally, one of Torrance's passengers, Louis Gaspare (Mike Colter), is a prisoner being extradited on a murder charge whose guard, Officer Knight (Otis Winston), perished in the emergency.

As you often find with Butler's films, there's plenty of macho posturing, bone breaking and sardonic comments to come, though his character Torrance does demonstrate a commendable devotion to the welfare of the survivors in his charge, even to the point of being prepared to risk his own safety for theirs. But a personal backstory about the widowed pilot's close bond with his college student daughter, Daniela (Haleigh Hekking), feels perfunctory at best, and was possibly added in to do little more than give the stunt men on set and the explosive special effects team a day off.

Butler recently spoke of the effort and strength it took to complete the film – and the emphasis on 'regular people' defeating the odds. "Part of what's cool about this movie is we're not dealing with superheroes. We're dealing with regular people in incredible circumstances," he told Polygon.com.

"So when I'm in that moment fighting, I remember that everybody's life depends on me surviving. I'm not just fighting for me, I'm fighting for the lives of all the passengers. So it's desperate and it's messy and it's exhausting.

"And often we did the fight scenes in



Gerard Butler and Mike Colter take a pause from the violence and mayhem to compare knitting patterns... actually, they're not

one shot, which is rare; normally we break that stuff up.

"It really was exhausting. And a lot of the time was literally just pushing with strength and to me that's a lot more believable than a stunt – punch, kick. I love this type of fight acting."

Butler also spoke about the originality of his character, Brodie Torrance, and his 'care' for his passengers.

"It's funny because I still just see him as a pilot," he told *inverse.com*.

"It's not that he is really an action hero; it's more that these circumstances pull something out of him that he didn't even know he had. And he always knew that he cared for his passengers. He felt a sense of loyalty and duty toward getting them to the right place and making them feel comfortable."

That's all well and good, but any thoughts of 'caring' are rapidly taken over by a desire to punch the lights out of anyone who gets in his way. Early on, there are some bone-cracking and hammer-wielding confrontations with Junmar's minions. By the time of the climactic showdown with his small army of followers, however, this already-harsh brand of combat has given way to a flood

of bloodletting produced by high-calibre weaponry.

The audience, moreover, is clearly meant to cheer on this crescendo of slaughter. Such an appeal to viewers' visceral instincts means that *Plane* makes a rough landing and that its journey as a whole is unfit fare for casual cinema fans.

'Plane' is released in UK cinemas on



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The 33,000-year-old bones that are causing a stir in the Welsh hills

HISTORY

Ffion Reynolds & Jacqui Mulville

When William Buckland from the University of Oxford grabbed his trusty collecting bag and headed for the Gower peninsula in south Wales in January 1823, he ended up discovering more than he had bargained for.

It is 200 years to the day since the geology professor happened upon one of the oldest human burial sites in western Europe, kicking off an archaeological debate that would last for the next two centuries. The anniversary of his discovery has once again sparked a debate about whether the human remains should now be repatriated from Oxford to Wales.

In December 1822, Buckland had received a package containing an elephant tusk and skull (which was really a mammoth), along with a basket full of animal bones. The finds from Paviland cave had been sent by Lady Mary Cole, who lived in Penrice Castle, Gower. The package was so intriguing to Buckland he decided he needed to visit the location in person.

Buckland, an Anglican priest, was operating at an important juncture in the study of human and geological time. He was about to publish his seminal work, *Reliquiae Diluvianae*, in which religion and science were thrust together as one.

At the time, our account of human history was still largely dictated by the chronology of the Bible. This meant Buckland clung to the idea of a cataclysmic biblical “deluge”.

He was adamant any extinct animals found during his explorations had been washed into the caves by the great flood. This idea became his biggest problem when trying to decipher the depth of time presented at Paviland.

A skeleton story

Paviland, or Goat’s Hole cave, is a



Where the bones were discovered:
Paviland Cave

limestone cave between Rhossili and Port Eynon on the Gower coast. Today, as at the time of Buckland, the cave is cut off by the tide for most of the year. Buckland visited during winter when tides are at their lowest, meaning he was able to enter and start his excavations immediately.

It wasn’t long before he found an undisturbed burial of human bones and objects, all stained red with ochre. The remains lacked a skull, but on excavation were found to be surrounded by ivory objects (including rods and rings), a clutch of periwinkle shells, and worked flints. Buckland took them back with him to Oxford.

