

Study – not blame –
needed on Pope Pius:
Carol Glatz, pg 20

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‘Just war’ has failed: we need nonviolence

Israeli-Palestine conflict shows that the world needs a new approach

Call for papal encyclical to promote global peace

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic groups have called on the Church to promote the concept of nonviolence in an encyclical as violent conflicts break out around the world, particularly in Ukraine and the Holy Land, devastating regions and slaughtering thousands.

The call comes as Israel has ramped up air strikes across the Gaza Strip this week in retaliation for Hamas's deadly raid of 7th October, reducing residential buildings to rubble and killing families.

But there is a growing clamour for it to rein back its response, with many claiming – including the UN Secretary-General António Guterres – that Israel is making the entire Palestinian civilian population pay for the sins of Hamas.

Israeli air strikes against “terrorist infrastructure” have left thousands dead, and the humanitarian situation is becoming more concerning as Palestine edges closer to collapse. A third of Gaza's hospitals are shut, with resources running low, and while a handful of aid lorries carrying essential supplies arrived in Gaza on Wednesday, agencies say this is insufficient, and that at least 100 lorries a day are required.

Against this backdrop Marie



Residents view the devastation of their homes in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, after an Israeli air strike. Photo: Reuters

Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International and senior director of its Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, called for a new global approach led by the Catholic Church which places nonviolence at its heart. “This latest war in the Middle East is one more example of why we have to find a different way to arrange how we function together as an international

community,” she said.

“Nonviolence needs to be at the centre of Catholic social teaching on war and peace, in comparison to the ‘Just war’ tradition which served for a very long time, but is not, as Pope Francis himself has said, as useful as it might have been, given the state of the world.”

If the Church aided Catholics “to

deepen our understanding of nonviolence and our commitment to try it out, we think it could make a really big difference in the world,” she added.

One way the initiative believes the Church can further develop Catholic social teaching on nonviolence is by urging “Pope Francis to share with the world an encyclical

on nonviolence and just peace.”

Pax Christi England and Wales has joined this drive for a non-violent response. It also backed calls this week by UN Secretary General António Guterres and UN Human Rights Chief, Volker Türk, for a humanitarian ceasefire, binding on all sides, to allow aid into Gaza.

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Desperate civilians in Israeli-Palestine crisis need our help – CAFOD

Andy Drozdziak

UK Catholic aid agency CAFOD has launched an appeal following the escalation of violence in the Holy Land.

Funds raised will ensure life-saving aid can be transferred into Gaza, Israel and other parts of occupied Palestinian territory as soon as access is available, and that local organisations have what they need to help those most affected.

“We have all been shocked and saddened by the images and stories in the media from Israel and Gaza,” CAFOD said. “We can raise our voices and urge all sides to end the violence and abide by international law. This means protecting civilians, releasing hostages and not punishing innocent civilians by stopping food, fuel and water reaching Gaza.”

CAFOD described the situation in Gaza as ‘increasingly desperate’ with an urgent need for water, electricity and fuel. It is reported that residents are consuming contaminated water from wells, which could lead to the spread of waterborne disease, and vital services are on the brink of collapse.

Over 4,000 Palestinians and 1,400 Israelis have been killed since the violence escalated, with one million people displaced from their homes and now living in dire conditions in central and Southern Gaza.

CAFOD has worked for many years in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and is in regular contact with partners such as Caritas Jerusalem, which has a number of staff in Gaza.

Palestinians carry a wounded man following Israeli strikes on houses in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip
Photo: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa, Reuters



Caritas Jerusalem said: “Most of our employees have been forced to leave their homes. Some have sought refuge in the Holy Family Compound in Gaza City, others in UN schools, and some in the homes of relatives and friends. Several of our employees’ houses have been completely demolished. They’re in shock, confused, and perplexed. They don’t have electricity, and the internet is sporadic.”

CAFOD has joined 11 other major humanitarian agencies in calling for the UK to help protect civilians caught up in the conflict and bring an end to the fighting.

Elizabeth Funnell, CAFOD’s representative for the Middle East, said: “We condemn the horrific killings and kidnappings by Hamas and the scale of the Israeli government’s violent retaliation, which is causing more civilian deaths and

injuries. We urge all parties to end the violence and abide by international law.

“The situation for families in Gaza is extremely severe and our local experts in Gaza are already providing support where they can. The level of need is huge, and other partners will start to provide urgent help to people living there as soon as it is safe to do so.”

Pope Francis is urging people to take the side of peace, declaring today (Friday, 27th October) as a day of fasting, penance and prayer for peace.

He has invited all Christians, members of other religions and all who hold the cause of peace in the world at heart to participate. “War does not solve any problem; it only sows death and destruction, increases hatred, multiplies revenge. War erases the future,” he said.

‘Just war’ has failed: Church must lead on nonviolence policy

Continued from page 1

It also asks supporters to urge MPs to sign a parliamentary motion calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and the immediate delivery of aid, condemning both Hamas massacres and Israel’s subsequent response.

On Monday, representatives of Pax Christi and 12 other Christian organisations, and over 700 church members and leaders, signed an open letter to Foreign Secretary James Cleverly about the escalating violence.

The letter, from members of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations, called on the Foreign Secretary to promote ‘de-escalation and dialogue’ in Palestine and Israel. It urged lasting ‘non-military’ solu-

tions to peace in the region to be pursued.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, said on 24th October that the Holy Land is “going through one of the most difficult and painful periods in our recent times and history.” “It is time to stop this war, this senseless violence,” he said.

Pope Francis has joined calls for the war to end and renewed his appeal for the free flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza and for the release of hostages. On Sunday he spoke by phone with President Joe Biden, about “situations of conflict in the world and the need to identify paths to peace.”

Pope’s call: see pg 17



Cardinal Pizzaballa: ‘The Holy Land is going through pain.’

NI health staff refuse abortion work – but terminations still rise sharply

Response shows lack of faith in abortion law – but number of operations doubles

Andy Drozdziak

Pro-lifers have welcomed news that 88 per cent of healthcare workers in a region in Northern Ireland refuse to help perform abortions – but blasted news that annual abortion rates have nearly doubled.

In a Freedom of Information request by Both Lives Matter to the Department of Health, The Northern Trust revealed that 87.8 per cent of healthcare staff signalled ‘conscientious objection’ to being involved in performing terminations.

Catholic medic Dermot Kearney said the statistic was “welcoming and encouraging.”

“It is encouraging for all healthcare professionals to read that that the vast majority of healthcare personnel maintain a conscientious objection to participation in abortion provision in at least one Healthcare Trust in Northern Ireland,” Dr Kearney told the *Universe*.

“It is particularly encouraging for healthcare professionals who respect the value of all human lives to realise that they are not alone and that they not only have legal protection but also strong support from colleagues to enable them to continue working according to their conscientious beliefs.”

Dr Kearney added that it is “sad... that more than 12 per cent in that

same Trust may be willing to be complicit in the intentional destruction of human life.”

Both Lives Matter lead Dawn McAvoy commended the conscientious objectors. “Conscientious objection cannot be viewed as a barrier to ‘service provision’ but should be respected as a strong desire to care for both women and their unborn children as patients worthy of dignity and respect,” she said.

In the absence of a Northern Irish Executive, abortion was legalised by the UK Government in Northern Ireland in 2020.

As of 23rd May 2023, 5,648 abortions have taken place in NI since the abortion law was changed, the research showed.

Dawn McAvoy criticised the law, contrasting it with the former situation in which abortion was illegal.

“This new law stands in stark contrast to our previous life affirming law,” she said.

“Before Westminster’s intervention, around 2,000 lives were being saved from abortion every year. Our research, which was scrutinised and upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority, showed that our previous law saved the lives of over 100,000 people born between 1967 and 2017.

“Now this carefully balanced law has been reversed.”

Dawn McAvoy also commented on the lack of accurate reporting on abortion statistics and called for greater transparency.

“It is concerning that there is presently no legal framework in place to ensure full and accurate reporting on all terminations of pregnancies carried out in Northern Ireland,” she said.

“There is no legal requirement to record why women are having abortions, in order to understand and respond to those needs at a policy level and offer alternatives.

“This structural failure is failing women and must be addressed,” she added.

‘It is encouraging that the vast majority of healthcare personnel maintain a conscientious objection to participation in abortion...’

Dr Dermot Kearney:
Photo/Simon Caldwell



Joy for Isle of Man Catholics as cathedral date confirmed

The Vatican has confirmed that Saint Mary of the Isle Church, Douglas, Isle of Man will be elevated to cathedral status on Friday, 3rd November at 12 noon.

The island will welcome the Archbishop of Liverpool, Malcolm McMahon OP, the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain, Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendía, Canons of the Metropolitan Cathedral and bishops from across England and Wales for the occasion, where they will be joined by civic dignitaries from the island and parishioners.

The Apostolic Nuncio will read a decree from Pope Francis elevating the Church to the status of cathedral and will install Archbishop Malcolm in his chair, or cathedra, which the name cathedral comes from.

Monsignor John Devine, parish priest of St Mary of the Isle, and Dean of the new cathedral, said: “The service will have a Manx flavour. The Lord’s prayer will be said in Manx Gaelic and the Manx national anthem will be sung.

“It is set to be a joyous occasion celebrating both the ancient Celtic traditions of the Catholic Church on the island, and its links to the church in Liverpool.”

The Church was elevated to ca-



“This will be a joyful day for the Isle of Man... the ceremony will have a very Manx flavour...”

Monsignor John Devine

thedral status by Pope Francis following Douglas being awarded city status as part of the late Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

As a ‘co-cathedral’ to the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King, 80 miles away, it will be the first Catholic co-cathedral in the British Isles.

Monsignor John added: “The

Archbishop’s chair will remain permanently fixed in the new cathedral with its specially designed coat of arms incorporating both Manx and Archdiocesan symbols. It will be a constant reminder to the people on the island that they are part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the archbishop is their archbishop, too.”

• You can watch the inauguration live at <https://manxcatholic.org.uk>

St Mary’s Cathedral, Aberdeen, is seeking a Youth and Children’s Ministry Co-ordinator

St Mary’s Cathedral, Aberdeen, is seeking a full-time Youth and Children’s Ministry Co-ordinator to bring their passion, vision, and energy to the Parish, assisting young people in seeking a personal encounter with Jesus in their lives, growing in the life of the Spirit and nurturing Christian values.

The role is Full time (35 Hours per week) including frequent evening and weekend hours.

Applicants should send a covering letter with their CV, plus a 10-minute (max.) video of themselves responding to the following questions:

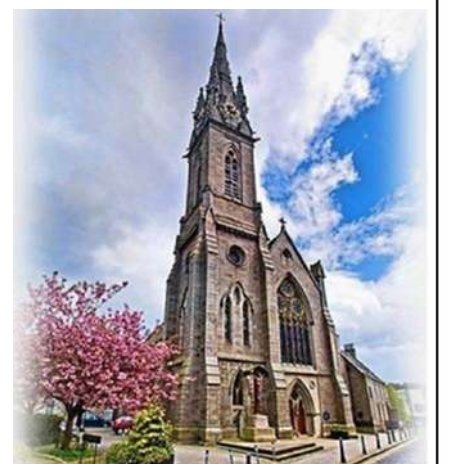
1. Briefly introduce yourself (1 min)
2. What is Jesus doing in your life just now? (3 mins)
3. Describe your experience as a youth leader within the Catholic Church (3 mins)
4. Why do you feel the Lord is calling you for this job? (3 mins)

Salary: £18,000 – £25,000 per annum, commensurate with qualifications/experience

Closing date for applications: 17th November 2023
Employment start date: 16th January 2023

To apply, or for more info about the post, please contact Fr Keith Herrera, at administrator@cathedral-abdn.org

For more information on the cathedral, see <https://www.stmaryscathedralaberdeen.org>



‘A Christ-centred community which is alive, forming and sending out joyful disciples’

In Brief

Pension ‘tweak’ concerns elderly

Pensioners could be denied the full £902-a-year boost because the Government is considering “tweaking” the figures used to calculate it.

The state pension should increase by 8.5 per cent next year under the ‘triple lock’ pledge, which guarantees a rise in line with the highest of inflation, wage growth or 2.5 per cent. But the Government is looking at plans to “swerve” the full increase because the latest pay data is “distorted” by one-off public sector bonuses. Campaigners have said that changing the basis of the triple lock would be a breach of the Tory manifesto.

Covid masks back on in Yorkshire trust

A hospital trust in Yorkshire has asked staff, patients and visitors to return to wearing face masks due to a rise in Covid and flu cases. Local and national cases of Covid had “risen significantly” over the last few weeks, said health bosses from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Commenting on Covid last week, Prof Christina Pagel, of University College London, said that “we’re not in 2020 or 2021 and that’s a good thing”, but “we’re also not in 2019”.

Case steps aside on medical grounds

Britain’s top civil servant is taking a leave of absence from work for several weeks because of a “private medical matter”. Simon Case was expected to give evidence to the Covid Inquiry in the coming weeks, and discussions are underway between government lawyers and the inquiry over whether his appearance will go ahead.



Pope Francis leads members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in praying for migrants and refugees in front of the ‘Angels Unawares’ statue in St. Peter’s Square. The sculpture by Canadian Timothy Schmalz, depicts a boat with 140 figures of migrants from various historical periods and various nations. Photo: Vatican Media

Shock rise in destitute children in UK ‘unacceptable’, says JRF

Andy Drozdziak

It is appalling and unacceptable that destitution has increased in the UK, according to a leading Catholic poverty campaigner.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found that across the UK, there are an estimated 3.8 million people suffering from destitution – including more than one million children.

According to the report, rising levels of destitution mean almost two-and-a-half times as many people are suffering as there were in 2017, with nearly three times as many youngsters affected.

Director of Caritas Salford, Patrick O’Dowd, told the *Universe*: “These are people’s lives, not just statistics, and it’s appalling and unacceptable that we’re seeing such high levels of poverty in 2023.

“Almost every week we’re seeing

new reports showing how desperate things are becoming in our local communities, and yet action is still so slow to happen.”

The report, the fourth in a series by the JRF, with research done by Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, found overall “there has been a shameful increase in the level of destitution in the UK”.

London had the highest destitution levels in 2022, followed by the North East and North West of England, and then the West Midlands.

Stating that the problem has “been increasing at an alarming rate since 2017” the report added: “Around 1.8 million households were destitute in the UK at some point over the course of 2022.

“These households contained around 3.8 million people, of whom around a million were children.”

Caritas Salford supports people

experiencing poverty, homelessness and discrimination across Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Patrick O’Dowd said: “Teams in our services right across Greater Manchester and Lancashire hear heartbreaking stories every day and things need to change now before more families and individuals hit acute crisis point.”

The report calls on the UK Government to introduce an “Essentials Guarantee” into Universal Credit payments, ensuring that the basic amount people receive can cover all basic needs “such as food, energy, toiletries and cleaning products”.

Doing this “would have a significant impact on destitution”, the report said.

Mr O’Dowd called on parishioners to take action and advocate ‘loudly for change’.

“We’ve all got to step up, let deci-

sion makers in local and national government know that this simply isn’t acceptable, and take practical action in our neighbourhoods too,” he said.

“We regularly share on our website and social media simple steps people can take - tangible action that, if we all take a small step forward, could mean a giant leap of progress.”

He added: “Only by working together and advocating loudly for change can we hope to make a difference to people experiencing challenging times – our friends, neighbours, colleagues, and families.”

A UK Government spokesperson said: “To help people out of poverty through work, we are increasing the National Living Wage again and are also investing £3.5 billion to help thousands into jobs by breaking down barriers to work.”

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Church ‘willing ally’ in fight to end slavery

Cardinal Nichols joined over 90 delegates from the diplomatic corps, police, faith groups, and statutory authorities, at a gathering in London on 20th October to begin a process aimed at better protecting the UK’s diaspora communities from the scourge of human trafficking.

The leaders, representing different nations, faiths, and organisations, took up the call to be ambassadors for change, committed to working together to protect vulnerable communities within the UK.

Cardinal Nichols reaffirmed that in tackling modern slavery and trafficking, “there is an ally to be found within the network of the Catholic Church”, as “communities of faith have invaluable levels of trust, contact, and knowledge”, highlighting the crucial facilitating role faith groups play between consulates and embassies and their diaspora communities.

Mateusz Stąsiek, Poland’s Consul General in London, said: “For information about the Polish community

we would always go to the Polish Catholic Churches. Poles always go to the Church before the Consulate.”

The conference centred around four pillars:

Diplomacy – how best to serve victims and potential victims of human trafficking within their diaspora communities;

Police – how best for diplomats to engage with police services and for law enforcement to engage with embassies and consulates;

Church – how consulates and embassies can engage with faith groups, who are often closest to diaspora communities, so vulnerable groups can be supported;

And **reprioritisation of combating human trafficking and modern slavery** through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 8.7.

These pillars serve as a guide towards ensuring consulates and embassies within the UK establish effective processes and protocols to engage with and assist human traf-



Cardinal Nichols addresses the meeting (main photo and below)

ficking victims and potential victims, adhering to the SDGs and other international conventions while also re-prioritising efforts to eradicate human trafficking. Diplomats agreed this aim could only be achieved through closer relations between the police, faith groups, with their close ties to the diaspora communities within the UK, and the diplomatic world.

Ambassador Popescu of Romania stated that although a “multitude of challenges vie for our attention, we need to focus on the insidious and pervasive crime” of human trafficking, emphasising the importance of

targeting this crime.

In light of the contentious politics surrounding migration, Sir Iain Livingstone emphasised that the issues of migration and human trafficking must be viewed separately, as conflating the two “strongly fails victims”.

Fighting the crime of human trafficking would be significantly helped by local communities throughout the UK assisting and informing the work of police and supranational bodies, delegates were told.

For more information visit the Santa Marta Group website: <https://santamartagroup.org/>



Ding-dong in Tiverton as residents complain about plans for new church bells

Andy Drozdziak

A Catholic church in Tiverton has denied claims that bells as part of a new development will disrupt the local neighbourhood.

The Times reported that the expansion of St James Church, Tiverton, would include ‘a spire and a belfry housing two bells,’ leading to local resident Gary Banfield claiming that the bells would affect the neighbourhood. “I’m not sure that bells as a call to prayer are suitable on a residential road.”

Les Cruwys, a Liberal Democrat councillor and chairman of the planning committee, agreed saying “I cannot agree with the officer’s recommendation to support this, unless it’s minus the bells.”

But responding to the criticism, the Diocese of Plymouth told the *Universe*: “The addition of a bellcote and spire shall help identify the building as a church – something

which is desperately needed. There is no belfry or bell tower at present as it has been reported.”

The bells will ring six times a week for 15 minutes before each service. Planning permission was granted on condition that the bells ‘shall only be rung at times when services are taking place.’ Planning officers for the new development also equated the sounds from the bells to “light traffic noise”.

A Planning Application document confirmed that there were not ‘any concerns’ with the new development with regard to bells.

“Mid Devon’s Public Health officer does not anticipate any concerns in relation to the installation of a single bell. Bells have been used on churches for many years in order to announce services. They are only used for very short periods and therefore the officer has no concerns regarding this,” the document said.



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Closing date: 12pm Friday 27th October | Interview date: Tuesday 28th November
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For further details and an application pack please go to:
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or email us at recruitment@fatherhudsons.org.uk, quoting post reference P1696

**UNIVERSE
CATHOLIC WEEKLY**

**COMMENT
King's message
is one we can
all get behind**

Last week at the Mansion House in London, King Charles made a passionate plea to the nation not to let the toxic “rancour and acrimony” of online debate corrode society.

It was a speech that paid tribute to the good old British sense of humour, in which he even managed to poke fun at himself, in a quip about his fountain pen mishap last year.

It is a measure of these uncertain times that the King felt moved to make this rare speech about what he called the “watershed age” that the country is living through. The speech has been dubbed a ‘State of the Union’ address by some, a sign that His Majesty intends to be more assertive on such societal matters than the late Queen was.

He said he had been reflecting on what made the nation what it is since his accession last year, an island of shared values, a “community of communities”.

“Every generation lives with its own set of hopes and fears, as if caught in a perpetual tussle between optimism and pessimism, promise and peril,” the King said.

That is more the case now than for many years. In addition to international uncertainties and two extant wars in Europe and the Middle East, developments like artificial intelligence are also disconcerting.

“Will it fundamentally change and perhaps even consume jobs and other opportunities before capturing and then surpassing our very minds themselves?” he asked of AI.

But this was an optimistic and upbeat speech, in which the King was convinced the country and its people are up to the challenges ahead. Its deep roots, its history and its institutions make the United Kingdom especially resilient.

It is also a country of civility and tolerance, and the King emphasised the need not to shout down those with different views.

The temptation to turn ourselves into a shouting or recriminatory society must be resisted, he said.

That is a message we should all take on board.

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Middle East conflict is exposing deep divides in British society

POLITICS

**Martin
Farr**



Much of the reaction in Britain to a crisis that has yet to acquire a specific designation, has concentrated on words used, and not used – their significance amplified by what their use, or non-use, may be held to mean.

“Pogrom” is one word not much heard outside the classroom or lecture theatre. But it was among the first words spoken when Prime Minister Rishi Sunak addressed the House of Commons to give a statement on the catastrophic situation in the Middle East. The word – meaning an organised massacre of Jews – was one with which even those regarding the actions of Hamas on 7th October as self-defence, would agree. It distinguishes this moment in the most intractable conflict on the planet.

No other foreign affair has such serious domestic ramifications for the UK. Britain entering Iraq, and leaving the EU, inflamed public opinion, but briefly. Israel-Palestine has been incendiary for over 50 years, and is itself, for Janna Jihad Ayyad Al-Tamimi, an activist at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign’s fringe event at the Labour party conference in Liverpool last week, part of the “aftermath of British imperialism”.

The foreign policy dimension is, relatively, straightforward, though not without dilemma. Broadly, the Conservative Government and the Labour opposition are in support of Israel: initially “unequivocally”, and then, if not equivocally, with mitigation. The principal one is humanitarianism, and that Palestinians are being made to suffer for the actions of Hamas.

The fracturing of the initial shocked consensus has already begun. The Labour left and, some academics, have described the response of the Israeli government as “collective punishment”. It is a contentious claim, but division among Israel’s allies was doubtless as Hamas had intended. Nor is it without historical precedent. Seventy years ago, voices on the Labour left and academics offered muted resistance to Britain’s targeting of civilians in in the Second World War. “Civilians” and “combatants” became blurred. For Israel, being “at war” is the defence made against nuance.

The diplomatic levers Britain can pull have been applied to encourage de-escalation. James Cleverley, the



Foreign Secretary, was dispatched to the region (to have his own brush with peril). Sunak spoke in the immediate aftermath, at least twice, to his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu and met Abdullah, King of Jordan, the regional country with the closest links with Britain, before flying to Israel for a meeting with the Israeli prime minister.

All was done more nimbly, the Government refrained from saying, by a UK free of EU considerations (although Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, and Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor, managed to get there before him).

Practical acts – a Royal Navy deployment, surveillance aircraft – to aid humanitarian efforts and interdict arms supplies, are inevitably dwarfed by two US carrier strike groups ordered to the region by President Biden.

The failures are, meanwhile, manifest. US and UK intelligence – always in lockstep – apparently had no inkling of the long-planned atrocity (their relationship spotlighted days later by the first public meeting of the Five Eyes security partners). For longer-term neglect of the region – Britain actually axed its Middle East minister last year – both have been deemed culpable.

Domestic flareups

But it is the domestic impact that is the most hazardous for public actors. The BBC for its reporting, the FA, for its selectivity, and the Crown Prosecution Service (and police) for their tolerance.

The crisis has opened another front in the culture war. The BBC

– attacked physically by pro-Palestinians and verbally by pro-Israelis – has defended its legal requirement to impartiality in not itself using the word “terrorists” to describe Hamas – though repeatedly quoting its use by others.

Its coverage has revived calls for the broadcaster finally to publish a report into its own alleged antisemitism. *The Daily Mail*, the BBC’s most inveterate foe, even managed to co-opt the President of Israel to maintain its own onslaught.

And why, it was asked, did the FA – literally – project its support for France and Ukraine after events unrelated to football, but not for Israel?

But empathy is wanting in febrile times. Demands that the police ought to have arrested two protesters with images of Hamas-like paragliders taped to their coats overlooked the fact that their bearers were in the middle of a protesting crowd of thousands. Anger there may have been, but a riot there was not.

No less shocking for being predictable has been the huge increase in anti-semitic offences since the anti-semitic mass-murder. Jewish schools closed, some vandalised; anti-semitic chants at rallies. The head of the Church of England spoke of the “cancer of anti-semitism”.

That public opinion is rarely heeded in foreign policy decisions is underlined by the most recent polling revealing that 21 per cent support Israel, 17 per cent Palestine, 29 per cent both, and 33 per cent “don’t know”. The seven British dead, and nine missing constitute a human connection between country and crisis, as

do British Palestinians trapped in Gaza, the family of the First Minister of Scotland most prominently.

It is easier, if by no means easy, for Sunak to be unequivocal than it is for Keir Starmer, leading a movement of both friends and critics of Israel. That’s why Tory ministers have called for Labour-affiliated organisations to disassociate themselves from Palestinian-supporting groups, with associated inferences of the party’s recent past.

Under Jeremy Corbyn Labour could have split over the crisis – if it had not already done so by likely equivocation over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Labour unity is fraying. If Israel persists with bombarding civilians – or launches an invasion – parliamentary consensus will fracture.

How to achieve the destruction of Hamas without the destruction of Gaza, and with it the escalation of the crisis into a regional war, is the pressing matter independent of UK influence or involvement.

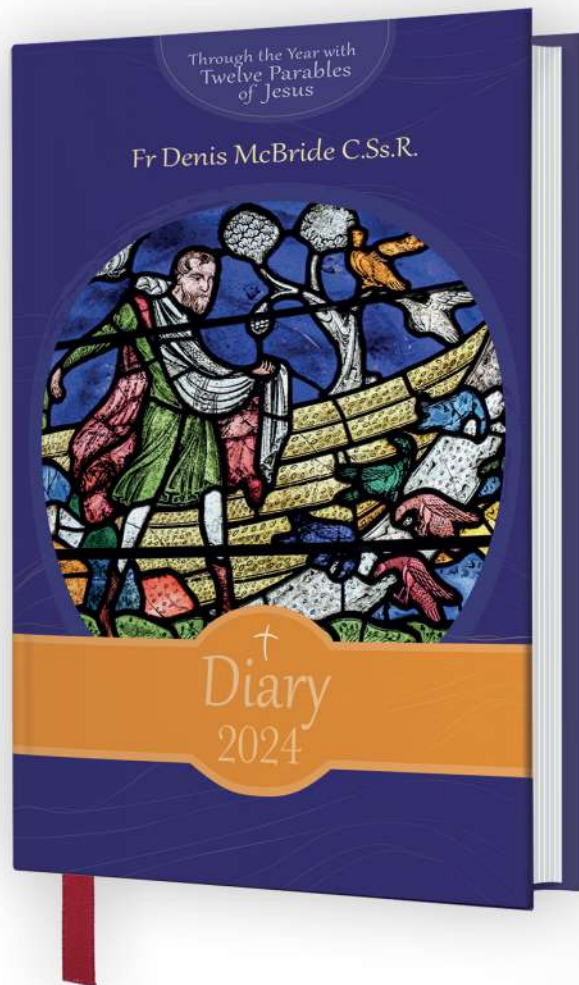
But Britain’s chronic central conundrum is now acute: how to support Israel, and Jewish people in Britain, without abandoning Palestine and the plight of Palestinians. MPs were “united” on the need for Israeli-Palestinian “co-existence”. They also spoke with “one voice” for a “two-state solution”, that abiding recourse in discussion of the conflict. It is a concept now, to many, that is merely words.

Martin Farr is a Senior Lecturer in Contemporary British History, Newcastle University

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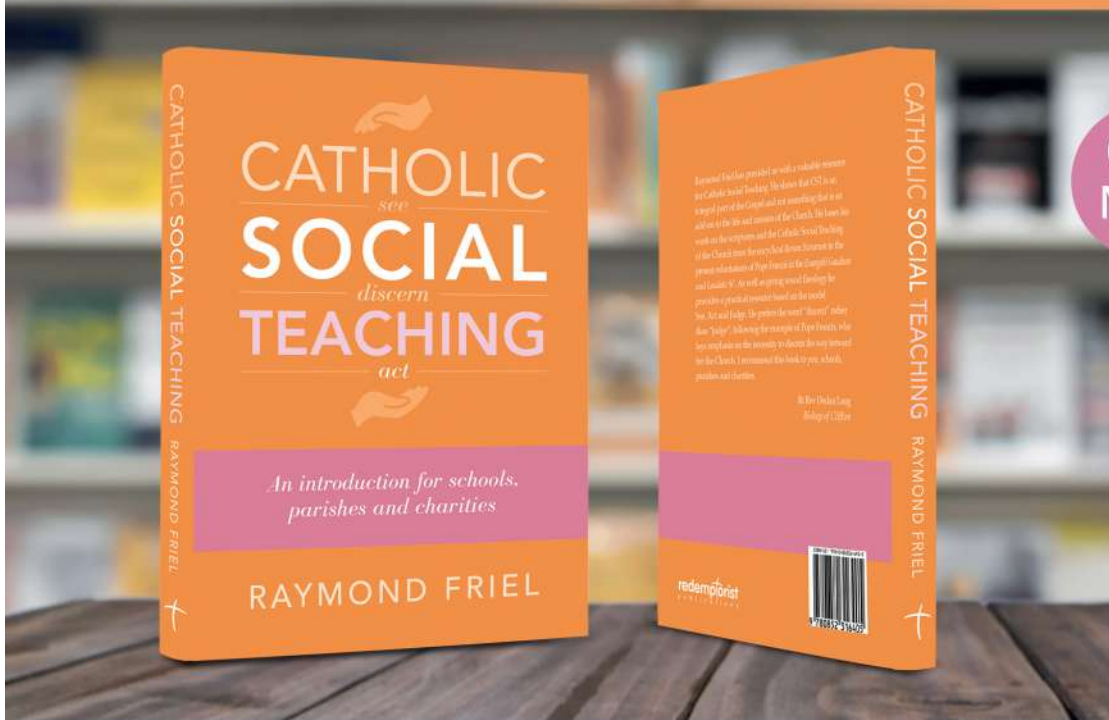
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Rt Rev Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton



God's time

Sir John Battle



This week it was reported that the great Barcelona contemporary work of architecture, the Sagrada Familia, with its towering silhouettes of daring spires, is at last approaching completion.

The cathedral was the vision and work of Antoni Gaudi who wanted to build a temple to the Holy Family in the capital of Catalonia.

Born in 1852 the fifth child of a coppersmith he grew up through hardship and family illness to become a remarkable visionary architect and ascetic Catholic, eventually getting the bishop's commission to build a cathedral. Work started in 1882 but Gaudi died in 1929, leaving behind a great monumentally beautiful but half finished work.

When once asked when the work on his temple would actually be finished and not left as an incomplete ruin, Gaudi replied "My client is in no hurry". He worked to "God's time", he added. The Sagrada Familia was officially opened in 2010 – with the building work still going on.

For the religious Gaudi, the laws of architecture were inseparable from the laws, nature and mystery of God's creation.

What Gaudi insisted on was developing a sense of eternity in the midst of the day-to-day business. Moreover, that included trying to understand that God's creative natural plans, though complex, were the working out of beauty and truth. The scientist Professor Russell Foster in *Life Time*, his book on biological rhythms, writes: "Just think about the formation of a photon in the centre of the sun, which then takes a million years to get to the surface and then six minutes to get to Earth. And when it arrives what does it do?" He lists the photon's creative action; it liberates oxygen, sparks photosynthesis, and leads to the evolution of complex life.

In his BBC series *Earth*, presenter Chris Packham takes us back millions of years into our planet's formation history through the Permian period of 'the Great Dying' some 252 million years ago, when the earth's crust erupted into "great curtains of lava fire", and then forward into the Triassic period when "it rained non-stop for two million years". Then marine life re-emerged.

Now there's a sense of time perspective that Gaudi would have warmed to. Encouragingly, though civilisations, cities and empires rise and fall, what shines through is a sense that the creative finger of God continues to generate history.

Australia's Albanese offers the world a masterclass on how NOT to run a referendum

WORLD AFFAIRS

Matt Qvortrup



I've studied the art of losing a referendum: the Australian government could have learned from other countries on these key points

It has been billed as Australia's Brexit – a vote that pitted the so-called elites against the masses. The issue in question was the 'Voice to Parliament', a consultative body that would have given the roughly three per cent of the Australian population that is Indigenous a constitutional right to be consulted before legislation pertaining to them was passed in parliament.

In the referendum held on 13th October, the proposition was only backed by 39 per cent of voters. It was a huge snub to Labor prime minister Anthony Albanese, who was elected last year on a promise to put the issue to a vote.

A bit of background is helpful to understanding how this came about. In 2017 then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, of the centre-right Liberal party, and Bill Shorten of Labor, the then leader of the opposition, appointed a council to come up with proposals for recognition of the indigenous population. In their so-called Uluru Statement of the Heart, the appointed members – Indigenous elders – called for "a First Nations Voice to be permanently included in the Constitution".

This was initially rejected by Turnbull but in the 2022 election, Labor committed to holding a referendum.

At the time, support for the 'Voice' ran at close to 70 per cent. The opposition Liberal party was largely silent on the matter, and its leader, Peter Dutton, from the right wing of the party, was exceptionally unpopular.

Lack of bipartisan consensus

The Labor prime minister decided not to seek a bipartisan agreement with Dutton to find a position on the referendum question. This proved to be a mistake. And, moreover, flies in the face of the history of Australian referendums.

Since federation in 1901, only



eight out of 45 referendums have passed (including the one just held). Part of the reason for this is the so-called double majority clause, which requires that amendments to the constitution are supported by a majority of the voters, as well as a majority of the states.

The provision was inspired by a similar provision in Switzerland. But it has worked in a very different way in Australia. In Switzerland – a country with a tradition for consensus politics and coalition governments – 75 per cent of all constitutional referendums have been won.

All the referendums that have succeeded in Australia have had bipartisan support. Not seeking this was a tactical blunder.

But it was not the only one.

In many ways, the Yes-side committed all the mistakes that ensure the defeat in a referendum. One of the most consistent mistakes is to assume that celebrity endorsements help winning a referendum.

They do not.

“

Voters have little time or incentive to read about politics. So they take cues and use short-cuts. They do so by seeking out people with whom they can identify. Celebrities with millionaire lifestyles and companies with a healthy bank balance are not that ...

Shaq says yes

In August 2022, basketball legend Shaquille O'Neal shook hands with Albanese and promised he would help mobilise support in the run-up to the vote.

That this was bound to alienate voters should have been known from other campaigns, not least the UK Brexit referendum in 2016. In that ill-fated referendum, soccer star David Beckham publicly backed the losing Remain side. Physicist Stephen Hawking did the same to no avail. I probably don't need to add that Scottish tennis player Andy Murray failed to convince a majority of Scots to vote for independence in the referendum in 2014.

Big end of town

The Yes-side in Australia did not appear to have studied overseas referendums to learn from their failures in this respect. And had they done so, they would have found further evidence on what not to do. For it is not just celebrities who can kill the chances of a

referendum success. The same applies to businesses. I recall from research I did in Denmark and Sweden before the referendums on joining the euro in 2000 and 2003 that Carlsberg and Ikea wanted to be on the supposedly "right" side of history by voting in support of the change. Sadly for Albanese, the voters were not moved.

That Albanese got the support of the national airline Qantas a week before their CEO was forced to stand down amid accusations of mismanagement certainly did not help the cause.

Why was this a mistake? Why is it that celebrity and company endorsement fail to convince voters?

Fundamentally, voters have little time or incentive to read about politics. So they take cues and use short-cuts. They do so by seeking out people with whom they can identify. Celebrities with millionaire lifestyles and, still less, companies with a healthy bank balance are not that, and are therefore unlikely to appeal to the average voter at a time of anti-elite sentiment.

To win a referendum you need to have a credible argument and a credible solution to a pressing problem. The Albanese government did not have this.

This referendum was a self-inflicted loss and a masterclass in how not to run a referendum. **Matt Qvortrup is a Chair of Applied Political Science, Coventry University**

PM told to take a lead on the climate crisis

Andy Drozdziak

Lead Bishop for Environmental Issues for the Bishops' Conference, Bishop John Arnold, is urging Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to take further climate action after sending him a copy of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*.

Highlighting how the Catholic community plays its part in addressing the global climate crisis, such as through the Guardians of Creation project, Bishop Arnold has appealed to Mr Sunak to better champion existing action taking place across society.

Sunak's Government has come under attack for its continuing support for fossil fuels and for 'backtracking' on key climate pledges. In September, Mr Sunak announced a delay on the ban on purchasing new petrol cars from 2030 to 2035 and delaying eliminating gas boilers.

In response, CAFOD's Neil Thorns, said: "The Prime Minister needs to tell the UK public clear scientific facts about the urgency of the situation, make genuinely long-term decisions based on the needs of the poorest rather than his politics, and he needs to do it fairly, by



Devastating deforestation in the Amazon: Rishi Sunak must help tackle issues such as this, says CAFOD

taxing polluters and using the funds raised to support the poorest communities overseas and in the UK."

Bishop Arnold wants Mr Sunak "to take a real global leadership role".

"In this global crisis no country is isolated from actions taken by other countries. We ask our Government, through all possible channels, to take a real global leadership role for the sake of future generations," Bishop Arnold said, underlining that the Catholic Church stands ready to support efforts to fight the climate crisis.

"The rich tradition of Catholic so-

cial thought recognises that securing the common good is the responsibility of all individuals and institutions in society," he told the PM. "I hope that, in addition to working towards reconfigured multilateralism, you will also consider approaches to the climate crisis which champion action at the local and civil society group level, which the Catholic Church stands ready to support."

[Click here to see Bishop John's appeal in full](#)



Animal groups criticise new papal encyclical

Andy Drozdziak

Catholic animal charities have criticised Pope Francis' new document *Laudate Deum* for not focusing enough on the planet's wildlife.

The encyclical was produced after the Pope said the response to his previous encyclical, *Laudato Si*, was inadequate, saying the "world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point."

But Virginia Bell from Catholic Action for Animals told the *Universe*: "In *Laudate Deum* there is not a word about animal agriculture, which is the main cause of all the environmental crises, no recognition of the suffering borne by animals." She listed the 'environmental crises' driven by animal agriculture: "loss of biodiversity, pollution, antibiotic resistance, destruction of land/sea/air ... yet there is no mention of this in *Laudato Deum*."

"I would like the Pope to consider that animals are beloved by God and were not made for humans to use," she added. "For those us who have campaigned for the treatment of animals to be brought into our circle of morality, *Laudato Deum* is a disappointment."

Ruby Alemu, from Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA), also criticised the omission. "Industrial ani-



mal agriculture is contrary to both human and animal dignity; in the search for the greatest profit at minimal cost and time, farmers are exploited... it is imperative we protect both humans and animals."

The abuse of animals is ignored, says Ruby: "What we eat and how we produce it correlates to a human mastery over animals. It is imperative that Pope Francis addresses the harmful modes of dominion which exploit animals in all aspects of integral ecology."

There was some praise for the encyclical: Virginia Bell commended the pope's "call for a less arrogant domination of the planet by humans," while CCA said *Laudate Deum* "is an urgent cry for humanity to take responsibility for the planet."

WAKE UP TO WAKEMAN

You don't have to know Rick Wakeman was the musical inspiration behind Cat Stevens' 'Morning Has Broken' to find yourself humming the famous hymn.

You don't have to know he was a Sunday school teacher before composing and recording top albums like *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

And you don't have to be a Wakeman fan to enjoy the UK's leading exhibition of church-based products and services.

What you do need to know is that he will journey to the centre of the Midlands to open the Christian Resources Exhibition (8/9 Nov) at Cranmore Park, Solihull nr Birmingham.

More than 170 exhibitors will make the same journey, to display everything from contactless card machines for churches to customised keyboards for worship.

Best of all, your favourite newspaper The Universe is offering you, as a valued reader, a free ticket (£8 on the door).

So, as morning breaks on Wed 8 Nov, join us as we wake up to Wakeman.



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Catholic Union**The need for religious freedom**

For many of us, the dark days of the pandemic were made that much worse by the closure of places of worship. For the first three months of lockdown, the doors to our churches were closed by law. Even after that, heavy restrictions were applied which made anything like normal worship impossible.

In England, a campaign run by the Catholic Union helped to get churches open for Christmas at the end of 2020, but churches in other parts of the UK were closed for the best part of a year.

I remember thinking that this time would pass, and our churches would open again, but for Christians in many parts of the world that remained a distant hope as they faced persecution for their faith.

A reminder of that came this week in the latest report by Aid to the Church in Need. Its report on the situation in Africa revealed an “explosion of violence”. In Nigeria, 17,500 churches have been attacked and 2,000 Christians schools destroyed in the last 12 years.

At an event in Parliament on Wednesday, Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme from Maiduguri in North East Nigeria spoke calmly but forcefully about the threats facing the people of his diocese.

Very few of us can relate to the horrors experienced by Christians in Nigeria and other parts of the world. But the closure of churches in lockdown has perhaps given us a new appreciation of religious freedom and the gift of being able to go to Mass freely.

As part of the UK Covid Inquiry, the Catholic Union has launched a survey on people's responses to the closure of places of worship during the pandemic. The strength of feeling on this is clear: over 600 people have taken part in the survey already, completing the two-minute list of online questions.

What is particularly striking from early results is the number of people who are going to church more regularly since the pandemic. It seems more people are following the call to pray first, often, and always.