At first he thought the human bones were those of a man, and joked that they belonged to a tax collector who had been murdered by smugglers, for which this coastal area was notorious.

Next, Buckland suggested the remains belonged to a witch, due to the presence of a “blade bone of mutton”. Based on his knowledge of Welsh customs, he imagined this was used as some kind of conjuring tool.

Finally, he argued the skeleton was that of a painted female prostitute, which made the shell beads implements of gambling, while the rings were jewellery made from Roman elephant ivory. This was the story he stuck to, and the one which best fitted his biblical flood theory.

The real issue is that Buckland did not seem to have studied the human bones in detail. Perhaps even if he had, he wanted to suppress what he found. Had he examined the bones properly, he would have noticed the individual wasn’t female but a young male, aged 25–30, who stood about 173cm (5ft 7in) in height.

Buckland’s theories had buckled.

Who was really buried here?

In 2008, radiocarbon-dating techniques conclusively showed these bones belonged to an individual buried around 33,000 years ago.

Paviland, at this time, would have been located at least 60 miles inland, on a cliff above a grassy plain. The landscape would have been teeming with prey such as

mammoths, woolly rhinos, giant deer, bison and reindeer.

Buckland was spinning a yarn, however, and wanted to largely ignore the human burial as it did not fit his theories. As a result, Wales lost its opportunity to be at the forefront of Palaeolithic studies, which shifted instead to a European focus.

Between their discovery and the present day, the Paviland bones have been on a journey from tax man, witch, prostitute and Palaeolithic hunter to the more recent suggestions of shaman or spiritual figure. People now visit the cave as a form of pilgrimage. But there have also been calls for the skeleton to take another journey – back to Wales.

Repatriation

Buckland did return some of his finds from Oxford to Wales. The hyena jaw bones are displayed at Swansea Museum, while an ivory staff is stored at St Fagans National Museum of History in Cardiff.

But the remarkable human remains are still on display at the University of Oxford’s Museum of



With the real Elgin marbles now poised to make their way back to Greece from the British Museum, is it time for the human remains from Paviland to come back to Wales?

Natural History. Some have called these bones the ‘Welsh Elgin marbles’.

With the real Elgin marbles now poised to make their way back to Greece from the British Museum, is it time for the human remains from Paviland to come back to Wales?

Repatriation is a complex issue. From the Mold Gold Cape to the Benin Bronzes, returning materials to nations or regions attracts controversy.

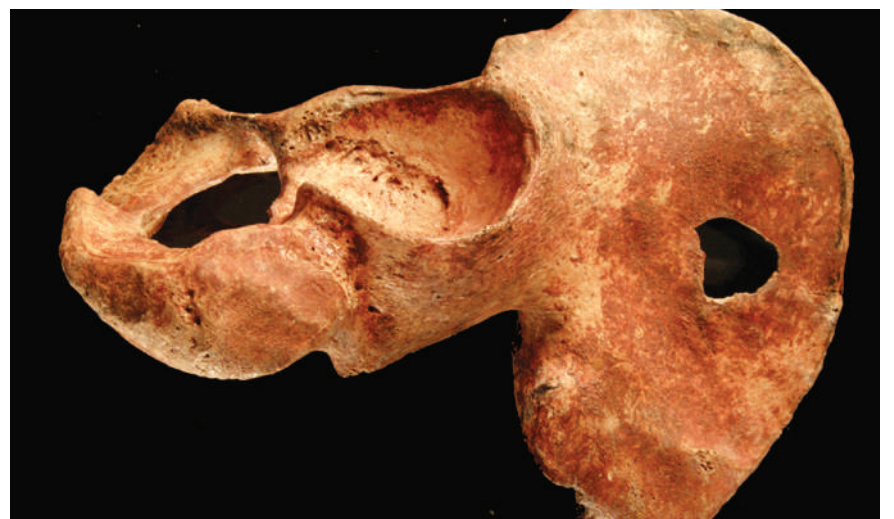
The Paviland remains are well cared for where they are, so there’s a question as to whether they should “come home” at all. A further debate is whether they should be returned as an ancestor or an exhibit.

However, the importance of this individual to European and global histories means their return would certainly enhance the Welsh national collection – and shine a spotlight on the unique archaeology and caves of Wales.