In the midst of troubling times for Christians in Africa, there are glimmers of hope. Bishop Oliver said that “prayer has turned the tide against the terrorists” with churches in Nigeria fuller than ever – something he puts down to praying the Rosary.

With our churches open again, let's use this moment to pray that churches in Nigeria and around the world can continue to provide light in times of darkness.

The Catholic Union's survey on Covid and Places of Worship can be found at <https://catholicunion.org.uk>

ICC is watching as the horrors of the Israel-Hamas conflict harms civilians on both sides

Catherine Gegout asks where does the ICC stand if war crimes are committed on either side of the Israel-Hamas war

Since Hamas launched its offensive in Israel on 7th October 2023, drawing a swift and emphatic response from the Netanyahu government, at least 1,400 people in Israel and 5,000 people in Palestine have been killed.

Many of these have been civilians – hundreds of Israelis at a music festival near the Re'im kibbutz, close to the border of Gaza, while hundreds of Palestinians were killed by an explosion at the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza.

While the first atrocity was committed by Hamas fighters, responsibility for the hospital blast has yet to be determined. Investigators will eventually attempt to piece together the truth about both atrocities. But will anyone stand trial for war crimes?

The International Criminal Court has the jurisdiction to investigate potential war crimes in Israel and Palestine. Palestine joined the court in 2015. In 2021, the then prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, announced the opening of an investigation into crimes alleged to have been committed since 13th June 2014 in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, the date when Palestine declared acceptance of ICC jurisdiction. Between then and early 2023, more than 3,000 people have been killed in Palestine, and more than 200 in Israel.

What the ICC can do

Given the current situation in Israel and Gaza, the ICC could take two measures. Tirana Hasan, the director of global rights campaigner Human Rights Watch, has written to Karim Khan, the ICC prosecutor, calling on the ICC to explicitly warn Hamas and Israel against committing crimes.

Bensouda did something similar in 2018 when she warned Israel not to forcefully evict a Palestinian community from Khan al-Ahmar, a village in the occupied West Bank. She said the eviction could constitute a war crime, as defined in article 8.2 of the ICC Treaty, which prohibits the deportation or transfer of all or parts of the



population of the occupied territory. Combined with pressure from local and international communities, a warning of this kind could have a temporary effect, as it did in this case.

But, in the event, even though diplomats from many states tried to discourage the eviction, the Israeli government still went on with it.

Second – and more importantly – Khan told Reuters press agency on 12th October that the actions of both Hamas militants in Israel and Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip fall under the jurisdiction of the ICC, even though Israel is not a member state. “It's horrendous what's going on, what we're seeing on our television screens. There has to be a legal process to determine criminal responsibility,” he added.

Challenges and investigations

There are three issues that could hinder an ICC investigation: a lack of co-operation by Israel, a lack of financial support from member states, and pressure by countries which feel a solution would be easier to achieve without the involvement of the ICC and the prospect of war crimes charges being levelled. This pressure would be dangerous for the ICC's credibility. It is important for justice and politics to remain independent.

The UN's commission of inquiry, mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, has been collecting evidence of potential war crimes committed by all sides in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories since 7th October.

It has already said that there

is evidence that war crimes have been committed, both by Palestinian militants, gunning down civilians and taking hostages in Israel, and by Israel's response by putting Gaza in a state of siege, which it has described as appearing to be “collective punishment”.

Human Rights Watch has reported “multiple airbursts of artillery-fired white phosphorus over the Gaza City port and two rural locations along the Israel-Lebanon border”, which it has attributed to Israel. This could potentially be a war crime, but Israel denies the allegation.

On the Palestinian side, the ICC could investigate Hamas, Islamic Jihad or any of the armed militant factions for allegations of war crimes in Palestine or Israel. On the Israeli side, the ICC could investigate the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and other officials who could have committed crimes in Palestine. Back in 2019, Netanyahu argued against investigating war crimes allegations against Israel, asserting that Palestine did not meet the criteria of statehood to accede to the ICC treaty.

States party to the ICC could call for Hamas and the Israelis to respect international law. But this has already proved fruitless in the UN Security Council. The security council tried but failed on 18th October to pass a resolution which would have enabled the the condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Hamas and made a demand for the hostages' release.

It would also have called for compliance by all with

international humanitarian law. Humanitarian pauses would have provided for the urgent establishment of full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for the UN, Red Cross and other organisations into Gaza to enable basic necessities to be supplied to the civilian population.

France and China voted in favour of this resolution, but the UK abstained with Russia, and the US exercised its veto. However, article 25 of the ICC treaty refers to the possibility of investigating people for aiding and abetting others to commit crimes. Any leader supporting leaders or people who commit war crimes could be held accountable too.

Is the ICC gaining prominence?

The ICC has 123 state signatories. It is now investigating crimes potentially committed in Ukraine by Russia, a permanent member of the security council. As a result, Vladimir Putin could not attend the 2023 Brics summit in South Africa for fear of arrest.

There have also been recent calls for the US to ratify the ICC treaty. Armenia is the latest state that has agreed to join the ICC. International criminal law is gaining prominence, and awareness of this fact could have a deterrent effect on any leader or person worldwide considering committing war crimes.

Catherine Gegout is an Associate Professor in International Relations, University of Nottingham

Latest batch of 'Scouse Aid' sets off to bring hope to Ukraine

The latest batch of essential aid for the people of Ukraine left the archdiocese of Liverpool on Tuesday, 24th October – the sixth consignment since the #Liverpool4Ukraine appeal was transported.

The 12-tonne vehicle will transport goods including medical supplies, toiletries, crutches, Zimmer frames, blankets and blow-up mattresses.

The aid has been purchased using financial donations from the #Liverpool4Ukraine appeal with support from Greenmount Projects, The Brick, Chorley and District Ukraine Support group, and the supply chain of Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust.

The goods will be received by Bishop Gregory Komar, from the Ukrainian diocese of Sambir-Drohobych, who will distribute them across the Lviv region of western Ukraine.

Bishop Gregory is the auxiliary bishop of the diocese and has a close association with the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

A small group of representatives from the archdiocese and Greenmount Projects, who have been influential in the appeal, will fly to Poland to support with the handover to Bishop Gregory.

Martin Miller, chief operating officer at the Archdiocese of Liverpool, said: "This will be our sixth trip to the border to deliver goods for those in Ukraine. For every trip,



we have adapted our processes based on our previous experiences.

"For this journey, we are using a 12-tonne vehicle for the first time which will enable us to take even more donations for those who need it the most.

"The appeal would not be possible without the continued support of our archdiocese and I would like to thank everyone who has helped or donated since we started #Liverpool4Ukraine in early 2022."

Bishop Gregory visited the archdiocesan offices in August this year to thank everyone who had sup-

ported the appeal. He said: "I came here to thank the people of Liverpool who have helped so much. Life in Ukraine has changed – many people have lost relatives, lost jobs, lost homes, and many have had to leave Ukraine.

"If we didn't get the help we've re-

ceived, we don't know where we'd be – it would certainly be much worse."

[Click here to support the Ukraine appeal](#)



UCL in cervical cancer breakthrough

Researchers at University College London said they have made the greatest advance in cervical cancer treatment for more than 20 years, which could save the lives of hundreds of young women. The scientists found that better use of existing drugs cuts the risk of dying prematurely by 35 per cent.

Cervical cancer affects 3,200 women a year in the UK and kills 850 each year. "We're excited for the improvements this trial could bring to cervical cancer treatment," said Cancer Research UK.

Life boost from your favourite brew

A cup of tea or coffee each day can keep you stronger in old age, according to a new study.

Researchers from the National University of Singapore studied 12,000 participants, aged 45 to 74, with a follow-up period of 20 years. They found that drinking coffee and tea at midlife may be associated with a reduced likelihood of physical frailty in late life.

Pothole anger boils

More than a third of drivers are having to swerve to avoid a pothole, an RAC poll has found – the highest number since 2015. Two-thirds said the condition of the local roads has got worse since 2022, due to poor surfaces and bad signage.

"Life in Ukraine has changed – many people have lost relatives, lost jobs, lost homes, and many have had to leave Ukraine. If we didn't get the help we've received, we don't know where we'd be ..."



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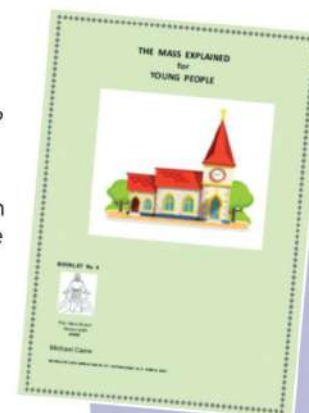
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It's a faith first as diocese's computer expert lands award

IT Manager Liam Olford, who works for the Diocese of Portsmouth, has been honoured at the South Coast Tech Awards for his software and hardware skills.

The IT professional was honoured in a special category uniquely created to recognise his talents – Special Recognition in Tech Leadership.

The judging panel, which was made up of the region's industry experts, lauded the digital revolution he single-handedly brought about in the diocese by training all 250 staff and over 2,000 volunteers.

Bishop of Portsmouth Philip Egan praised Liam for 'upskilling' the diocesan staff and clergy. "As technology continues to evolve, so does the need to effectively communicate it. Liam has single-handedly embarked on a transformative IT project across our diocese, upskill-

ing our clergy, staff and volunteers and inspiring collaboration among a largely non-technical audience through his well-planned, courteous, and jargon-free approach," Bishop Egan said.

"It is not an overstatement to say that parishes throughout the region have developed the confidence to capitalise on the opportunities and face the challenges that digital technologies and online environments provide as a direct result of the assiduous IT support Liam provides to them."

Canon Gerard Flynn, vocations director for Portsmouth diocese, also praised Liam's "effective communication, knowledge, wisdom and kindness."

As far as the diocese is aware, this is the first time any regional organisation with religious affiliation has won an IT-sector award.

Richard Thompson, chief executive of *The Business Magazine*, organisers of the event, said: "We were thrilled to make an additional and very special award this year, after reading about the amazing contribution Liam has made."

Commenting on the award, Liam said: "I feel truly humbled and honoured to have been recognised in this way. Since I started in 2021, we have made huge progress in the IT strategy and as a result have inspired collaboration between clergy, staff and volunteers, who are now all working together and embracing new digital technologies."



From left, Mary's Meals representatives Aina Swedi, Elisalex Löwenstein and Panji Kajani collect the award

Mary's Meals is a royal winner

Scotland-based International Catholic charity Mary's Meals has won a prestigious award after it was honoured with the Princess of Asturias Award for Concord at a ceremony in Oviedo, in northern Spain.

The ceremony, which was attended by members of the Spanish royal family, Hollywood actress Meryl Streep, other award laureates and 1,600 guests, heard how the judging panel commended

Mary's Meals on its dedication to tackling child hunger.

Aina Swedi, who collected the award along with Panji Kajani on behalf of Mary's Meals, summed up the charity's work as follows: "The beauty of Mary's Meals is that we anchor our programme in community participation, so we don't just do it alone, we do it with the full support of communities we are helping."

Felicity Read, director of

communications at Mary's Meals International, added: "We are delighted to receive this incredible award on behalf of the 2.4 million children who eat Mary's Meals every day. But we know there is more to do."

In his closing speech, King Felipe VI acknowledged the importance of Mary's Meals in places around the world where basic human rights such as food and education are so difficult for many to attain.

Pact report lays bare cost families pay for a loved one's imprisonment

Andy Drozdziak

With the prison population at an all-time high, new research shows that prisoners' families face the 'devastating impact' of financial hardship and emotional strain.

Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust) is the national Catholic charity supporting people in prison and their children and families. In a new report, *Serving a Hidden Sentence* it documents how families are being hit by additional costs and are struggling to make ends meet.

Families also describe suffering from a widespread social stigma associated with imprisonment and resulting mental and physical health struggles.

Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs said: "This research lays bare the devastating impact that the imprisonment of a loved-one has on hundreds of thousands of families and children."

The Government's research shows that prisoners who stay in touch with family and significant others are 39 per

cent less likely to return to crime after prison, yet 56 per cent of families said money affected their ability to stay in touch with a loved one in prison.

Half of respondents expressed concern about affording basics for their children, while 38 per cent spend a quarter or more of household income supporting a loved-one in prison. More than half find it difficult or very difficult to pay for some of the basics, including food, heating and clothes / shoes (68%).

Many respondents said their health had suffered. The social stigma associated with imprisonment often results in people seeking to hide or avoid talking about what has happened to their loved-one: 83 per cent of respondents said their mental health was worse or a lot worse, with 71 per cent saying their physical health was worse or a lot worse. 70 per cent have lost relationships with friends and family.

Andy Keen-Downs said: "Extra costs

and a loss of household income are heaping extra pressure on people already affected by the cost-of-living crisis. But the impact stretches well beyond financial problems, as family members struggle with the social stigma associated with imprisonment and their physical and mental health deteriorate."

"If we are serious about cutting crime and delivering safer communities, we must support prisoners to stay in touch with family."

Pact is now calling on the Government to review its Help with Prison Visits scheme, which aims to support people on low incomes with the cost of prison visits. One in three respondents were unaware of the scheme. Pact is also asking that steps are taken to ensure prisoners are held as close as possible to families, and to ensure training is in place so that frontline staff understand the importance of keeping prisoners in touch with families.



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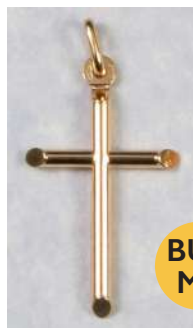
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Laity's role vital to future – and Church has to add an Asian flavour at home

An Asian delegate has said he will leave the synod convinced “we have to involve many more laity in the decision-making of the Church.”

Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo said it was a challenge but “we have to be serious” about how to involve lay men and women who are already short on time with very busy lives and families to take care of.

He also said the Church in Asia needs to change to better reflect local customs and traditions. “It is true that our structure is really Western structure, of course, the Catholic Church,” he said, but it is possible to “introduce our hospitality spirit into the parish activities.”

“First welcome all the people,” he said, to “take off your shoes, come in, don’t stand outside, but come into my house and let’s talk about your life.”

Letter to the people will close synod

Members of the Synod of Bishops will issue a ‘Letter to the People of God’ at the close of the first session of the synod assembly, which ends on Sunday, 29th October, the Vatican said, to guide the faithful as to the direction the discussions have taken.

The letter, the drafting of which was approved by the synod assembly, was discussed during small group working sessions and among the entire assembly on 23rd October after a Mass for synod participants in St. Peter’s Basilica.

It added that additional time will be made for synod participants to discuss the methodology and steps for the next phase of the synodal process to take place between the first session’s close on 29th October and the second session, which is scheduled to take place at the Vatican in October 2024.

Church hierarchy has ‘nothing to fear’ from synodality – cardinal

Justin McLellan

The Church’s synodal process, intended to actively solicit input from all its members, is not a threat to the hierarchy, a cardinal said.

“The hierarchical structures of the church have nothing to fear from a process that begins with listening,” said Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The cardinal said that “it’s impossible that that should damage the hierarchical nature of the Church,” adding that it is an act of faith and hope to believe that “radical listening” will improve the functions of the Church’s structures.

Synod members spoke to report-

ers the day after they began discussions on participation in the Church’s life and mission, responding to the question, ‘What processes, structures and institutions in a missionary synodal Church?’

“The exercise of any structure or ministry or authority of the church must be based on a fundamental conversion of heart,” Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, said during the briefing. Rather than begin by reorganising Church structures, “I’m more worried about how it is that we will inaugurate a deep thirst to become a people, baptised and ordained, who are focused on serving one another in the heart of Christ.”

Archbishop Dabula Anthony

Mpako of Pretoria, South Africa, said that “synodality co-exists with the hierarchical structure of the Church.”

“I think we have all accepted that in the Catholic Church, synodality has unique character. It is a synodality, at the centre of which there is the chair of Peter, the pope,” he said. “At the end of the day, hierarchy goes together with synodality.”

Discussing the novelty that members of the synod who are not bishops or even priests have the right to vote at this assembly, Cardinal Czerny said that posed no danger to the Church, because “there are responsibilities which are already entrusted to non-cardinals, non-bishops, non-priests.”

He also rejected claims that the outcome of the Synod of Bishops is pre-determined to advance progressive positions, Bishop Flores said, “I do not see a conspiracy.”

“I have simply heard honest, sincere, faithful, charitable conversations ‘sub tutela Petri’ – under the care of Peter,” he said, adding that such discussions are “not a threat to the faith.”

Archbishop Mpako said that viewing the synod as a threat to the Church “doesn’t connect with the reality as I know it.”

“I think the desire for a more synodal Church that encourages the participation by all is something that many of us have been calling for,” he said.

Delicate negotiations as synod debates way to include views of ‘all the baptised’ in mission

The aim of the Synod on Synodality is to create a Church in which all the baptised participate and take responsibility for mission – but it will need structures and processes to help Church members listen to the Holy Spirit and to one another, synod members were told.

While “the big media” is looking for changes in Catholic practices on just a few issues, “the people closest to us are wondering how they will be able to concretely experience in their lives that missionary discipleship and co-responsibility on which we have reflected in our work,” Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, the synod relator general, said.

Those collaborators “are wondering how this is possible in a Church that is still not very synodal, where they feel that their opinion does not

count and a few or just one person decides everything.”

The synod discussed ‘participation’ and the exercise of authority and responsibility in the Church as well as the processes and structures needed to promote greater participation in its life and mission.

The section included discussion about ways to encourage the development of “discernment practices and decision-making” that involve all Catholics in seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a look at how to harmonise “the synodal and hierarchical dimensions” of the Church.

The synod working document also asked assembly members to consider how to “foster the participation of women, young people, minorities and marginalised voices in

decision-making processes.”

There was a call to “reform structures, institutions and functioning mechanisms” with a view to transparency, something that was particularly strong in the context of the abuse crisis.

Cardinal Hollerich admitted that power and authority in the church was a “delicate issue,” but said the assembly is not being asked to come up with solutions, but suggestions, which will be studied, discussed and prayed about over the course of the next year before being presented to the synod assembly scheduled for 2024.

“These are questions that need to be addressed,” the cardinal said. “They touch the concrete life of the Church and also the growth dynamism of the tradition: a wrong dis-

cernment could sever it or freeze it. In both cases it would kill it.”

Fr Dario Vitali, a professor of theology at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University and co-ordinator of the theologians assisting the synod, told members he was struck by how often participants in the hall echoed the Second Vatican Council’s description of the Church as a “sacrament,” a “sign and instrument” of unity with God and with humanity, but how seldom anyone used Vatican II’s description of the Church as “the people of God.”

Synod members would do well to recognise Vatican II’s insistence that “before functions is the dignity of the baptised; before differences, which establish hierarchies, is the equality of the children of God. This is a pyramidal church.”



Pope Francis poses for a photo with participants in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops before a working session in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican



Pope praises star for bringing the laughs

Pope Francis praised actor Whoopi Goldberg for helping people laugh and feel joy, telling her, “You are very important.”

“Not as important as you!” the star of 1990s hits comedy *Sister Act* replied during a private audience at the Vatican.

Goldberg shared details of the meeting on US TV show *The View*, saying, “He was quite amazing. He is exactly what I hoped he would be, which is a pope for all people regardless of religion, I really appreciated it.”

“I wanted to thank him on behalf of all of my gay friends and my divorced friends because he basically has said, ‘Listen, God loves you no matter what, come back to the church.’ I appreciated that,” she said.

The star admitted she was “shocked” to be invited to meet the Holy Father – despite having ‘performed’ in front of Pope St John Paul II in a scene from the film that sealed her fame. “I took a bag of merchandise from *Sister Act*,” she said, referencing the

film in which she played a nightclub singer who has to disguise herself as a nun in a convent to hide from the mob.

She said the pope laughed when showed a poster from the movie of her in her habit disguise. “Very interesting shoes,” he said, pointing to bright red stilettos conspicuously clashing with her heavy black habit on the poster. “Yes, you know, we’re trying to help bring the sisters into the 21st century,” she joked with the pope.

Democracy not for all, west told as Libya and Iraq still in chaos

Pope Francis has warned Western nations that they cannot think they can export their systems of democracy to other nations and expect them to work, citing Libya and Iraq as countries where it has clearly has not.

His comments were published in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* as excerpts from a book released by journalists Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin called *You Are Not Alone: Challenges, Answers, Hopes*.

The pope was asked by the book’s authors about whether the most developed countries were responsible for the chaos being experienced by other nations.

The pope pointed out that the chaos was due in part to “the failure of the West in its attempt to import its own type of democracy” in some countries around the world.

“We are thinking of Libya, which seems to be led only by very strong personalities such as Gaddafi,” the pope said.

“A Libyan told me recently that they once had only one Gaddafi, while now they have 53.”

The Holy Father similarly pointed to the Iraq War, which he called “a real disgrace” and “one of the worst cruelties.” US-led forces invaded and deposed president Saddam Hussein, but left the country, many

people would argue, in a much worse place, riven by sectarian violence.

“Saddam Hussein was certainly not a little angel, on the contrary,” Francis said, “but Iraq was a fairly stable country [under his rule].”