Ffion Reynolds is an Honorary Research Fellow, Cardiff University

Jacqui Mulville is a Professor in Bioarchaeology, Head of Archaeology and Conservation, Cardiff

Images of unearthed bones courtesy of University of Oxford Museum



Playing sport is healthy: just try not to get injured along the way

FAITH IN SPORT

Mgr Vlad Felzmann

As with life in general, accidents and collisions can occur in contact sports – with head injuries commonplace in football, rugby, hockey and many others. While rules are in place in such sports to protect players from head injuries, collisions are inevitable.

High tackles are illegal in rugby league play. As per International Rugby League (IRL) laws, a player is judged guilty of misconduct if, when effecting or attempting to effect a tackle, he or she ‘makes contact with the head or neck of an opponent intentionally, recklessly or carelessly.’

In rugby union, a player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to, tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders – even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders.

A spear tackle is an illegal tackle in rugby union, rugby league and Australian rules football in which a player lifts another player into the air and drops them so that they land on their back, head or neck.

In 1976, the tackling technique known as spearing was banned across the board. Associations such as the National Football League (NFL), and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) made it illegal to perform any kind of spearing or head down contact to another player.

When you have had concussion, you may not play or train for at least three weeks from the time of your concussion. You must start with a period of rest, then some light aerobic activities, moving on to more aerobic exercise and strength training. It is only when players are symptom free, and declared fit after a medical examination, that they can then return to full training.

One of the most notorious sports for knee damage is weightlifting, which puts a lot of extra strain on the joints, particularly the knees during squats and free-weight use. Then there is cycling, tennis, football, basketball and netball.

Knee injuries in cyclists often occur due to bicycle misalignment, long-distance riding, and a lack of conditioning before cycling. To minimise knee injury while cycling, it is wise to adjust the saddle-pedal distance and ensure that the saddle is in the correct position.

If you are a cyclist who has ever felt the sharp twinge in one or both of your knees, you are not alone. Research shows that anywhere from 23 to 33 percent of cyclists have suffered from cycling-related knee



Cycling is a proven way to get fit – but over doing it risks serious muscular and joint injuries

pain at one point or another. Yet the good news is that most cycling-related knee pain is solvable.

A common cause of cycling knee pain comes from “overdoing it”. You ride longer and/or harder than your body is conditioned to, which strains your connective tissues, causing inflammation and pain. But what about those spontaneous twinges of crank-stopping knee pain? It might feel like they came out of nowhere, but they’re usually just the first noticeable symptoms of a long-brewing problem, and can leave you wondering why your knees hurt so much.

Below are the top four toughest sports on your hips and knees.

1. Skiing

One of the most common ways to injure a knee or hip is by a fall. Skiing is one of the sports with one of the highest chances of falling, and is especially dangerous when the slopes are icy or bumpy. Even without falling, skiing places strain on both joints if your form is incorrect, which can damage the joints over time. Mogul skiers have additional strain put on their knees by absorbing the shock of the jumps.

If skiing is a must in your life, then be very mindful of your form, make sure you do not lock your knees (especially on bumpy slopes), keep the muscles around the knee active to help absorb any shocks, and avoid doing dangerous jumps.

2. Basketball

Basketball is a fast-paced sport with sudden stops, pivots, and jumps. The constant shocks and twists put strain on the knees, which act as the body’s shock absorbers. While the majority of basketball injuries are to the ankle and feet, the

fast pace of the game can also lead to a hip labral tear or hip pointer. People who play basketball regularly and at a high intensity are at a greater risk of osteoarthritis, so be mindful of your long-term health when getting ready for a game.

3. Tennis.

Due to the repetitive upper-body motions, tennis players may have strength imbalances between the upper and lower body. The short bursts of running with constant sudden stops hit the knees, while the hips lend their power to the forces holding and swinging the racket.

The most effective way to lessen damage is to do a long and deep warm up, and avoid sudden stops while sprinting. Slow your speed before stopping completely and then stop with your knees unlocked, placing more burden on the muscles surrounding the joint. You might also consider playing doubles, so there’s less running around.

4. Plyometric and Weight Room Exercises.

Plyometric exercises are exercises which involve a lot of jumping and the exertion of maximum force in short bursts (eg, burpees, lunges, jump squats). In a jump landing, the knee absorbs the force, making this especially taxing for these weight-bearing joints. Lower-body weight room exercises are especially tough on the hips because it may be difficult to maintain proper form. Make sure to start your workouts with lighter weights before getting into the heavy lifting, and always dedicate some time to stretch out your muscles and joints afterwards.