The pontiff said that he was in no way defending Gaddafi or Hussein, but their overthrow was followed by “organised anarchy and other wars.”

“I therefore believe that we must not export our democracy to other countries, but help them to develop a process of democratic maturation according to their characteristics,” Francis said.

“Do not wage a war to import a democracy that their peoples are unable to assimilate.”

He added that some countries, such as ones with a history of ‘strongman rulers’ or monarchies, “will probably never accept a democracy” as the West sees it, but nations “can help to ensure that there is more participation in those instances.”

The pope said he considered himself “ignorant in terms of international politics,” though he said the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) indicates “an unfortunate Western choice” – suggesting he holds the West responsible for its rise.

Pope to lead Mass for Benedict and remember UK war dead

Pope Francis will celebrate a memorial Mass on 3rd November for Pope Benedict XVI and cardinals and bishops who have died in the past year.

The Mass will take place at the main altar in St. Peter’s Basilica at 11am, the Vatican announced.

Pope Benedict died on 31st December, aged 95.

The previous day, the 2nd November, the feast of All Souls, the pope will celebrate Mass at the Rome War Cemetery, the burial place of members of the military

forces of the Commonwealth who died during and immediately after World War II.

The 426 men buried there, from the UK as well as Australia, India, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, died between November 1942 and February 1947 in the campaign for the liberation of Italy.

Also on the pope’s liturgical calendar for November is his celebration of Mass for the World Day of the Poor. He will preside over the liturgy in St. Peter’s Basilica on 19th November.

Unity will bring us evangelism

Since the Gospel message touches every aspect of a person’s life, it must be proclaimed in a way people can understand, Pope Francis said.

At his weekly general audience, he used the lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, two brothers from ninth-century Greece who became missionaries in central Europe, to make his point. He briefly summed up the three important characteristics of the two saints: unity, inculturation and freedom.

There was unity among “the Greeks, the pope, the Slavs, at that

time ... there was an undivided Christianity in Europe. It collaborated in order to evangelise.”

With inculturation, “evangelisation and culture are closely connected” because the Gospel cannot be preached “in the abstract, distilled.” Proclaiming the Gospel requires freedom, the pope said, “but freedom needs courage. If a person is free they are more courageous and won’t be chained.”

Pope Francis invited everyone to pray “that we may be instruments of ‘freedom in charity’ for others, to be creative, constant and humble.”

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Public Engagement by Catholics for the Common Good



Far left, Palestinians who fled their houses due to Israeli airstrikes gather to receive food offered by volunteers at a UN-run school where they have taken refuge in Rafah, in the southern Gaza. Photo: Mahmoud al-Masri, Reuters

Left, Shahar Idan, 9, weeps during a funeral for his brother Maayan. Maayan, 18, was killed by Hamas gunmen in kibbutz Nahal Oz, and the brothers' father, Tzahi, was kidnapped. Photo: Tomer Appelbaum, Reuters

'God, end this madness now'

Latin Patriarchate in impassioned plea for peace as Christian civilians killed while sheltering at church

Judith Sudilovsky

An explosion at the St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church campus in Gaza has left the administration building in ruins, and at least 17 people dead, with dozens injured.

Several hundred people had been sheltering at the church complex, many of them sleeping, when the explosion came. The Hamas Ministry of Interior in Gaza blamed the explosion on an Israeli airstrike but

responsibility for the explosion has not yet been independently verified.

Latin Patriarchate CEO Sami El-Yousef asked the faithful to pray for victims and survivors: "Our prayers are with our people in Gaza," he wrote. "Please God end this madness now!"

The Latin Patriarchate said that it "declares solidarity and stands with its sister Orthodox Church in these difficult moments."

Mohammed Abu Selmia, director general of Shifa Hospital, said dozens were injured in the blast but local hospitals were struggling to cope with their current workload.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem expressed its "strong-

est condemnation" of what it said was an Israeli attack on the church property.

"The Patriarchate emphasises that targeting churches and their institutions, along with the shelters they provide to protect innocent citizens, especially children and women who have lost their homes due to Israeli airstrikes on residential areas over the past 13 days, constitutes a war crime that cannot be ignored," said the statement.

The Israeli Defense Forces said that its "fighter jets targeted the command and control center belonging to a Hamas terrorist, involved in the launching of rockets and mortars toward Israel."

It acknowledged that as a result of the IDF strike, "a church in the area of the centre was damaged," and it was "aware of reports of casualties," but it unequivocally stated that the Church was not the target of the strike.

It added that "Hamas rocket launches are carried out from areas adjacent to civilian buildings and compounds such as hospitals, UN schools, mosques, restaurants, diplomatic buildings, and hotels."

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate said it remained committed, along with the other Churches in the region, to "fulfilling its religious and moral duty in providing assistance, support and refuge to those in

need." It said it would not heed Israel's warnings to leave the area as Israel continues to carry out airstrikes against Hamas targets.

Eleven Catholic religious have chosen to stay in Gaza to be with the Christians in Holy Family Latin Parish in Gaza City. The religious include two priests from the Incarnate Word congregation, three Incarnate Word sisters from Argentina and Peru, three Missionaries of Charities sisters from India, Rwanda and the Philippines who care for severely disabled children, and three Rosary Sisters from Egypt and Jordan.

Judith Sudilovsky writes from Jerusalem.

UN chief attacked for criticising Israeli approach

A UK minister called on UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres to retract his comments about Hamas's assault if it implied any justification for the slaughter of Israelis, and to apologise.

Mr Guterres sparked a diplomatic storm after he told a United Nations Security Council meeting in New York that it was important to recognise that "the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum" and had occurred after the Palestinian people had been "subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation".

In comments made on Tuesday, the UN chief also expressed concern that "clear violations of international humanitarian law" had been committed by Israel in Gaza during its fightback against Palestinian militants, with thousands of casualties.

Israel has conducted air strikes on the 25-mile strip that is home to 2.3 million Palestinians and blockaded food, water, fuel and other essentials, with humanitarian aid only allowed through in recent days.

But UK immigration minister Robert Jenrick said he did not support Mr Guterres's assessment, telling Sky News: "We don't believe Israel has broken international law.

"There is a clear right in international law for a nation to defend itself, and that is what Israel is doing."

He urged for Hamas's bloody assault on Israel on 7th October, in which fighters killed 1,400 people, to be called out as an "appalling act of evil terrorism" that was without justification.

Asked on ITV's *Good Morning Britain* about Mr Guterres's remarks on Hamas's incursion, Mr Jenrick said: "No-one, whether deliberately or otherwise, should imply there is any justification for that. In that sense, I think he was wrong. I hope that isn't what he meant but, if it is, he should retract it."

Mr Jenrick added: "It is important we are all very clear that there is no justification for what happened, no context that is relevant.

"What happened was an appalling



act of evil terrorism and everyone should call that out."

Israel's foreign minister was also highly critical of Mr Guterres, saying there "can be no cause for such a massacre". Israel would refuse visas to key UN officials in retaliation unless an apology was forthcoming, he added.

"We need to shock the UN," Israel Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan told Israeli media. He said the UN

lead on humanitarian affairs Martin Griffiths wanted to come to Israel - and had been refused entry.

"I, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed them of the refusal," said Erdan.

"He will not be able to come here to the region. Their agencies constantly need to bring in new people, certainly at a time like now. They will be refused."

Israel has ramped up air strikes

across the Gaza Strip in a retaliation that is reducing residential buildings to rubble and killing dozens at a time, according to witnesses.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry said on Tuesday that at least 5,791 Palestinians had been killed since 7th October, including at least 704 in the past day.

More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, according to Israeli officials, mostly civilians who died in the initial Hamas rampage.

Over 200 people were captured by Hamas during the raids and are being held in Gaza. Four have been released, including 85-year-old Yocheved Lifshitz, who has family in the UK.

Mr Jenrick suggested the releasing of further hostages could open up peace talks. "We want to see the hostages out, so the first step that could be taken by Hamas would be to release those innocent men, women and children that they are keeping captive in Gaza," he told Sky. "Then we can talk about peace talks."



Palestinians bring a child out of a destroyed building after an Israeli airstrike on a house in Khan Younis, southern Gaza

Pope labels all war a 'defeat' as he begs for the fighting to stop

President Biden and Pope Francis have used a 20-minute telephone conversation last weekend to discuss ways to de-escalate the conflict in the Middle East, with both pledging to facilitate a "durable peace" in the region once this latest crisis is over.

President Biden made clear during the conversation that his support was with Israel, condemning the barbarous attack by Hamas against Israeli civilians, but affirmed the need to protect civilians in Gaza, the Vatican said.

The pair discussed the president's recent visit to Israel and his efforts to ensure delivery of food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance

to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"They also discussed the need to prevent escalation in the region and to work toward a durable peace in the Middle East," the Holy See press office added.

The Holy See Press Office said during the conversation the pope and the president spoke about "situations of conflict in the world and the need to identify paths to peace."

For his part, Pope Francis called for the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza.

Later he told pilgrims in St Peter's Square: "I renew my appeal for spaces to be opened, for humanitarian aid to continue to arrive, and for

the hostages to be freed."

Some 200 hostages still remain missing after being taken into Gaza by Hamas during its co-ordinated attack on Israel on 7th October, in which more than 1,400 people died.

The pope said he is "very concerned" and "grieved" by the situation in Israel and Palestine. "I pray, and I am close to all those who are suffering: the hostages, the wounded, the victims and their relatives," he added.

Pope Francis expressed his concern over "the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza," saying he is "saddened that the Anglican hospital and the Greek-Orthodox parish have also been hit in recent days."

He appealed for more humanitarian aid for Gaza and said he was also praying for the suffering people of Ukraine.

The pope also said he was saddened to hear of the bomb strike at St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church (*see facing page*).

"War, any war that there is in the world – I also think of the tormented Ukraine – is a defeat," Pope Francis said after praying the Sunday Angelus. "War is always a defeat; it is a destruction of human fraternity. Brothers, stop! Stop!" the pope pleaded.

Biden also spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel the same day.

Pope in new call for hostages out, aid in

Pope Francis again called for the release of hostages taken from Israel by Hamas militants and for allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza.

He told pilgrims gathered for his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square: "I encourage the release of hostages and the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza," he said, and "I continue to pray for those who suffer, to hope for avenues toward peace in the Middle East and martyred Ukraine and in other regions wounded by war."

The pope spoke the morning after Archbishop Caccia, the Vatican's permanent observer at the UN, told the Security Council that although dialogue seems impossible right now, it is the "only viable option for a lasting end to the cycle of violence" that has plagued the Holy Land.

Biden pledges ongoing support for Israel, Ukraine

Israel and Ukraine both face existential threats and deserve US aid as they fend off conflict, President Joe Biden said in an Oval Office address to the nation.

In the televised address following his return from a visit to Israel, Biden argued that although the conflicts are far from the US mainland, "making sure Israel and Ukraine succeed is vital for America's national security."

"History has taught us when terrorists don't pay a price for their terror, when dictators don't pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos and death and more destruction," Biden said. "They keep going, and the cost and the threats to America and the world keep rising."

Biden requested more than \$105 billion in aid for both conflicts, and other "Critical National Security



Priorities," including efforts to ensure US military resources and additional funding for security efforts at the US-Mexico border.

The money would be "a smart investment that's going to pay dividends for American security for generations, help us keep American troops out of harm's way, help us build a world that is safer, more

peaceful, and more prosperous for our children and grandchildren," Biden said.

remarking on his visits to both war zones, Biden said "Hamas and Putin represent different threats, but they share this in common: They both want to completely annihilate a neighboring democracy – completely annihilate it."

Biden said Hamas' "stated purpose for existing is the destruction of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people," but the group does not represent the Palestinian people.

"Hamas uses Palestinian civilians as human shields, and innocent Palestinian families are suffering greatly because of them," he said.

Biden also repeated US intelligence analysis that a blast at a Gaza hospital was not caused by Israel.

"More than 1,300 people slaugh-

tered in Israel, including at least 32 American citizens," Biden said, adding that "scores of innocents – from infants to elderly grandparents, Israelis, Americans" – (have been) taken hostage.

"As I told the families of Americans being held captive by Hamas, we're pursuing every avenue to bring their loved ones home," he said. "As president, there is no higher priority for me than the safety of Americans held hostage."

Meanwhile, Biden said, "Putin denies Ukraine has or ever had real statehood."

"He claims the Soviet Union created Ukraine," Biden said, adding, "If we don't stop Putin's appetite for power and control in Ukraine, he won't limit himself just to Ukraine."

Biden argued "America is a beacon to the world still."

"Tonight, there are innocent peo-

ple all over the world who hope because of us, who believe in a better life because of us, who are desperate not to be forgotten by us, and who are waiting for us," he said. "But time is of the essence."

In an allusion to the ongoing and contentious debates in the House over electing a speaker, Biden continued, "I know we have our divisions at home. We have to get past them."

If the House fails to elect a Speaker – or a temporary one – US ability to provide aid to both Israel and Ukraine could be stymied, as the chamber cannot conduct its usual business until the position is filled.

"We can't let petty, partisan, angry politics get in the way of our responsibilities as a great nation," he said. "We cannot and will not let terrorists like Hamas and tyrants like Putin win," he said.

In Brief

Trump leads Biden in latest poll

Donald Trump is leading Joe Biden in several of the swing states expected to decide the 2024 presidential election, a new poll has discovered.

The controversial frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination – despite currently facing court charges for fraud, and with more charges pending on misconduct in office – leads Biden by an average of 47 per cent to 43 per cent in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, as concerns about the US economy continue to weigh on voters.

Those seven states, added to traditional 'heartland' Republican states, would win him a return to the White House, pollsters believe.

Canada pulls staff from India

Canada has withdrawn dozens of diplomats from India in an "escalation" of tensions between the two nations, the *Toronto Star* has reported. Some 41 staff have left due to a rift over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader on Canadian soil, which Ottawa blamed on Indian agents.

Earlier this month, India had threatened to remove their immunity if they remained. Canadian officials described this threat as a "clear violation of international law".

Canada has accused India of being behind the June killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, but India says the claim is "absurd".

Migrant killed on Channel boat

A young migrant was allegedly trampled to death on a small boat by a group of about 80 others before her body was thrown overboard, reports claim.

Details of the death of the 24-year-old Eritrean emerged after police "smashed" a massive international people smuggling ring, said *The Times*.

The woman, who was trying to make it to Britain, suffered asphyxia when she was caught in a crush involving men, women and children.

French detectives launched an investigation.

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Vatican offers sanctuary for dozen exiled Nicaraguan priests

David Agren

Nicaragua has expelled a dozen priests held as political prisoners as the increasingly tyrannical regime continues sending clergy into exile and cracking down on the Catholic Church.

The 12 priests boarded a flight for Rome after an agreement for their release was reached between Nicaragua and the Vatican. The priests "will be received by the Vatican Secretary of State," Matteo Bruni, the Vatican's spokesman said, adding that the freeing of the priests was part of a process "to preserve peace and support the Catholic community."

A number of clergy remain imprisoned however, including Bishop Rolando Alvarez of Matagalpa, who is serving a 26-year sentence for conspiracy and spreading false information, and Frs Ivan Centeno and Julio Norori.

Bishop Alvarez has repeatedly refused to leave Nicaragua, and his current condition is unknown.

The agreement was "reached with the intercession of high authorities of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua and in the Vatican," the Nicaraguan's said.

The priests' arrest was part of a wave of repression against Catholic clergy, especially in Bishop Alvarez's



Fathers Ivan Centeno, left, and Julio Norori remain under arrest after 12 other priests were released and sent into exile



diocese. Several priests were detained by police and paramilitaries at the start of October, with most taken from their parishes or parish residences under arrest.

The priests were initially held under house arrest but were later transferred to the notorious El Chipote prison where human rights defenders have condemned the deplorable treatment of political

prisoners and documented cases of inmates being tortured.

Nicaragua had previously suspended relations with the Vatican in March 2022 and had previously expelled the then-apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag. The Vatican closed its embassy in March.

Pope Francis has described the regime of President Daniel Ortega

and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, as a "gross dictatorship" and compared it with Nazi regime, but also called for continued dialogue.

The regime has increasingly turned totalitarian as it has suppressed the spaces for organised civil society and silenced all dissenting voices in the religious, business, media and political arenas – while also closing Church-run universities and charitable projects and revoking the registrations of some 3,500 nongovernmental organizations.

It also has chosen to banish priests and political dissidents from the country, sending them into exile then stripping them of their citizenship.

The most recent exile of clergy "demonstrates that none of the crimes that were attributed to the priests are real, they were all invented," Martha Molina, an exiled Nicaraguan lawyer who tracks church repression.

"The dictatorship is demonstrating that what it wants is to drown and disappear the Catholic Church along with its members," she added. "This displacement does not mean a ceasing of hostilities. The aggressions will continue and possible imprisonment, too."

Surprise as Argentinian 'outsider' fails to clinch vote as left-winger tops poll

Argentina's presidential election took another twist last weekend after the surprise upstart who came from nowhere to lead the polls didn't take his expected victory.

Javier Milei, a libertarian Trump supporter who has vowed to ditch the Argentinian peso and use the US dollar in a bid to curb runaway inflation and improve the economy, had come from nowhere to lead the polls.

During his campaign he has continually lashed the country's ruling class, saying he would "take a chainsaw to the state", attacking the Church and launching a crude verbal assault on Pope Francis.

But in what was a shock for pollsters, his lead vanished on election night and he took only 30 per cent of the votes, way down on his predicted numbers. The winner was the Peronist Economy Minister Sergio Massa, with 36.7 per cent of votes. The pair will now go forward to a run-off vote on 19th November.

Milei's shock tactics had apparently won him huge support. As well as ditching the peso he had called for firearms to be legalised and state services slashed, while



Javier Milei

pledging a referendum on abortion, which was decriminalised in 2020. He railed against corruption and the political class, which he called "the caste" for the perceived privileges they enjoyed in an increasingly impoverished country.

But he also verbally assailed Pope Francis, calling the pontiff and fellow Argentine "a malignant presence on earth" and branding him a "filthy leftist." Attacks during the campaign's closing rally caused special controversy as economist and Milei adviser, Alberto Benegas Lynch, called for severing diplomat-

ic ties with the Vatican "while the totalitarian spirit resides there," words the candidate himself later explained saying he does not intend to break ties with the Vatican.

Archbishop Jorge Garcia Cuerva of Buenos Aires responded: "We're experiencing a violent moment, with words, aggression. I think that we need to build bridges, the culture of encounter. – the things the Pope has been working on."

"The speeches at the campaign closing event were embarrassing," the archbishop added.

The attacks on Francis appeared

to have backfired, however, as voters in the rural, conservative regions switched to Massa, the Peronists' candidate, at the last minute.

Priests working in Buenos Aires' shantytowns said they had been left "hurt, and astonished, shocked, by the attacks one of the candidates had. These were statements that deeply saddened Pope Francis."

Milei claimed – as his idol Donald Trumpo also claimed – that the vote had been stolen from him, but analysts said in the run-up to last weekend's vote "the public had become increasingly nervous of Milei's firebrand style" and what it could mean to the country.

But while he is now second favourite to clinch the November vote, he could still win, Fr De Vedia, a shantytown priest from Buenos Aires, said. "The economy is going terribly; the ruling classes, not just the politicians, are far removed from the needs that people are going through. This man has stepped into the void, appearing to offer solutions. People are dissatisfied with politics so they support him – but perhaps now they are scared he has gone too far."



Cardinal Christophe Pierre, nuncio to the United States, vests Las Vegas Archbishop George Leo Thomas with the Pallium during a Mass for elevating the Diocese of Las Vegas to an archdiocese. The ceremony took place just metres away from the infamous 'Strip' which is home to Las Vegas numbers gambling tables and strip clubs

Church's newest archdiocese hopes to bring faith to world's most lurid city

Las Vegas's 24-party vibe masks a city with a strong faith community, says Matt Gambino

In a sign of the growing Catholic community of southern Nevada and the Western United States, the Archdiocese of Las Vegas has become the global Church's newest archdiocese.

A solemn Mass on 16th October at the Shrine of the Most Holy Redeemer in Las Vegas formally celebrated the designation of the archdiocese and the appointment of Archbishop George Leo Thomas by Pope Francis.

The new metropolitan archdiocese and province of Las Vegas includes Reno – the 'quickie divorce' capital of America – Nevada, and Salt Lake City, the home of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, as suffragan dioceses of the province.

During the Mass, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the pope's representative as apostolic nuncio to the United States, placed the pallium – the woollen liturgical garment worn by a metropolitan archbishop – upon Archbishop Thomas's shoulders. The pallium represents a pastor's care of his flock and his unity with the pope. Pope Francis gave the archbishop the pallium in June at the Vatican.

The growth in the presence of Catholics in Las Vegas and southern Nevada was a key factor in its elevation to an archdiocese.