There is no guaranteed way to practice a sport that will ensure

safety, especially if you play competitively, but if you consult your doctor or a training professional before participating you will be more aware of the risks to your body and better prepared to employ safety measures. These include always warming up before engaging in physical activity and stopping immediately if you have sharp pain.

Aim for balance in your exercise regimen. Mix it up between weight-bearing activities (skiing, running) and non-weight-bearing activities (cycling, swimming). That said, even if you have or likely will have osteoarthritis, there are many low-impact activities you can do that have minimal risk: elliptical training, doubles tennis, yoga, cycling on a flat surface, and swimming. When it comes to your long-term health, nothing is truly black and white. Staying active is one of the best ways to ensure healthy bones and joints, but you should stay mindful of the types of movements that may end up doing more harm than good.

Chronic extreme exercise training and competing in endurance events can lead to heart damage and rhythm disorders. People with genetic risk factors are especially vulnerable.

A daily routine of physical activity is highly beneficial in the prevention and treatment of many prevalent chronic diseases, especially of the cardiovascular (CV) system. However, chronic, excessive sustained endurance exercise may cause adverse structural remodelling of the heart and large arteries.

Hip sprains and strains are common in sports that require repetitive use of the lower body, such as cycling, running, swimming,

baseball, and golf.

Tennis champion Andy Murray has opened up about the impact his hip injury and subsequent “resurfacing” operation had on his marriage. In January 2019, the 32-year-old announced that the Australian Open might be the final tournament of his career due to the continuing pain he was experiencing from a “severely damaged hip”.

However, on 28th January, Murray elected to undergo an operation on the hip to “improve his quality of life”. The operation was a success and Murray enjoyed a winning return to competitive action at Queen’s Club in London in June.

In a recent interview with *The Times*, the two-time Wimbledon champion has opened up about his injury and admitted that he was struggling with depression throughout that time. “I was pretty down, that’s for sure,” Murray said. “It was a really tough period for me because it wasn’t so much the actual injury itself. Being injured can be frustrating, but the issue that I had was with me every single day, sleeping and walking. It wasn’t just I hit a serve and my arm hurt. This woke me up in the night. It was bad.”

When asked if his family were aware of how much pain he was in, Murray said that he tried to put on a “brave face” for his children, but that his wife, Kim Sears, knew just how much he was struggling.

He added that his low mood negatively affected his marriage and praised Kim for her continued support. “It put a lot of strain on our relationship, just because I was down all the time,” Murray admitted.

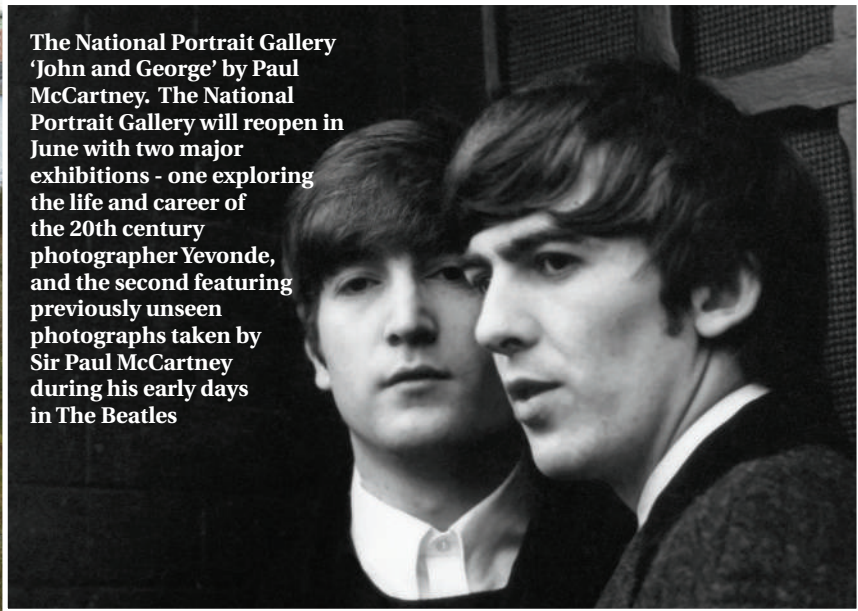
“She has been brilliant and I would probably be quite selfish, just in terms of thinking about myself and how I’m feeling all the time and not actually realising the impact that has on all the people around me. When everyone was trying to encourage me to keep going and keep trying and keep playing, I was, like, ‘You don’t know what it’s like. You don’t know what it is that I’m feeling.’”