Catholics have lived in the region in small numbers since the late 19th century. The Diocese of Reno was established in 1931 and by 1976

it became the Diocese of Reno-Las Vegas, reflecting growth in the south around Las Vegas and its booming tourism industry. It was not until 1995 that the Diocese of Las Vegas was established. At that time there were 26 parishes and four mission churches, not many fewer than today.

The 350,000 Catholics among a total regional population of more than 1 million in 1995 had ballooned to an estimated 750,000 Catholics among more than two million residents today, according to the archdiocese.

This remarkable growth was "a result of the dynamism and the vitality of the Church here," Cardinal Pierre said at the Mass, adding that the Las Vegas Archdiocese is "what the Church is called to be: a living sign of the Saviour in the world."

The elevation to an archdiocese, he said, "is a source of encouragement and renewal of the laborers in the field."

One effect of a doubling of the Catholic population in 27 years while adding only four more parishes – 26 in 1995, 30 in 2022 – is, particularly in the city of Las Vegas and its suburbs, a changing experience of parish life.

A few Catholic parishes in the archdiocese boast some 40,000 parishioners, and it is not uncommon for parishes to celebrate more than 40 baptisms a week, archdiocesan spokesperson Montie Chavez said.

Observers attribute the growth to employment opportunities through hotel resorts, gaming and other entertainment industries, including the new professional football and hockey franchises. People also

choose to make a new life with a good job in a warm, dry climate.

Another reason is more prosaic: Nevada has no state income tax, which has attracted people from California and other states to the 'Silver State'.

Where Catholic communities have long been established, the parish was the locus of a family's educational, spiritual and social life. This is not as much the case in the East and Midwest of the US as it once was. But, in the Las Vegas Archdiocese, new residents actively seek out community among fellow parishioners, and strong parish communities are formed, said Catholic parishioner and pastoral worker Connie Clough.

Since 1983, Clough has served at several parishes, and today she serves as the archdiocese's faith formation director.

"The Church provides community. People are more connected in church, through social life in the parish," she said.

"For the most part, people really work to get to know each other," Clough said, noting that after a recent surgery, she had numerous offers of food, visits and even holy Communion. "I do think that happens here more often than not."

As the Catholic community grows, it changes. Officially the

archdiocese counts 620,000 registered Catholics, but because of migrant workers and others who do not register with a parish, the archdiocese estimates it serves three-quarters of a million faithful.

Many of those new arrivals are Spanish speakers, and today "there is a very large Hispanic population," Clough said. In some parishes that were traditionally Anglo, now more Masses are celebrated in Spanish than English, she noted.

But regardless of the language spoken, Clough detects an intense hunger for Catholic formation.

"People are hungry and thirsty for knowledge, and there are no Catholic retreat houses or colleges nearby," she said.

That is why her office offers in-person faith formation courses that lead to certifications for parishioners and parish leaders who travel into Las Vegas. Clough will even bring the courses to parishes in far-flung rural areas – important for an archdiocese that spans 39,000 square miles.

The archdiocese also takes into consideration Catholics among the more than 700,000 tourists who visit Las Vegas each week for its ample entertainment options.

In fact, poker chips used to end up in collection baskets in churches located along 'The Strip', Las Vegas

Boulevard, dotted with famous hotel casinos.

But since chips could only be redeemed in the casino that issued them, a priest referred to as 'the chip monk' traditionally gathered chips and visited the hotels for the weekly collection.

That quirky bit of Las Vegas Catholic lore has faded as casinos turn to using digital chips.

But it does reflect the irony that, in a city renowned as a modern day 'Sodom and Gomorrah' where anything goes – strip bars, brothels and informal prostitution sit side-by-side with the gambling dens and poker tables – the Church should be undergoing such a growth. As one Church representative put it, "Vegas acts as a magnet to many – whether it's to work, or to play – but once here they hanker for community and stability that only the Church can bring. That's why we have so many people at Mass."

He pointed out that "you get a surprising number of people at mass who come to Vegas for the gaming tables but want to touch base with their faith at the same time. I've often wondered, are they seeking forgiveness for their recent sins... or hoping for holy intervention the next time they are playing blackjack or roulette!"

As the city and the archdiocese continue to grow, at least one resident is overflowing with pride.

"I love Las Vegas, and the Church of Las Vegas," said Clough. "It's vibrant and growing and faithful."

She expressed gratitude for "the people here and the giftedness they bring from other places. Everybody is a transplant, and often they bring (the culture) they had, here."

“

Poker chips used to end up in collection baskets in churches along 'The Strip'... but since chips could only be redeemed in the casino that issued them, a priest referred to as 'the chip monk' gathered up the chips and visited the hotels to exchange them for cash...



Study, not blame or shame, needed with pope's wartime record, scholar says

Carol Glatz

The era of divisive debate about Pope Pius XII has been left behind, and now Catholics and Jews, historians and theologians must take up serious and collaborative study, said the co-organiser of a major conference looking at the early results of new research into the wartime pontificate.

"We have come to study these documents and to think about their meaning for our lives. Not to blame, not to shame, but to study," said Suzanne Brown-Fleming, director of international academic programs at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, opening the conference in Rome.

As a lifelong practising Catholic, she said, "it's been a dream to study these documents together with my Jewish friends and colleagues in a transparent, open way, as the Holy Father asked of us in 2019 when he announced the opening of the documents," reminding people that "the Church is not afraid of history."

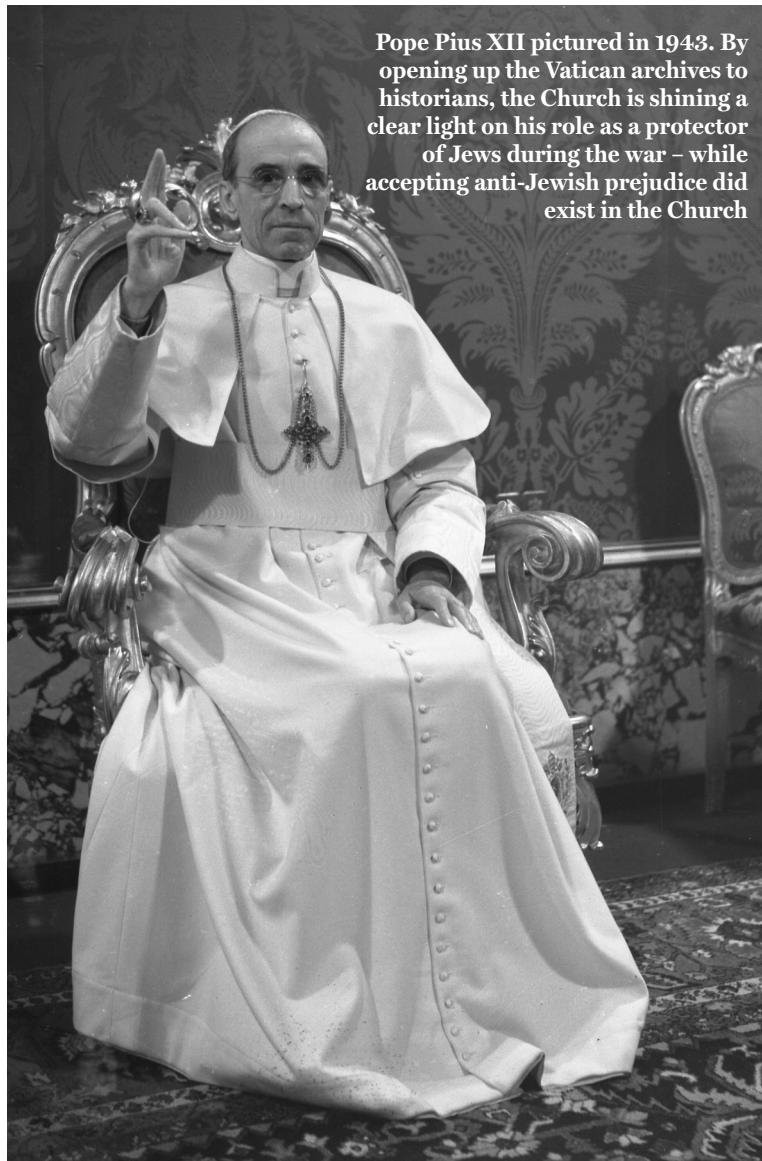
The conference at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University focused on recent research into the Vatican archives of Pope Pius XII's pontificate before, during and after World War II. The gathering was also organised by the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, and the Cardinal Bea Center for Judaic Studies at the Gregorian University. Speakers from Yad Vashem canceled their travel plans to Rome because of the outbreak of war with Hamas militants.

Bishop Etienne Veta, who was director of the Cardinal Bea Center until his appointment as auxiliary bishop of Reims, France, in September, told the conference, "16 million new pages/files pertaining to one of the most sombre and complex moments in human history" was made available to scholars three years ago.

"It is impossible to have a complete view of so much material in just three years, but we hope this conference can offer a first assessment," he said.

Organisers invited speakers with "a wide range of perspectives and analysis on the period," including theologians because "to understand the motivations of the various players involved one needs to grasp their worldview and the theology," the bishop said.

"The first pressing questions will be historical," he said, but much



Pope Pius XII pictured in 1943. By opening up the Vatican archives to historians, the Church is shining a clear light on his role as a protector of Jews during the war – while accepting anti-Jewish prejudice did exist in the Church

needs to be understood regarding how Pope Pius XII, papal diplomats and local bishops understood the relationship between church and state and between ethics and politics, for example, as well as the Church's position at the time regarding the Jewish people and racial theories.

"We are ready to explore more what are the motivations, why people came to these conclusions about what they should do or say, or not do or not say," Bishop Veta struck to see to what extent Pius XII believed that Hitler would win the war," he said, and "that the framework for many of his decisions was that Hitler will win, so what do we do in this situation?"

Following up on the topic at the news conference, Brown-Fleming said, "It's clear that (Pope Pius) felt very responsible for 2,000 years of Catholic history and material treasures in the city and around

Italy" and "how to protect the Church itself" was a major motivation if Germany had won the war and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini remained in power.

Pope Pius XII, who was pope during World War II, has been criticised by many for not publicly condemning the Nazi regime and its genocide of Europe's Jews, or the round-up of Jews in Rome.

Catholic officials and a variety of historians have argued that Pope Pius facilitated hiding thousands of Jews on Church property and co-ordinated efforts to rescue and locate displaced persons in Europe

“

Catholics, out of obedience to the pope, defended the Jews with all their means... but the Church was laden with anti-Judaism deeply-rooted over centuries ... Jewish suffering was theologically justified



The Vatican files on Pius XII

during and after the war.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, told the conference that thanks to the recent opening of the archives, "it has become more evident that Pope Pius XII followed both the path of diplomacy and that of undercover resistance. This strategic decision wasn't an apathetic inaction, but one that was extremely risky for everyone involved."

"Recent discoveries in the Vatican's and other archives have made it easier for us to understand how the historical records were manipulated in the post-war era, resulting in little or no mention of Catholics in the resistance movements," he added. "A considerable number of Catholics, out of religious conviction, but also out of obedience to the pope, defended the Jews with all their means, also by taking part in active resistance against Nazism and Fascism," he said.

"It will take more than a generation of historians" to bring together the many archival sources on Pope Pius, the cardinal said, and it will be important to allow judgments to "mature with time, allowing them to move beyond the narrow world of decontextualized subjective interpretations."

Rome's Chief Rabbi Riccardo Di Segni also underlined the importance of staying true to the context of the time and place well

before the Second Vatican Council and the "total revision of positions that sowed suffering and ordeals in history."

"At that time there was no dialogue and the Church did not love Jews," he said.

While the Church "rejected biological racism even though many believers had embraced it," the Church was nonetheless "laden with anti-Judaism deeply-rooted over centuries" and, he said, "Jewish suffering was theologically justified, at least somewhat, avoiding excesses."

With that context in mind, the rabbi said, "many things that would be inexplicable today find their framing" or explanation.

Explaining past "dynamics" and motives is one thing, Rabbi Di Segni said, and moral justification is another.

"The prohibition against killing has been carved on the tablets of the law for 34 centuries. By a tragic paradox many of those who killed the Jews professed beliefs built on those Ten Commandments," he added.

The silence of individuals also does not escape judgment, he said. It is the judgment of ordinary people "who have been affected by events and of many others who study history and ask about moral responsibilities, which are all the greater when one carries the role of a spiritual leader."

Regular "people of common sense" want to understand, he said, and "what we all expect" during this "moment of great historical verification is that our painful feelings and memories be respected and not offended by the judgments" of others who wish to absolve or be an apologist of the past "at all costs."



Pope Pius XII prays outside the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome as fears grew an Allied attack on the city would devastate its ancient treasures and lead to huge casualties among the local population. Thankfully, Rome was spared

Italians' sacrifices to save WWII Jews under-estimated, conference hears

Generosity and compassion for those fleeing persecution prevailed over racial laws and centuries-old anti-Semitic prejudices in Nazi-occupied Italy, Jewish and Catholic historians said at an international conference.

Before anti-Semitism was declared a sin with the Second Vatican Council, it was commonplace for Catholics “to think of Jews and Judaism as something dangerous, something different,” said Suzanne Brown-Fleming, director of international academic programs at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

However, many Catholics overcame these prejudices to rescue and save Jewish people in danger, “sometimes at the cost of their lives. Others did not. And that’s fascinating ... somehow, those who were able to break out of this thinking brought us to the Second Vatican Council,” she said.

Brown-Fleming was one of dozens of scholars speaking at the conference at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University looking at recent research into the Vatican archives of Pope Pius XII’s pontificate before, during and after World War II.

Liliana Picciotto, a Holocaust historian at the Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center Foundation in Milan, said: “There were 38,994 Jews in Italy on the eve of the German occupation on 8th September 1943. Some 81 per cent of them were saved – but more than 7,000 Jews across Italy were arrested and



Participants attend the conference on New Documents from the Pontificate of Pope Pius XII at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome

deported to extermination camps.

After years of war and now with the Italian Fascist state becoming a Nazi-German puppet state, there were also tens of thousands of others needing help: escaped Allied prisoners of war, Italian civilians and young Italian soldiers who all risked being labelled enemies of the state and deportation by German authorities, she said. In addition to waves of destitute citizens flooding the capital from the south, Rome’s population went from about 850,000 to 1,500,000 people in this short period of time and they all needed clothing, food and protection.

Many laypeople and the Catholic Church “abundantly distributed assistance to all of them and without distinction,” she said, “including taking in Jews,” who had already been unjustly discriminated against by Italian racial laws since 1938, but now faced mass arrests and deportations after the German invasion.

Neighbours, hospitals, parishes, religious houses, seminaries, papal institutes and other Church-owned structures opened their doors while some laypeople and clergy ran organized clandestine networks that helped smuggle thousands of Jews into Switzerland, procure false documents or hide them in their communities.

“Thousands of people were helping thousands of other people,” in a kind of underground popular movement after decades of dictatorship, said Picciotto.

Rome had the largest Jewish community of 12,000 people and “the largest concentration of religious houses in Italy,” she said. Many of Rome’s Jews, especially after the Nazi raid on Rome on 16th October, 1943, “were saved thanks to the hand extended to them by Church structures.” Some 1,259 people, mainly members of the Jewish community, had been taken by the Nazis that day.

A total of 27,500 Jews were

rescued in all of German-occupied Italy, she said, and “between a quarter and a fifth of them were saved thanks to the outreach of the church,” she said.

Picciotto said a number of documents she found suggest initiatives were taken by the “middle tier” of the Church hierarchy, where leaders let their superiors know they were aiding the persecuted, but without waiting for their permission and “without getting them involved.”

Sr Grazia Loparco, a Salesian sister of St. John Bosco, said that religious superiors decided individually what their house would do, with many helping, and some not.

Cloistered convents and monasteries, however, did need permission from their bishop or his representative to let in outsiders, she said. For Rome, this would be the pope’s representative, called an apostolic visitor, who documented there had been 99 Jews hidden in 11 cloistered convents. Picciotto said the visitor, identified only as Fr Giovanni, directly found shelter for 176 people – civilian fighters and Jews – in the monasteries and convents he oversaw.

Sr Loparco, a professor of church history at Rome’s Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences Auxilium, said it is highly unlikely Pope Pius XII directly wrote an order to hide Jews and others because a written directive would have been too risky. “However that he was aware and that he supported this is very clear, since the cloistered monasteries had

been given permission to do so.”

She told the conference that oral communication in the Church hierarchy “worked very well in Rome.” Every morning a priest from the Vatican or the Diocese of Rome visited each women’s religious house in order to celebrate Mass, making it “very easy” to pass along information.

Sr Loparco’s research together with new documents found in the archives of the Jesuit-run Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome have found at least 100 women’s and 55 men’s religious congregations offered hospitality to 4,300 people in Rome.

She said that since the new research came out, she was still getting information from people finding diaries or evidence in their archives of clandestine rescues in religious houses.

The delay and surprises in learning about the past is often because there is no trained archivist to access the materials or the archives have not been catalogued.

Also, she said, religious women and men saw helping the Jews and others was none other than their basic duty to offer charity and save innocent human lives, no matter the risk.

But the occupation of Rome took their mandate to love and protect to a new level, she said, as the religious and those they cared for lived under the same roof and “shared the fear, shared the risk, they shared everything there was, so they created a closeness that was not doctrinal but was human.”

Pope's message on climate crisis in Laudate Deum reverberates in Africa

Fredrick Nzwili

When Pope Francis released his apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (*Praise God*) was released on 4th October, its message echoed loudly across Africa, where millions of ordinary people are victims of the global climate crisis.

Priests, women religious and bishops on the continent continue to care for communities battered by droughts, famine, floods and storms.

"This is real," Fr Gerard Matolo, a priest in the newly erected Wote Catholic Diocese in Kenya. "My congregants often tell me how the rains in the 1980s used to be enough to sustain a harvest, but now we are going year after year without any due to poor rains."

"We have to give food aid to people who often come to our parish offices. It's usually for a few and most needy. They are also in serious need of water," he said a day after the papal exhortation was issued. "There is some borehole water, but it has too much fluoride. That's why most children in my parish have brown teeth," a condition called fluorosis, which is caused by overexposure to fluoride.

Laudate Deum stresses that time is running out and that irreversible damages to the planet have already occurred. It also notes that climate change is real, cannot be denied and has been caused by human action. Among other messages, it observes that progress on limiting greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, deforestation and soil erosion has been slow.

Climate change "is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life," *Laudate Deum* said, adding that "the African bishops stated that climate change makes manifest "a tragic and striking example of structural sin."

The situation could really be called tragic in the Horn of Africa, the region that is still recovering from a severe drought – the worst in 40 years – that continued to unfold in 2023. Until the arrival of the rains, the drought had displaced an estimated one million people and left millions of others on the brink of famine.

Scientists blamed the situation on rising temperatures, which, accordingly, had disrupted weather patterns in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, resulting in a fifth consecutive rain season failure.

In September, the opposite unfolded in Libya where devastating floods resulted from Mediterranean storm Daniel. Thousands have been confirmed as died, many after a dam collapsed, with almost 9,000 still missing.

On the very day *Laudate Deum*



Pope Francis waves to crowds during his recent papal visit to Sudan. Africa was very much at the forefront of his thinking when he wrote *Laudate Deum*

was released, flooding in Cameroon killed 27 people in the country's capital.

As COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference will convene in the United Arab Emirates from 30th November. Bishops in Africa, under the Symposium of Episcopal Conference in Africa and Madagascar, said in that as the leaders of Catholic communities in Africa, they ask that COP28's leaders "to recognise their moral duty and commit to urgently taking ambitious action to protect our common home and the most vulnerable."

That's why the bishops celebrated and welcomed Pope Francis' new climate exhortation "that illustrates the global social issues of climate change and echoes the obvious nature of climate change impacts." They referred in particular to the 13th point of the exhortation: "It is not possible to conceal the correlation between these global climate phenomena and the

accelerated increase in greenhouse gas emissions."

"We must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes," the African bishops said.

"I think the document is very timely, coming hot on the heels of extreme weather events that have devastated communities around the world," said Allen Otarro, the founder and executive director of the Catholic Youth Network for Sustainability in Africa.

Ottaro said the question about Africa posed in the document – "How can we forget that Africa, home to more than half of the world's poorest people, is responsible for a minimal portion of historic emissions?" – echoed the African bishops' position that the continent suffers the most, despite contributing the least to the problem.

"This is a very important point

that was also raised at the Africa Climate Week and Summit in September, but also reinforces the need for climate justice, particularly for the global south which urgently needs support for adaptation," said Ottarro.

He hoped *Laudate Deum* would re-energise Church leaders in Africa to effectively address the ecological crisis, and the demand for more accountability, particularly from the global north.

"We have seen the continued exploitation of Africa's natural resources, in the name of renewable energy where the African people themselves hardly benefit," said Ottarro, as he highlighted the conflict in Eastern Congo, which fuelled a scramble for mineral resources.

According to Fr Edward Obi, a specialist in the ethics of natural resource management in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, *Laudate Deum* is a shocking yet timely reminder that the world as we know it is in grave peril on account of the recalcitrance of world leaders on the climate change phenomenon.

"Eight years after his persuasive, yet urgent, invitation to change [*in Laudato Si'*] from 'an undifferentiated and one-dimensional (technological) paradigm' and, ultimately, allow ourselves to be converted to a new relationship with the cosmos, the pope finds it necessary to issue this dire warning that 'we may be nearing a breaking point,'" said the

Rescue workers in Derna, Libya, which was devastated when flooding caused by Storm Daniel caused a local dam to collapse. Photo: Libyan Red Crescent Ajdabiya via Reuters

priest. For Fr Obi, climate change is an unfolding existential calamity for sub-Saharan Africa.

"Just think of the fact that this region contributes only 2-3 per cent to global warming from all human and industrial activities, while the US and China are unabashed at about 30 per cent of the global total each. Yet, despite our small contribution to a big problem, we bear a disproportionate burden in terms of real-time impact," he said.

As part of the consequence, Fr Obi highlighted that the total available water in the large basins of the Niger, Lake Chad and Senegal had decreased by 70 per cent and overall temperature rise in the region is headed toward 2 degrees Celsius.

At the same time, Ashley Kitisya, the Fossil Free Campaigner at *Laudato Si'* Movement Africa, said with the repercussions of climate change, leaders must expeditiously accelerate actions and relentlessly pursue the phasing out of fossil fuels.

"The frenzied pursuit of oil and gas across my continent, at the cost of disenfranchised people, mirrors the very concern highlighted by *Laudate Deum*. Despite the abundant potential for renewable energy, it is disheartening that fossil fuels continue to account for 80 per cent of the world's energy supply," said Kitisya.

"These decisions we make hold not only the fate of nature but also the very prosperity and survival of the human race in their balance," she said.

Catholic Relief Services said that *Laudate Deum* was a rallying cry of Pope Francis for the crucial policy work needed to change course.

"He invites leaders everywhere to rise above self-interest and imagine a future shaped by the common good. With COP28 on the horizon, world leaders must heed this call. They must listen to developing countries, which are pushing for an operationalized Loss and Damage Fund," the agency said.

"They must abandon fossil fuels and invest in a green energy transition. And they must provide more financial support for communities to respond to the effects of climate change," it added.

Frederick Nzwili writes from Nairobi, Kenya



A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE

ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE



The magical puzzle of life

I'm retired, and every morning weather permitting, I walk to a shop for a newspaper, either along the Trans Pennine Trail. The total distance is only around quarter of a mile, but it's a good start to the day for an octogenarian.

The reason I mention this is that it was only last week when I realised that what I was looking at, presented me with a great puzzle.

When I went down the trail, or on the road, I found myself looking and contemplating the wonders created by both plant and animal life, which made me investigate both and identify my great puzzle. I started by looking at them both in a special way.

Plant life

What I've called a puzzle, has caused me to look closely at the plant life I've been passing for years. There's lots of it, trees, shrubs, grasses, and berries of all kinds, each growing and each year doing their best to make sure they'll have offspring, using pollen and seeds they produce.

There are hundreds of different plants in our countryside, but it made me remember how DNA controls how each species grows into the same plant. All life has DNA in its cells: it's the masterplan for all

life on earth. It controls how each one grows into what it should be, and how, sometimes, it can evolve.

DNA is a set of instructions that each cell obeys in a specific sequence, at a specific time, so that a desired form will be created.

To me this is like a knitting pattern or a music score. If the instructions are obeyed, the garment desired will be produced. If a music score is followed, then the melody or tune will be reproduced.

Thinking about these made me realise that humans who created knitting patterns and music scores only did so because they had a purpose, and only intelligent beings create things for a purpose.

This is what I believe DNA does. It produces the living organism intended by the instructions in it, so DNA must have a purpose.

I sat looking at the plants in my garden, knowing that I was looking at miracles. How could a plant know which instructions in its DNA to access, when to access them, how to interpret and execute them in the required way to produce the plant in question? This still puzzles me, but it's not the great puzzle I originally mentioned.

The other important thing I began to realise is that plant life is necessary for the survival of all life.

Some of the things it provides are materials to be used by animal life to make things, provide medicines, food and, most importantly, take in CO₂ and produce oxygen, one of the ingredients needed by all life.

In simple terms, I'm sure that if there was no plant life there would be no animal life; no life at all. I could be wrong, but it seems to me that DNA is the masterplan for all life on earth, but especially human life.

Animal life

I then looked at animal life and had similar feelings when I was walking down the street. All around me were things that had been thought of, designed, then created for use by humans or other animals and even plant life. They all had a purpose. There are roads, railways, houses, shops, garden walls, all kinds of tools, communication devices, vehicles of all kinds, flying craft, even those which can go into space, and many others.

Animal life also uses DNA in a similar way to plant life, but here is where I found my great puzzle...

We're told that DNA started in simple cell-like forms, then over billions of years evolved into the plant and animal life we see today. I asked myself "why is it only human

beings that can think of a need, design something for that need, create it and use it. No other animal, within the animal kingdom can do this".

This thought made me ask, "why are there no animal life forms that are more intelligent than human beings or have similar abilities?"

Why has human life evolved with intelligence far greater than all other life forms?

This was my great puzzle.

No matter how I thought about this, the only answer I could come up with was that there must be a purpose for it, and looking at human life, only an intelligence greater than it would have one.

Although it was a puzzle, it didn't stay one for long. A greater intelligence than a human being

could only mean God, and we know from other articles in this series what his purpose for creating the humans race is; it's for them to obey his covenant so that their souls gain the wonders of living in heaven with him for all eternity when we die. A great puzzle, then, but easily solved.

God had to create an environment for humans to live in, hence the universe containing our one galaxy among billions, and our solar system, with the formation of life using DNA, which enabled plant life to form, producing the oxygen all life needs.

What a great God we have. His design of our existence can only be described as masterful, but isn't that what God is, all loving and masterful?

JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



Getting our feet wet

When someone is elected to high office, we often talk of their having 'a honeymoon period', a time to settle in before judgements are made on performance, a time to get to know how to exercise responsibility, a time of patience with the occasional mistake.

Only later does the scrutiny become more incisive and the edges sharper in argument.

From the start of his induction as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis has spoken with deliberate intent, honestly and with humble sincerity. The editorial writer in *America* magazine made this point in November 2014: 'It is one of the small miracles of Pope Francis' pontificate that he rarely makes morality seem tedious. Even when he talks bluntly about our human flaws – and the pope is nothing if not blunt – he does so in a way that engages rather than alienates his audience. Listening to Pope Francis, you want to be a better Christian, not because you feel guilty, but because you want to rise to the occasion and accept his

invitation to follow the Christian path.'

This is what we have come to expect of a cleric who has travelled a long way to occupy the See of Peter. In those first few years so many things happened that have taken us out of our comfort zone. For the Bishop of Rome to be acknowledged on the front cover of *Time* magazine and *Rolling Stone* within weeks of each other must tell us that something is stirring. It would seem that when Francis acts in a Christ-like manner, offering compassion and forgiveness, looking at the spirit of



the law rather than ruthless adherence to it, seeking to build loving relationships rather than antagonistic positions, he is criticised. But then so was the Nazarene in whose place he offers guidance. Pity that, but there it is.

Some people will always find a problem with one who leads by example, someone for whom the Second Council of the Vatican was not just an historical event, but a continuing, life-enriching experience.

In many ways the journey that Francis is making and at the same time is encouraging us to take with him, resembles crossing a fast moving river by way of stepping stones. The stones are slippery, and that can give rise to accidents if you are careless. There would appear to be no way of avoiding getting your feet wet before you reach the other side.

Let's hope that those attending the Synod are not adverse to water, in order that, together, we can continue being pilgrims in a Pilgrim Church, wet feet and all.

CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF FIDELITY



GOD IS CALLING!
ARE YOU LISTENING?

As you reflect upon where God is calling you in life, are you willing to leave your boat and follow Him? Join us for a day of prayer and to know more about the religious life.

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Rev. Sister Bernadette
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Email: sr_bernadette_vfcss@hotmail.com

The vineyard is the Lord's, and no simple man can claim dominance over it

In the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in the Vineyard (Matthew 21:33-43), Jesus paints an image of the Church which is less than flattering. It is an image of a Church that has gone astray, a Church that is tended by those who think it is theirs to use at will, to bend to their own ends, and not to do the will of God - the true Master. This striking parable has reference, obviously, to the Jewish leaders of Jesus's day who rejected him, and would finally put him to death. But it also has reference to the leaders in today's Church who fail to promote the following of Christ as their primary mission. Thus, this parable has a message for all times, but especially for today.

The property owner in the parable is God the Father. The tenant farmers refer to the religious leaders whose job it is to do God's will, unselfishly, not lording over the faithful as if they were their masters. The servants who were sent to obtain the master's "share of the grapes" represent the prophets and saints who laboured to do the Lord's will in his vineyard but were persecuted for their efforts by corrupt, religious leaders. The Son, whom God finally sent, is Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins. Jesus quotes the Old Testament scriptures in this parable which refer to himself as the "cornerstone" of the new kingdom which was rejected and continues to be distorted by corrupt religious leaders.

We have all been planted in the Lord's Vineyard, and we must all bear good fruit in this Vineyard. No one can presume to be the owner, the master of this fruitful kingdom. There is only one master, one owner, and that is almighty God. We are all called to be



Marten van Valkenborch's Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, ca. 1680-1690

co-operative, fruitful workers in this church. This parable does not sing of a co-operative church, however, it sees only a harvest of those useless, wild grapes that sprout up in the untended vineyard. The gift that God had given was neglected and scorned.

If Church leaders should act this way today, and God forbid, the vineyard will be taken away from them and given to those "who will yield a rich harvest." On the other hand, if Church's leaders are willing

servants, fruitful and contented workers, acting decently and respectfully in accordance with the example of God's only son, his blessing will be upon them and those in their charge.

The message of this parable is a message for our day. Pope Francis launched his Synodal Process to renew the Catholic Church's understanding of itself and its mission to meet the needs of the gospel in a changing world. This is an awesome task. It is not easy to

achieve renewal in the church because it is fraught with dangers, crises, and obstacles that tend to derail the church from its true purpose. But the synodal process is in line with the reforms, and pastoral guidance set forth by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It deserves our respect, our prayers, and our support.

The Church is the People of God, endeavouring to be faithful to the Gospel of Christ in a sinful world.

Let us humbly pray for our

Church and today's Synodal Process:

Heavenly Father, help our Church walk in a manner worthy of Your calling.

Guide us in our dealings with one another to be meek and humble of heart.

Grant us patience to bear one another's burdens with love, and compassion.

Inspire the Synodal Shepherds and Faithful to lead wisely for the good of all.

A king with no earthly match

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him'

Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:31

In today's scripture we meet a king with no earthly match. This king is a shepherd for us and, like the good shepherd; he does not push or herd the sheep from behind but walks ahead of them and leads them into fine pastures. This king seeks us out when we're lost, empowers us when helpless, and rescues us when we're trapped.

The king who comes in judgment in today's Gospel (Matthew 25/31-46) comes

into our lives, not with punishment and condemnation but with sympathy and reconciliation. Jesus comes to lift up sinners. He wills not the loss of any member of the flock, but only that each member recognize him. Jesus says that he is to be recognized in all those in need. Judgment in his kingdom is to be levied according to whether we have recognised him in our neighbours in need by feeding, clothing, housing, refreshing and consoling them.

Thus Jesus insists: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.

Remember that those who are condemned in today's Gospel were cast out of the kingdom not just for what they failed to do but for what never occurred to them to do.

We must, therefore, choose to do well and to do it in the ways that Jesus tells us; The Gospel reminds us that it is the little things

that count. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, healing and visiting the sick, giving shelter to the homeless and visiting those in prison.

It is the little steps that we take in all these areas that build up God's kingdom. So, put one foot in front of the other and commit yourself to helping others. You are not just trying to reserve a place for yourself in God's kingdom, you are leading others to it as well.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



Love thy neighbour remains greatest commandment as it links us to God

29th October 2023 – 30th Sunday, (A)

Our Gospel celebrates the great commandment of love. To love our neighbour as God does, prejudices based on race, religion or colour have to go. The revelation at Mount Sinai prompted a sense of fairness towards others, deeper than specific commandments. Jesus demonstrates a life of utterly unselfish loving, and invites us to make that our guide to life. For St Paul, this imitation of Christ is the core of spirituality

Exodus 22:20-26

The Israelites must show fairness in practical matters

The Lord said to Moses, “Tell the children of Israel this: ‘You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.’”

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.

If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbour’s only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbour cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.”

Responsorial: Psalm 17:2-4, 47, 51

R./: I love you, Lord, my strength

I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my saviour. My God is the rock where I take refuge; my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold.

The Lord is worthy of all praise: when I call I am saved from my foes. (R./)

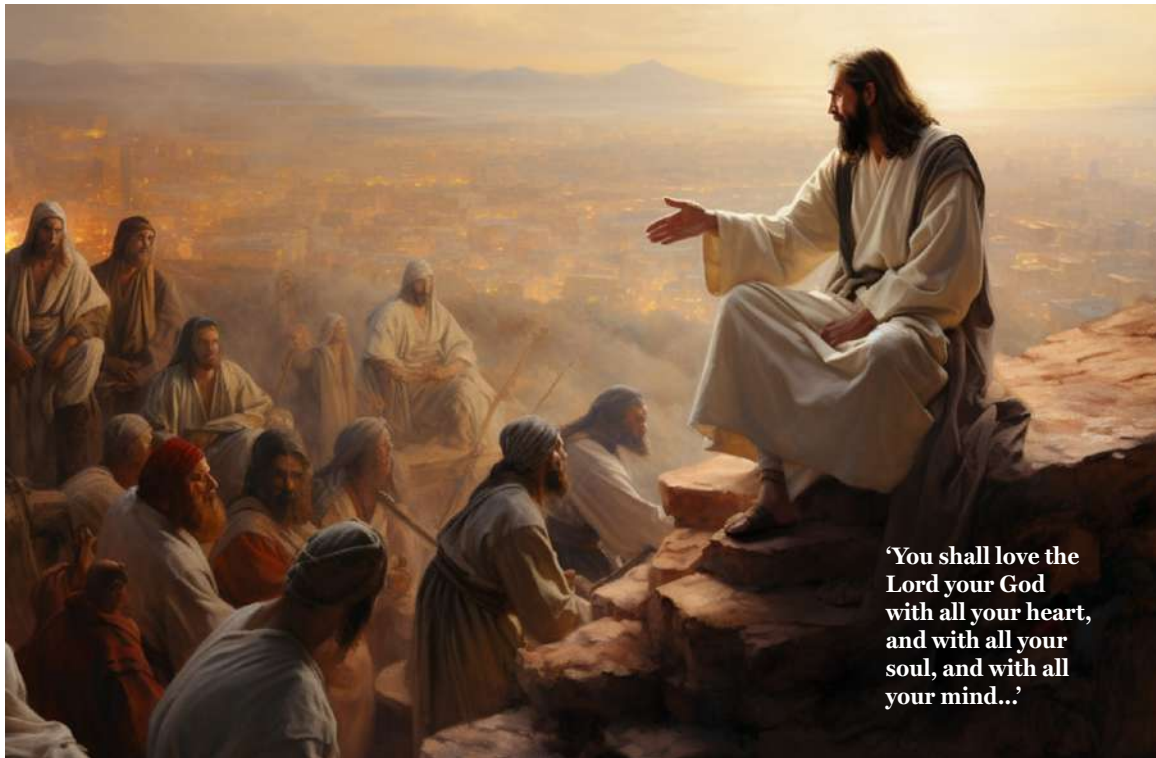
Long life to the Lord, my rock!

Praised be the God who saves me. He has given great victories to his king and shown his love for his anointed. (R./)

1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

The fervour of the Thessalonian converts encouraged other local churches

Our message of the Gospel came to you not in word only, but also in



‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...’

power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Gospel: Matthew 22:34-40
Jesus’ summation of morality as the twofold commandment of love

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Doing justice in love

All our texts today suggest one clear and practical principle: loving God involves doing practical justice in our world. But even our superficially Christian society is full of people who show little respect for love or justice. Political and economic life is ruled by values far from those of the Gospel. Greed, and fierce desire for power and profit can be seen in our daily papers. We are closer to the paganism mentioned in Paul’s letter than we may imagine. Today no less than then, the world is hostile to what Jesus represents, and it is hard for us to take a stand even on important issues of justice and compassion. Our Lord shows love of God and genuine love of the other as two basic aspects of the same call. There can never be a contradiction between the two, even though one may sometimes feel trapped in a situation where a particular law of Church or State seems to create a contradiction.

An approach to the second commandment about love could be by reflecting on how we love ourselves. Love of neighbour becomes virtually impossible in the agony of self-hatred in which some fearful, discouraged people can find themselves. Loving the other as oneself only becomes possible if we have, or can grow into, a healthy,

sane level of self-appreciation. This is a sound psychological principle, which should be mentioned in our churches even though Christian love transcends all the transient vogues of psychology. Its ideal is the example of Christ himself, with also his commitment to justice for the poor.

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants who have come to live among us in the UK and Ireland. We have moved from a mono-cultural to a multi-cultural, multi-racial society. Today’s readings invite us to reflect on how well we receive these strangers, make them feel at home in our society and in our church. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” They are distinct from us, and, often, different from us. The saying, “Birds of a feather flock together,” expresses the evident truth that like attracts like. It is tempting to frequent the company of people like ourselves. Yet, the Lord gathered about himself a community of great diversity. Even within the twelve there was to be found a tax-collector and a zealot, men from opposite ends of the political spectrum. In a similar way, the Spirit of the Lord at work in our lives prompts us to connect with those who are different from us, as well as those who are like us. The one we find initially strange can reveal the Lord to us in surprising ways. We pray for a greater openness to the many ways the Lord comes to us in life.

The heart of the matter

Life is becoming increasingly complex. We value people who have the gift of getting beyond the multiple dimensions of an issue so as to zoom in on the heart of the matter. Such people prevent us from missing the wood for the trees. They are good at separating out what really matters from the things that are less important. They encourage us to invest our energies in what is really worthwhile, rather than allowing them to be dissipated by what is not significant.

Jesus was a person who knew how to go to the heart of the matter. On one occasion someone asked him to intervene in a family dispute about inheritance. In his reply, he ignored the concrete issue and, instead, he called on the person who approached him to “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (Lk 12:13-15). He saw that the real issue was not the details of the particular case but the greed which underlay the dispute.

This capacity of Jesus to get to the heart of the matter is clear from his response to the question put to him by one of the Pharisees in today’s gospel reading, “Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?”

In the time of Jesus there were known to be 613 commandments in the Jewish Law. The potential here to miss the wood for the trees was enormous. Preoccupation with the detail of regulations could result in people ignoring what really matters, like straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel (Mt 23:24). Jesus answered the Pharisee’s question by going straight to the heart of the Jewish law. He was asked if there is one “greatest” commandment, but in reply he named the second greatest commandment as well. For the first commandment, loving the Lord your God with all our heart and soul, is inseparable from the conjoined commandment, of loving my neighbour as myself. For Jesus, what God wants from us above all else is love. There is no genuine love of God unless it finds expression in love of our neighbour. Love of neighbour, in turn, presupposes a healthy self-love, recognising and appreciating myself as fundamentally good, because I am created in the image and likeness of God.

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Disciples' conviction in the resurrection led to them paying the ultimate price

Q. I have always been puzzled by the lack of reaction to Christ's resurrection from Jewish citizens and Roman officials. It is well-documented that Jesus suffered and died, and his execution was authorised by Roman leaders. Yet, even at a time of no media coverage, how could Christ's return to life have gone unnoticed by the very officials who had clamoured for and authorised his death? And what happened to the Roman guard who was stationed at the tomb? Why did he not report such an event to his superiors?

A. I am happy for this question on the resurrection, because our Christian faith stands or falls on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. Paul said: "If Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, your faith" (1 Cor. 15:14).

It is far from true that the resurrection of Jesus went "unnoticed" by civil and religious officials of the day. When those who had been appointed to guard the tomb reported to the chief priests "all that had happened," the chief priests assembled the elders to determine a plan of action.

It was decided to bribe the guards with "a large sum of money"; the guards were directed to tell anyone who asked that "his disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep." The chief priests also assured the guards that, if the news reached Pilate's ears, "we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble" (Mt. 28:11-15).

That "stolen body hypothesis" never caught on – first of all, because the dispirited band of Jesus' followers, whose dream had seemingly died with their master, were then huddled together in fear and unlikely to risk going anywhere near the tomb of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus was destined to cause enduring problems for Roman and Jewish leaders, and it would have been worth their every effort should they have been able to disprove it. (Imagine the effect of being able to produce the body of Christ and parade the 'stolen' corpse through the streets of Jerusalem.) But any investigation on the part of civil and religious authorities came up empty.

The rapid spread of Christianity in the first century was fuelled by the accounts of more than 500 witnesses to whom Jesus appeared in the 40 days following the resurrection. Writing some 25 years



later, Paul said that most of these 500 "are still living" (1 Cor 15:6)-in effect, challenging deniers, "If you don't believe me, talk to them."