However, Andy has guts in spades. In this year’s Australian Open, he won his first game by beating the 13th seed Matteo Berrettini in five sets. Then, in the second round, two sets down to Australia’s Thanasi Kokkinakis, Andy produced a trademark indefatigable display to claim an outrageous 4-6, 6-7(4-7), 7-6 (7-5), 6-3, 7-5 win. It was the longest, five hour, 45 minutes, match of the 35-year-old’s stellar career before he bowed out in heroic fashion after a valiant defeat to Bautista Agut in the third round. Even with his metal hip, Andy showed how guts, determination and a willingness to look after your health can take you a long way.

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days...



Dublin landmark the MV Naomh Eanna, which used to ferry people to and from the Aran Islands, has capsized in the Grand Canal dock in Dublin. The MV Naomh Eanna was built in Dublin in the 1950s and run until the 1980s. It had been hoped to make it a centre piece of Dublin's Maritime Quarter, but it has been left to languish.



The National Portrait Gallery 'John and George' by Paul McCartney. The National Portrait Gallery will reopen in June with two major exhibitions - one exploring the life and career of the 20th century photographer Yevonde, and the second featuring previously unseen photographs taken by Sir Paul McCartney during his early days in The Beatles



A crew member looks up at a new mural at Euston Station which has been commissioned by Avanti West Coast to honour Karen Harrison, one of the first female train drivers in the UK



People welcome in the Chinese Lunar New Year of the Rabbit as scenes are projected onto the wall of Edinburgh Castle



Coronation Street actress Helen Worth receives her MBE for services to acting and TV

Former firefighter Joe Dixon (nearest camera) as he celebrated his 105th birthday at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service headquarters. Tributes have been paid to a 'hero' believed to be the world's oldest retired firefighter after he died aged 109. Mr Dixon, who also served on bombing missions in World War Two, was a firefighter on Tyneside for 27 years until he retired in 1964.



A mural highlighting the plight of women in Iran has been erected on Dame Street in Dublin. The mural, by a group of female artists known as the Minaw Collective, has the words 'Woman Life Freedom' in English, Irish and Persian, and features an image of 22-year-old Masha Amini, who died after being arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's strict dress code.

LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, 29th January: 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Zeph. 2:3, 3:12-13; Ps. 146:7-10 r. Matt. 5:3; 1 Cor. 1: 26-31; Matt. 5:1-12a

Monday, 30th January: Heb.11:32-40; Ps. 31; Mk.5:1-20

Tuesday, 31st January: St. John Bosco, Priest, Heb.12:1-4; Ps.22; Mk.5:21-43

Wednesday, 1st February: Heb.12:4-7,11-15; Ps. 103; Mk.6:1-6

Thursday, 2nd February: The Presentation of the Lord
Mal. 3:1-4; Ps. 24:7-10, r. 8; Heb. 2:14-18; Lk.2:22-40

Friday, 3rd February: St. Blaise, Bishop, Martyr, St. Ansgar, Bishop, Heb.13:1-8; Ps. 27; Mk.6:14-29

Saturday, 4th February: Heb.13:15-17,20-21; Ps.23; Mk.6:30-34

Extraordinary Form Calendar

Extraordinary Form Calendar according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

Sunday, 29th January: 4th Sunday after Epiphany
Rom. 13:8-10; Mt. 8:23-27

Monday, 30th January: St. Martina, virgin and martyr
Ecclus. 51:1-8,12; Mt. 25:1-13

Tuesday, 31st January: St. John Bosco, confessor
Phil. 4:4-9; Mt. 18:1-5

Wednesday, 1st February: St Ignatius, bishop and martyr, Rom. 8:35-39; Jn. 12:24-26

Thursday, 2nd February: Purification of Our Lady
Mal. 3:1-4; Lk. 2:22-32

Friday, 3rd February: Feria, Readings of Sunday repeated

Saturday, 4th February: St Andrew Corsini, bishop and confessor, Ecclus. 44:16-45:20; Mt. 25:14-235

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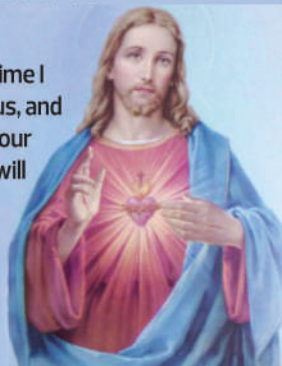
Dear Heart of Jesus

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



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