The pyramids of Egypt, Westminster Abbey, Arlington National Cemetery are famous as the burial sites of those renowned by history. The tomb of Jesus, instead, is empty, and Christ's epitaph is carved not in stone but spoken by the angel who greeted the women at the tomb, "He is not here ... he has been raised" (Lk. 24:6).

And yet, for me, the strongest proof of the resurrection comes not from an empty tomb, but from the living witness of Christ's first followers.

Of the Twelve Apostles, only John died of natural causes. The others – so convinced were they that they had seen Jesus after the resurrection, spoken with him in the upper room, eaten with him on the shore in Galilee – were willing to die by violence for the truth of that claim: James, son of Alphaeus, by stoning; Peter hung on a cross upside down. That is a pretty high price to pay if you made up the story to start with.

Q. I read recently that, during the consecration at Mass, the blessed Saviour is most present to us – and that, if we have a special prayer request, that would be the best time to make it. Can you tell me if that is correct, or is there a more appropriate time?

A. It is true that when the words of consecration are pronounced by the priest, Jesus himself becomes present on the altar under the appearance of bread and wine. This makes that moment, of course, an especially sacred one. I have noticed that even when a congregation has seemed fidgety and distracted, a reverent hush descends at the time of consecration.

If you feel a particular closeness to Christ right then, by all means go ahead and make your request – although the primary focus at that moment should be gratitude to the Lord for coming so near.

Finally, I need to point out that, in listening to our needs, God has no "office hours." I believe, and the teaching of the Church holds, that Jesus' invitation to "ask and you shall receive" applies in any circumstance and in every setting.

Q. Often, I have been at a Mass where the deacon reads the Gospel, which is fine. But then, sometimes, the deacon goes on to give the homily while the priest watches. This disappoints me and makes me feel that the deacon is overstepping his bounds. Why should a deacon, rather than the priest, comment on church teachings? Is this a new function in the church today?

A. Although the permanent diaconate was restored by Pope Paul VI in 1967, the questions above would seem to indicate that even today, nearly half a century

later, there is still some confusion about a deacon's role. Deacons can baptise, witness marriages, perform funeral and burial services (outside of Mass), distribute holy Communion and preach a homily. They cannot celebrate Mass, hear confessions or administer the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. They are obligated each day to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. Deacons were first appointed in the earliest days of the church with the special ministry of serving the poor.

There are two kinds of deacons: transitional deacons, who are seminarians in the final stage of their training for the priesthood, and permanent deacons. Permanent deacons, ordained after several years of theological preparation, may be single or married. They often have secular jobs, but also assist parish communities at liturgies and in service ministries such as visiting the sick or counselling families.

When joining the priest at Mass, a deacon normally introduces the penitential rite, reads the Gospel and the prayers of intercession (petitions), helps in distributing Communion and proclaims the dismissal rite.

When a deacon baptises or preaches, there is no requirement that a priest be unavailable. The church's Code of Canon Law, in No. 861, for example, says simply that "the ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, a presbyter or deacon." Sometimes when a deacon baptises or accepts wedding vows, it is

because he has a particular relationship with those receiving the sacrament – but that is not necessary. Often in parishes that have a deacon, the deacon preaches the homily on a regular rotation (perhaps once a month, perhaps at one Mass each weekend). Parishioners have often commented that a deacon, especially if he has a family, can share a different perspective.

Pastorally, when a deacon is scheduled to do a baptism, wedding or funeral service, it is best for the priest to advise the family in advance, since many still expect that a priest will officiate.

Q. In the Bible, Jesus says: "Do this in memory of me." But he doesn't say that it has to be done every Sunday and holy day. So many young people are falling away from the church because of its rigidity. Please explain why we are obligated.

A. The responsibility to gather on Sundays for the Eucharist has been recognised by Christians since the earliest days of the church, although it was not specifically written into law until the fourth century. That obligation is codified in the current Code of Canon Law (in No. 1246), which says: "Sunday ... must be observed in the universal church as the primordial holy day of obligation."

Sunday is singled out as sacred, of course, because it was the day of Christ's resurrection. In the Didache, which was the compendium of Christian teaching written in the second half of the first century, believers were directed as follows: "On Sundays, get together and break the bread and give thanks, confessing your sins in order that your sacrifice may be pure."

It is true, as you say, that the Sunday Mass obligation is a precept of the church rather than a verbatim command of Jesus, and therefore it could be modified by competent church authority. But it doesn't seem to me that removing the obligation would serve to bring young people back to more regular eucharistic practice.

The solution, I think, has more to do with liturgies that celebrate joyfully what Jesus has done, with homilies that are well-prepared and directed to the challenges people face daily, and – most of all – with parents who show their children, by example, the importance of the Mass in their lives. **Unfortunately, this column can't accept questions from readers**

EDUCATION

SISTER CATHY JONE, Religious of the Assumption



University has a permanent praying presence to the Lord on its doorstep

Seven years ago, in the summer of 2016, the first group of Assumption Sisters moved to a property opposite St Mary's University in Twickenham, west London.

It was a convenient location that enabled us to be a frequent presence on the university campus, and for students and staff to easily visit us.

Francis Campbell, at the time the Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's, was seeking ways to foster the Catholic identity of the university and believed that having a religious congregation involved in the life of the university would contribute towards this.

Hearing how much the prayerful presence of our sisters living next door to Heythrop College, London, was appreciated by staff and students alike, he invited our congregation to send sisters to be part of the life of St Mary's.

We discerned that this was a call which we should respond to, in a very simple and open manner, by having the key mission of our new community to be a 'praying presence' within St Mary's. This left us a great deal of flexibility to become involved in the life and mission of the university, as and when opportunities emerged that fitted with our charism and our capacities.

The Religious of the Assumption (often known as Assumption Sisters) were founded by St Marie Eugenie in Paris in 1839 and quickly became an international congregation, opening our first community in England in Richmond, Yorkshire, in 1850. There are now almost 1,200 sisters present in 32 countries on four continents. In England we are a small group of 30 sisters, often identified by the fact that we wear a simple form of our original purple and white habit, or by our connection to our main convent in Kensington Square, for many years home to the Maria Assumpta Teacher Training College.

The key apostolic mission of our congregation is education, which can take many forms, depending upon the needs of the context and the talents and formation of individual sisters. We have a special priority for young people; an often-quoted statement of St Marie Eugenie is 'Each one of us has a mission here on earth', and we seek to help people, especially young people, discover this mission and embrace it.

From the start of our presence at St Mary's we have been warmly



Some of the Assumption Sisters of Twickenham. Though few in number, they are hugely engaged with the community they live in, and take great joy in their links with the student community

welcomed as part of the chaplaincy team, invited to participate in chaplaincy events, and to propose new ideas. Our first and lasting initiative was directly connected to our spirituality. As Assumption Sisters we have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each afternoon in all our convents, so it was natural for us to introduce an hour of adoration followed by evening prayer once or twice a week in the university chapel. While only a very few people attend evening prayer, during the time of adoration we hear the chapel doors opening and closing, as students and staff call in to the chapel, often without us knowing who they are.

We have found that simple invitations to accessible forms of prayer work best. During our first



Sisters have also made connections with students and staff in other ways, for instance by setting up a food bank ... from our first feast of All Saints at St Mary's when students came unexpectedly knocking on our door in the evening to invite us to their 'All Saints party', we have found them remarkably open and friendly.

Lent at St Mary's we began Stations of the Cross each Friday in the chapel, and this has continued each year since. Other initiatives have varied from year to year, including talks on different types of prayer, Bible sharing sessions, and an end of year retreat day.

No one academic year is like another, each cohort of students is delightfully original, and with the chaplaincy team, we try to respond to their requests, including of course, the challenge of the years when Covid prevented most forms of ministry.

While it has been important to us to enhance the range of possibilities for prayer on campus, it is times of social interaction with the students that has been the most fulfilling and fruitful.

For us, the best contact with students has been over shared meals, particularly when we welcome them to our convent, and they rejoice in a homely atmosphere and one another's company. It has become a tradition that any evening meal at the convent ends with Compline, which might well be a new term to many students, but they soon learn how easy and enjoyable it is to pray the night prayer of the Church.

Since we moved to St Mary's we have always had some sisters studying at St Mary's. Sisters have also made connections with students and staff in other ways, for instance by setting up a food bank, and in contributing to teaching an inter-disciplinary module, which shows the connections between different academic disciplines and how spirituality can be found in them all.

We are also able to offer accommodation to a small number of students through the women-only student residence we run in the house next-door to our convent; this year we are happy to welcome five Catholic students.

The number of practising Catholics is only a very small proportion of the university population, and perhaps because of

this, it is very important for them to make Catholic friends and to be able to share their faith journeys with one another. From our first feast of All Saints at St Mary's when students came unexpectedly knocking on our door in the evening to invite us to their 'All Saints party', we have found the students remarkably open and friendly. Some are very committed to their faith and seek spiritual advice or accompaniment, while others have significant gaps in their understanding of Christianity, and we find ourselves faced with an array of unexpected questions.

For others the challenge of adjusting to living away from home and in student halls can be difficult, and our support is more one of encouragement and gentle kindness. Other students share their concerns and worries, which range from their approaching essay deadline to the social injustices of our world and the climate crisis. One thing is sure, our lives as sisters has been greatly enriched by the students and staff at St Mary's, and we are thankful for our praying presence there.

To find out more about the Assumption Sisters: <http://assumptionreligious.org>



AROUND THE PARISHES & EDUCATION

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



Holy Land priest asks London to help save Christian community

Suresh Abboodass

The population of Christians in the Holy Land is fast dwindling and no more so than in Bethlehem where, if nothing is done soon, it will be facing extinction, warned Mamdouh Abusada, a Melkite Latin priest from the ancient Biblical city.

Speaking at Mass in St. George's Metropolitan Cathedral, Southwark just prior to the attacks by Hamas on Israel, Fr Abusada said the Christian people in the Holy Land are facing a lot of problems. These include a lack of proper facilities like housing, schools, lack of infrastructure and neglect. This is especially acute among children with special needs, he said.

"To carry on the missionary services of neglected children especially children with special needs is impossible without aid and help from the West. So, we need your help, support and solidarity", he said. "We want you to pray for us, act for us and also visit us."

Fr Abusada, the Melkite priest who hails from Beit Sahour (the Shepherd's Field) in Bethlehem, is the Founder of the School for Joy for children with special needs. The Melkites trace their origin from the early Christian community in Antioch, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and celebrate Mass in

the Byzantine Rite.

Fr. Abusada founded the School of Joy in 1993. The school is situated in the West Bank. Its pupils are children with various disabilities who are not able to get admission into the state schools run by the Palestinian Authority, which do not have the facilities they need.

It was this lack of a provider for their education that led Fr Abusada to set up the School of Joy. It offers an invaluable service, providing the much-needed support these neglected children need.

Fr Abusada's mission is to help the parents understand that "their child is a special gift of God" and that they have a moral duty to give them the support they need.

One of the projects run by the school is a small factory producing olive wood products. The school also requires special teachers to educate these children. It was for this reason that Fr Abusada visited London to gather financial support from Christian brethren.

The School of Joy is supported by The Friends of the Holy Land (FHL), the Cahristian charity set up in 2007 by Michael Whelan, a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre. Moved by the plight of Christians in Bethlehem, FHL helps about Christian families in the Holy Land.

Coventry school flies flag for the planet as it lands major eco-award

A Coventry Catholic school has received international recognition for its commitment to raising awareness of climate change and the environment.

Pupils and staff at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, part of the Romero Catholic Academy, are celebrating earning an Eco-Schools Green Flag Award after launching a series of eco-awareness projects.

The school picked up the Green Flag Award with Distinction, which is awarded to organisations who go beyond the core Eco-Schools criteria.

Cardinal Wiseman's Eco-Committee was praised by judges for its tree planting initiatives to increase biodiversity, including the creation of 'Wiseman Wood', which is made up of almost 400 trees with many more still to be planted, that will serve as a nature reserve and an outdoor learning space for generations of pupils and encourage birds and insects to pass through the school.

The award also recognised the Romero Eco Days, which are supported by the Eco-Committee and have so far been hosted at

three schools across the academy to educate primary and secondary pupils about the environment through interactive outdoor activities with the support of Jonathan Ensell of horticulture training provider Roots to Fruit Midlands.

The school, in partnership with Roots to Fruit Midlands, has also created a Level 1 Practical Horticulture Skills course which will be jointly delivered by Patricia Blaney to groups of pupils who will benefit from this excellent vocational qualification.

The Eco-Schools programme was established in 1994 and is now delivered in more than 70 countries across the globe.

James Elkins, science teacher and eco-Co-ordinator at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, said: "It has been an incredible journey from carrying out our initial research and creating an action plan to deliver some fantastic projects with so many young people – and all pupils who have been involved should be very proud of this achievement.

"Our eco-committee has laid the

groundwork for us to continue raising eco-awareness not just in our school, but across the Romero Catholic Academy, and that is already in resulting in real, positive changes in our schools to help protect the environment."

Matthew Everett, principal at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, said: "Our staff and pupils have been inspired by the ideas and aims of the Romero Eco Conferences, which are led by pupils across all Romero schools to make sure that we are building a sustainable and green future for our local communities and parishes for generations to come."

Eco-Schools England Manager, Adam Flint, said: "The Eco-Schools Green Flag award is an internationally recognised symbol of high environmental standards.

"The pupils and school staff deserve immense credit for their hard work, determination, and creativity. Their passion for protecting our planet is an inspiration to us all."

To learn more about Eco-Schools, visit www.eco-schools.org.uk



“

To carry on the missionary services of neglected children, especially children with special needs, is impossible without aid and help from the West. So, we need your help, support and solidarity ... we want you to pray for us, act for us and visit us...

Trio rewarded for devotion to the Church

Congratulations to Molly Wade, Cathy Regan and Lawrence Curran of Our Lady and St Bridget's in West Calder who received the archdiocesan medal from Archbishop Cushley on Sunday. The medals were awarded for their long service and dedication to the parish in various roles over many years.

Molly Wade was awarded for her outstanding years of service and contribution to the work of the Church both in her parish and in the archdiocese itself.

She worked in the diocesan office from 1995 to 2006 and she was known and respected by clergy and laity alike.

Her contribution to the life of her parish was described as "remarkable". Among her many roles she has done the secretarial work, published the weekly bulletin, counted and banked the weekly collection, arranged the flowers, led the singing as cantor and served as the church rep on St Mary's Primary School Council.

She has also been a tremendous support to a number of priests over the years, including Monsignor Lawson, Fr Chambers and Fr Kevin Dow.

Despite personal tragedies, Molly has never wavered in her faith and in her devotion to the church. This has been shown over very many years.

Cathy Regan was awarded for her service to the parish and, in particular, for her service to the parish of St Thomas in Addiewell before it amalgamated with West Calder. Her work helped that merger go smoothly.

She supported Fr McMahon in the 1970s. Although he was very independent, Cathy was always on hand to help him in the house when needed, especially on special occasions when guests were coming. She also helped clean the church at that time. When Fr Bremner came to Addiewell, she took on greater housekeeping duties and helped look after his mother.



Around this time, she took on extra duties in the parish, including counting and banking of monies. In 1987, Fr Bremner moved into the parish house in Stoneyburn, where Cathy continued to support him.

In 2005, Cathy took on the role of housekeeper to West Calder's priests, a role she continues.

Cathy is a very quiet, prayerful and highly respected parishioner, who has served both the parishes of St Thomas and Our Lady and St Bridget.

Lawrence Curran's service to the Church began in 1941 when, at the age of eight, he became an altar server. This is a role he continued until he left school.

He has taken on numerous voluntary roles. If work was needing done in the church, its building or its grounds, Lawrence would always answer the call – often behind the scenes, so his efforts sometimes were invisible to others.

When retired at the end of the

1990s he dedicated more time to more noticeable roles. For over 20 years he has served as sacristan, taking responsibility for ensuring that everything needed for the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments was in the right place and in good order.

His service to the parish has also gone full circle in that he has served on the altar once more, during all liturgical seasons, at Sunday morning Mass and at funeral Masses.

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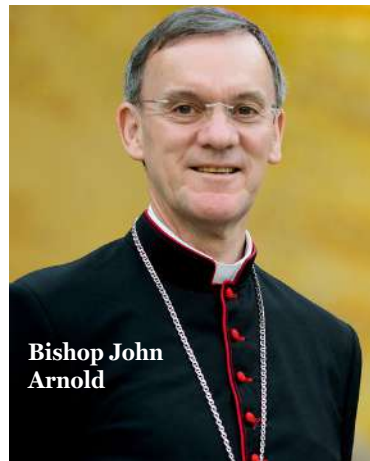
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Tell us, we're listening says Salford



Bishop John Arnold

The Catholic Church in Greater Manchester and Lancashire is inviting people to help shape the local Church of the future.

In April this year, the Catholic Diocese of Salford announced it would be undertaking a diocesan synod – a period of prayer, discussion, and questioning – to explore ways to meet the needs of a 21st – century society.

The synod seeks to connect with people living across the diocese – which covers much of Greater Manchester and Lancashire – particularly those who feel

disconnected or distanced from the Church and faith today.

This October marks the first key stage of the synodal process, entitled The Big Listen, which invites people over the next three months to prayerfully reflect on a number of questions to help identify key themes within our diocesan community.

Through these questions, the diocese of Salford seeks to explore a range of topics, from how to ensure the Church is a welcoming place for all, to how parish and school communities might look to

develop, to how the diocese can respond practically to the needs of our community and our world today.

Rt Rev. John Arnold, Bishop of Salford, said: “As we live in a fast-changing world, we must be prepared to question our priorities and our aspirations.

“There are global issues that are so distressing: the war in Ukraine, conflicts in other parts of the world, the plight of refugees and migrants, religious persecution, poverty, and the increasing impact of climate change.

“While we must look to Rome to prioritise global actions as the Catholic Church, we must recognise that we have a particular responsibility for our local Church here in the North West of England and its own particular needs and opportunities.”

• **The Diocese of Salford is now inviting all people to respond to this stage of the synod process by submitting their thoughts online at <https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/faith/synod/> or attending a meeting at their local parish.**

We can do it says Milton Keynes as food bank breaks world record for good cause

The St Barnabas cluster, a cluster of parishes across Milton Keynes in the Diocese of Northampton, joined with other communities in the hope of providing more food to those in need at a record-breaking event.

On Monday, 16th October, the St. Barnabas cluster participated in ‘MK Can’, an event hosted by the MK Food Bank to raise donations – much needed to cope with the huge demand at present. MK Food Bank decided to try and break the record for the longest line of food cans. This gave businesses and other communities a chance to not only help those in need, but also to have a chance to meet new people and promote their individual charitable priorities.

At the event, there were approximately, 100 businesses, 20 schools, 30 churches and faith groups, 50 community organisations and 25 charities. In total, MK Food Bank received 102,447 cans of food (11,000 of



which were funded by the general public) and broke the world record by making a line 8.67 km long.

Fr Francis Higgins said: “It was great to see so many people from across Milton Keynes come together to support this important cause. It seems really important

that our Catholic parishes are involved in serving the most needy and vulnerable in society”.

The St. Barnabas cluster donated 2,000 cans of food, covering 200 metres – 150 metres more than they anticipated. Parishioners helped in laying out the tins. When

asked as to why they donated their time to help, one parishioner said: “I wanted to be part of something that meant so much and could have a great impact on those in need. It is amazing to see the amount of people who have dedicated their time to come and help.”

Superstar Jack raises cash and stoma awareness

A superstar from a Catholic school has taken on a marathon challenge to raise almost £1,000 – and counting – for a cause close to his heart.

Eight-year-old Jack Dale set himself the task of running 31 miles over the 31 days of October – during Stoma Awareness Month – to raise understanding of stomas and bring a welcome boost to Colostomy UK, a charity which supports people with stomas and their families.

And right behind Year 4 pupil Jack in his mission are his supportive classmates at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School in Shotton Colliery, who all ran one of his miles with him around the school field.

The children ran wearing purple, the colour of stoma awareness, as

the rest of the pupils and staff came out to cheer them on during a special awareness day organised by the school, which is part of the part of the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.

The charity is incredibly important to Jack, who himself has a stoma – a medically-created opening in the abdomen to divert bodily waste into a collection bag. Stomas are needed for a variety of reasons and may be temporary or permanent.

As part of the awareness day, every child in Jack's school decorated a stoma bag and both staff and pupils proudly wore Stoma Awareness stickers to show the school's support.

Jack, who has so far raised more than £900, was delighted with the support shown to him and the



cause. He said: “I think it's great that school are raising awareness for Colostomy UK and I love that they are supporting the charity.”

Jack's class teacher, Adam McPhail, said: “Jack has really let his light shine with his awareness work and fundraising efforts.

“Jack is inspiring others to achieve, which is one of our mission values. His charity efforts are remarkable and as a school community we fully support Jack in his efforts and are happy to help Jack and his family raise awareness of such an important condition.”

Seminarians in joyful visit to the Holy Land

Last month, the staff and seminarians at the Venerable English College in Rome went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Among the group were three seminarians from the diocese of Portsmouth: Ryan Browne (fifth year), Ryan Hawkes and Jack Ryan (both fourth year).

Ryan Browne said: “We started our trip spending five days at the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem, followed by three days in Tiberias, by the Sea of Galilee.

“The pilgrimage was expertly led by Canon Mervyn Tower, a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and an alumnus of the English College, Rome. Throughout the week he led us in prayer and reflection as we visited key sites in the life of Jesus and his disciples.

“One of the most moving experiences for me personally was the opportunity to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem at night.

“To be able to pray at the site of the crucifixion and the resurrection was an immense privilege, and I kept everyone in our Diocese of Portsmouth in my prayers especially.”



“To be able to pray at the site of the crucifixion and the resurrection was an immense privilege...”

Ryan Browne

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AROUND THE PARISHES/EDUCATION

Anti-slavery day marked by Bakhita House gift for pope

To mark Anti-Slavery Day on 18th October, a delegation from St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) visited the Vatican and had a chance to meet Pope Francis at the end of the weekly general audience, in the company of the UK Ambassador to the Holy See, Chris Trott.

SMU Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran and Dr Carole Murphy, director of SMU's Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse, attended the general audience in St Peter's Square to highlight the work of the university in researching and combatting modern slavery.

At the end of the audience, the SMU representatives presented the pontiff with artwork created by residents of Caritas Bakhita House, London, a safe house for women who have been trafficked, enslaved, and exploited.

The artwork was used as the cover of the book *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: the Victim Journey*, edited by Carole Murphy and Runa Lazzarino, a copy of which

was also presented to Pope Francis.

The visit to the Vatican, which was organised by the British Embassy to the Holy See, included St Mary's attending a panel event entitled 'Education to tackle modern slavery and empower', also on 18th October. Hosted by the British Embassy and Talitha Kum, the anti-trafficking network of women religious, the event featured addresses from women religious working on the ground in Africa and Europe. Dr Carole Murphy delivered the event's keynote address prior to a panel discussion.

Ambassador Chris Trott said: "The visit of St Mary's University is an opportunity to highlight the vital role of education in empowering human trafficking survivors and people with lived experience of modern slavery. It also shows the role of education research centres in informing policy-making and building partnerships."

"Everyone, everywhere should live without fear of violence and exploitation and should be supported

to reach their full potential. The UK is committed to ending modern slavery and all forms of human trafficking, including forced labour in supply chains and child labour.

"I commend the work of Talitha Kum and the Catholic networks, who are a trusted local presence in their communities, giving voice to the most vulnerable."

St Mary's Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran added: "It is a great honour to represent St Mary's with Dr Murphy at the General Audience. As a Catholic university, St Mary's is committed to addressing injustice and inequality through academic research and advocacy, by breaking down the barriers to higher education, and in equipping our young people with the ethical foundation and skills needed to make a positive impact on wider society upon graduation."

As part of their visit, the delegation also held meetings at the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.



Top, Pope Francis shakes hands with SMU Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran; and above, Dr Carole Murphy presenting Pope Francis with artwork created by residents of Caritas Bakhita House, London. Photos: Vatican Media

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

pg 34

GARDENING

Controlling pests organically – and why ladybirds are the unsung heroes of your garden



Did you know that only about three per cent of the insect population actually does any kind of harm to our plants? That leaves 97 per cent per cent that are actually good bugs or just neutral. This week we're looking at how the horticultural community is embracing biological controls and shows you that you don't need to grab the pesticide spray at the first sign of a bug problem in your garden.

Suzanne Wainwright-Evans blends her degrees in environmental horticulture and entomology, into a unique skill as an "ornamental entomologist" specialising in Integrated Pest Management establishing that there is a safer way to treat pest problems. She is often asked, "Where do insects come from?", she responds that they can arrive on the wind or use visual clues to find their food source and hitchhike from the garden centre. She suggests that if you want to have a pest problem in your garden, start spraying! By that she means non-selective synthetic pesticides will also kill beneficial insects, which will only exacerbate the problem.

And, how does she tell a good bug from a bad

bug? Suzanne says if she sees a lot of insects hanging out together they are usually up to no good. In other cases, if you observe the insect, you can actually see the damage they are doing such as with caterpillars.

(Keep in mind that butterflies are pollinators so determine your tolerance for acceptable damage)

But once a pest problem has been identified, only select a product for that specific issue. Products on the market today are so much smarter and are able to narrowly target certain species. Bio-controls, which are regulated, are a

"The first line of defence is to plant the right plant in the right place. Be careful not to over-fertilise or over-water. Plants that are stressed by these practises are more vulnerable to insect attacks"

natural way to control pests without the fear of releasing an invasive species into the environment.

At home there are several precautions we can take to minimise pest problems. The first line of defence is to plant the right plant in the right place. Read the label and follow those guidelines. Be careful not to over-fertilise or over-water. Plants that are stressed by these practises are more vulnerable to insect attacks. Also, utilise plants that attract beneficials. Varieties with small flowers such as alyssum, dill and basil are very useful for drawing predator insects to your garden.

Lets focus on several of the unsung heroes of the garden, a number of which are available for purchase. One of the most popular is the ladybird. Suzanne cautions against purchasing adult ladybirds but rather encourages purchasing laboratory-reared larvae instead.

So what are some precautions we can take at the garden centre before we even bring plants home? Here's what to look for when making your purchase at the garden centre. Checking the condition of the leaves, especially the undersides and the root system will go a long

way to ensure you are bringing home a plant in the best possible condition. Finally, a strong blast of water to cleanse the leaves gives extra assurance you have dislodged any opportunists you didn't see.

So how do we keep beneficial insects working inside the nursery. With thousands of plants all of the same variety, a monoculture so to speak, the potential for a serious pest outbreak is all the more probable. Here is where Suzanne has focused her energy into helping the wholesaler manage pests non-traditionally; without pesticides. Many nurseries are now more proactive, introducing beneficials before pests can get a foothold. The benefits extend from more natural looking, colourful plants to the pond that retains excess water run-off on the property. Today the pond is chemical free and boasts a robust ecosystem.

For those of us at home, supporting a company that is helping to reduce chemical overuse benefits the planet by way of cleaner air, cleaner land and cleaner water. Likewise that chemical residue doesn't come home to the family but the good guy predators do and happily take up residence in our own gardens.

HEALTH

Skin cancer: more people die from types that aren't melanoma

Sarah Allinson

If you mention skin cancer, most people think of melanoma – the deadliest skin cancer. The other ones are pretty benign, right?

Not so. Worldwide, more people are now dying of non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) than melanoma, a new study has found.

The study, by researchers at the University Hospital of Nice in France, used patient data collected by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (part of the World Health Organization). It showed that while melanoma caused 57,000 deaths globally in 2020, non-melanoma skin cancer accounted for even more, with 63,700 people losing their lives.

In some ways, the study upends conventional wisdom on how much of a threat to life NMSC represents. NMSC is considered to be less serious than other types of cancer – rarely fatal and often left out of national cancer registries' reports of overall cancer numbers.

However, "rarely fatal" is not the same as "never fatal", and if a sufficiently large number of people develop this type of cancer, then that can add up to a lot of deaths, as this new report shows.

Melanoma and NMSC share some features, with both being closely linked to exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) from either the sun or tanning beds. UV is able to produce cancer-causing mutations that drive the formation of both melanoma and NMSC.

The past several decades have seen large increases in the incidence of both types of cancer, as people's holiday destinations and attitudes to tanning have changed. Most of these cancers occur in white people, but people with darker skin tones can also get skin cancer. Unfortunately, it often goes undiagnosed due to a lack of awareness in both patients and dermatologists.

Melanoma and NMSC do have some important differences, though. While UV is a risk factor for both, NMSC is more associated with chronic exposure throughout a person's lifetime. Consequently, tumours often arise on the face and head. In contrast, occasional severe sunburns are more closely linked to melanoma, particularly on the trunk.

There are two main types of NMSC: basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC). Both arise from a type of skin cell called a keratinocyte.

Keratinocytes are the main type of cells that make up the epidermis, the outer layer of our skin. Mutations in keratinocytes, caused for example by exposure to UV, can override the



internal checks and balances that usually prevent cells from uncontrollably dividing, resulting in a tumour forming.

In contrast, melanomas occur as a consequence of cancer-activating mutations in a different type of skin cell called a melanocyte. There are about ten times fewer melanocytes than keratinocytes in the epidermis, but they play an important role in protecting our skin from damage by producing melanin. Melanin is the pigment that determines our normal skin colour and which is produced in greater amounts after exposure to UV, causing a tan.

How deaths occur

Most cancer deaths are caused by secondary tumours that arise when cells from the original

tumour break away and spread, or metastasise, to distant sites in the body. Skin cancers are no exception.

However, metastasis is a very challenging process for cancer cells. They first need to invade surrounding tissue, then survive the stress of transport around the bloodstream before finally being able to establish a colony in an environment that is quite different to the skin.

Melanoma cells are much more effective at achieving all of the steps of metastasis than NMSC cells are. For example, melanoma cells share some characteristics with cells found in the brain and so can readily adapt to the brain as a new environment, forming secondary tumours there.

If it's the case that NMSC is far less likely to

form dangerous secondary tumours, then why is it that it causes more deaths than melanoma? This partly comes down to the numbers involved.

While we have a pretty good idea of how many people across the world get melanoma each year, the numbers for NMSC are much less clear.

However, we do know that the current official statistic of 1.2 million cases per year (compared to 325,000 for melanoma) is likely to be a substantial underestimate. This is because of inconsistencies in how data on NMSC cases are gathered and reported between different countries.

These gaps in the data mean that it is quite difficult to get a full picture of trends in the number of cases of NMSC and how likely they are to cause death. Despite this gap, a particularly worrying part of this latest report is its conclusion that where you live in the world has a big impact on how likely you are to survive an NMSC diagnosis.

Like all cancers, the earlier a NMSC can be diagnosed and treated, the better the chance of a positive outcome. It remains to be determined whether a tendency to regard NMSC as relatively innocuous has played any role in this trend, or whether it's entirely due to other factors such as having ready access to diagnosis and treatment.

An optimistic view

Another, more optimistic, reason for NMSC overtaking melanoma as a cause of cancer death may be the significant progress made in treating melanoma over the past few years.

For example, after decades of increases in the annual number of melanoma deaths, the UK has recently turned a corner and fewer people are now dying, despite the number of cases continuing to rise. This trend is thanks to the availability of a range of new targeted treatments for melanoma that are saving lives every day.

However, prevention is always better than treatment and it's clear that more still needs to be done to prevent these cancers from occurring in the first place. This can be achieved by ensuring that sun protection messages reach everyone at risk.

"The past several decades have seen large increases in the incidence of both types of cancer, as people's holiday destinations and attitudes to tanning have changed. Most of these cancers occur in white people, but people with darker skin tones can also get skin cancer..."

Sarah Allinson is a Professor, Department of Biomedical and Life Sciences, Lancaster University



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FOOD

So tasty – strawberry lemon shortcakes

Start to finish: 2 hours

Servings: 6 small shortcakes

Sounds complicated but when you get stuck in, it's simplicity itself

INGREDIENTS

Shortcakes

- 1 cup or 120 grams all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt (1/3 teaspoon table salt or coarse kosher salt)
- ½ cup or 110 grams unsalted butter (straight from the fridge)
- ½ cup or 115 grams double cream (straight from the fridge)
- 1 medium or 55–60 grams egg (straight from the fridge)
- Mint leaves (optional)

Macerated Strawberries

- 1 pound strawberries (one medium sized container)
- ½ cup or 110 grams sugar
- Zest and juice of 1 medium lemon
- Whipped Cream
- ¾ cup or 170 grams heavy cream (straight from the fridge)
- ⅓ cup or 80 grams sour cream (straight from the fridge)
- 3 tablespoons or 40 grams sugar
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt (1/8 teaspoon table salt or coarse kosher salt)

RECIPE

Shortcake:

- In a large bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt until combined.
- Using a cheese grater, grate the butter in medium-sized shreds into the flour mixture.
- Using your fingertips, gently coat the butter pieces with the flour. Place the bowl in freezer for at least 30 minutes. (This can be done the night before.) Meanwhile, heat your oven to 450 F and position a rack in the middle.

Strawberries:

- Wash strawberries in cold water, then remove the tops and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices, placing them into a large bowl.
- Add the sugar, then add the juice and zest of the lemon.
- Using a flexible spatula or wooden spoon, mix until the strawberries are completely coated in the sugar.
- Place in the refrigerator while you prep everything else. (This can be done overnight.)

Shortcake:

- Crack one medium egg into the cup containing the doible cream. Whisk thoroughly with a fork.
- Take out the flour butter mixture from the freezer. Add about ¾ of the cream mixture and mix with a fork. Keep adding drops of the cream mixture until the dough comes together in a sticky, shaggy mass; you may not need all the liquid. The dough should stick to your fingers but not be so wet that it's spreading out.
- Sprinkle the dough with flour on the top until it's thoroughly covered with a thin coating of flour and generously flour your hands.
- Using your floured hands, flip the dough over onto your work surface and sprinkle the exposed area thoroughly with more flour. Flatten the dough with your fingers, shaping it into a rough rectangle.
- Using a knife, cut the dough into six equal pieces.
- Grease the bottoms of a standard-sized muffin tin with nonstick spray.
- Generously flour your hands and form one piece of dough into a ball, making sure to coat each ball in a light coating of flour then pat it into the muffin tin. Repeat for each dough ball, making

sure to flour your hands. (You must work quickly.)

- Bake the shortcakes in the oven at 450 F for about 15 mins on the middle or top rack until the tops are puffy and golden brown and the smell of butter is everywhere.

- Let shortcakes cool in the tins for 10 minutes then lightly bang the muffin tin on the countertop a few times to loosen them, then invert the shortcakes onto a parchment lined baking sheet.

Whipped Cream

- Place cream, sour cream, sugar, vanilla and salt in large bowl.
- Using a hand mixer, beat the mixture until it forms peaks when you lift up the beater. When mixing, make sure to get the sides and bottoms of the bowl so you don't have any sections that are droopy.
- If piping, place it into a piping bag with a large star tip.

Assembly

- When ready to assemble, grab the shortcakes, the strawberries and the cream.
- Slice the cooled shortcakes in half
- Take a spoonful of the macerated juice and pour it onto the bottom half of the shortcake then pile it with some strawberries.
- Dollop or pipe the cream and place the other half of the shortcake on top, then dollop or pipe the cream on top and decorate with a mint leaf or extra lemon zest for a more potent lemon flavour.
- Repeat for each shortcake. Serve with extra strawberries and cream on the side.



WINTER MINESTRONE WITH ITALIAN PARSLEY OIL

With the cold and wind starting to bite, what better way to keep cosy than with a tasty bowl of warm, flavourful soup with plenty of varied ingredients.

**Prep time: 30 minutes ; Cook: 1 hour
Servings: 12**

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound bulk Italian sausage (mild or hot variety)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 large carrots, chopped
- 3 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- 3 cans (15 ounces each) cannellini or Roman beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 large can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon crushed red chili flakes
- 2–3 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano rinds (optional)
- 8 Tuscan kale or Swiss chard leaves, spines removed and chopped
- 1 cup small-shaped dried pasta
- Italian parsley oil
- 1 bunch fresh Italian parsley, washed and patted dry
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil

METHOD

■ In large, heavy pot or Dutch oven, cook sausage over medium-high heat, breaking it into bits with a spoon, until the meat is brown. With a slotted spoon, remove the sausage and set aside. Carefully drain all but a tablespoon of grease from the pot.

■ Add the olive oil, carrots, celery and onion to the same pot and cook over medium heat until onions are soft. Add the garlic and tomato paste and cook while stirring for another minute or two.

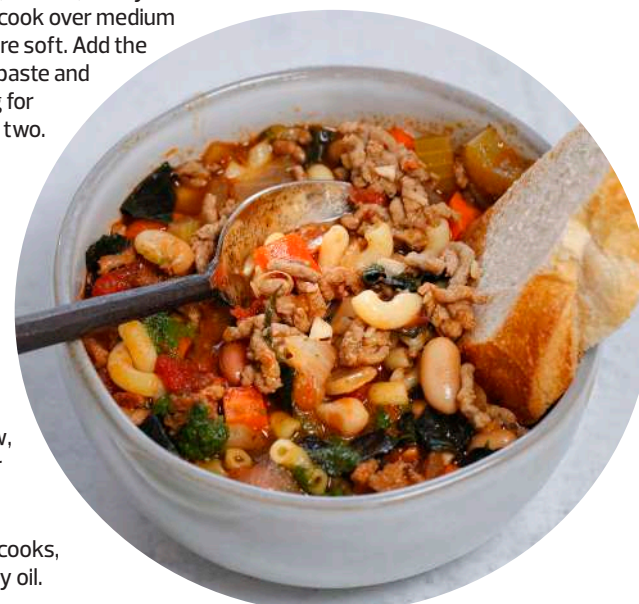
■ Add the beef broth, beans, tomatoes, bay leaf, oregano, thyme, chili flakes, parmesan rinds (if using) and the sausage. Bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 30 minutes.


■ While the soup cooks, prepare the parsley oil.

■ Cutaway thick stems from the parsley. In a blender, add the parsley, lemon juice, garlic, salt, pepper flakes and olive oil and whirl until all the ingredients are well incorporated. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.

■ Uncover the minestrone and stir in the kale and the pasta, simmer for 8 minutes until pasta is al dente. Remove from heat.


■ Ladle minestrone into individual bowls and garnish with a teaspoon of parsley oil. Serve with a crusty baguette or rustic-style bread.





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FILMS

Taylor Swift's Eras is a rare treat for fans

Kurt Jensen

Early on in the history of film, stage actors had to make the transition from the outsized gestures and expressions needed to convey emotion to a crowded theatre to the restraint required by the intimacy of the camera. The same contrast is always likely to be highlighted in a film dedicated to capturing a lavish stadium music concert.

Those attending *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* (AMC Theatres) will discover that the titular singer-songwriter – the current doyenne of breakup songs – is aware of this. Just as the smirks and eye rolls of some of her numbers become cloying, the solo balladeer emerges and equilibrium is restored.

While Swift can be credited with aesthetic insight, parents of teenagers clamouring to see her on screen will be concerned with other matters. In a world of ultra-raunchy rap and the obscenity-laden lyrics often found even outside that genre, Swift shows considerable moderation. A smattering of swear words aside, her performance is more glitzy than gritty. So, although her pre-teen fans may have to be kept away from this production, older teenagers can probably be given the green light.

They'll find *Eras* a lively recap of all 10 of her studio albums across 17 years. Directed by Sam Wrench, the footage was compiled from Swift's concerts at SoFi Stadium in

Inglewood, California, outside Los Angeles.

This is, then, no valedictory. Rather, it's a powerful summation of Swift's life and work so far. The idea is to craft an experience just as communal and immersive as the vocalist's live events. Audience members, for instance, are encouraged to sing along. Yet, in a cinema, the noise is not overwhelming, making it possible to concentrate on Swift in all her sparkly glory throughout.

Little exposition is provided. Instead, there is continuous music, enhanced by CGI special effects and a bit of dancing. In contrast to some of the documentaries in which Swift has featured in the past, no backstage segments are included and no forum is given to her opinions.

Her lyrics do, however, address the loneliness of her level of stardom and hint, fairly consistently, at past heartbreak. At their poignant best, her songs somehow manage to combine the varied qualities of honky-tonk blues and the sophisticated work of German-born American composer Kurt Weill.

Swift found the Eras tour helped her 'make sense' of her stardom and journey, as she shared with fans on a social media video during the tour.

"I've just never been this happy in my life in all aspects of my life ever. And I just want to thank you for being a part of that," she said. "It's not just a tour. I just sort of feel like my life finally feels like it makes sense."



Taylor Swift attends a premiere for *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* in Los Angeles
Photo: Mrio Anzuoni, Reuters)

Scorsese's dark tale of murder is another masterpiece

Emotional ambiguity pervades the dramatisation *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Epic yet intimate, director and co-writer Martin Scorsese's masterful recounting of real-life events in 1920s Oklahoma is too gritty for kids, but deeply rewarding for grown-ups and possibly acceptable for older teens.

As relatively few viewers may know, shortly before the turn of the 20th century, oil was discovered on land owned by the indigenous Osage Nation. By the dawn of the Jazz Age, the windfall that followed had brought the Native Americans prosperity. But it had also excited violent envy and greed among some of the area's white population.

Stepping into the midst of this volatile blend of good fortune and malice comes returning World War I veteran Ernest Burkhart (Leonardo DiCaprio). The uncertainty characteristic of the story takes hold when Ernest meets strong-willed, wise Mollie Kyle (Lily Gladstone).

Ernest's cattle rancher uncle Bill Hale (Robert De Niro), a local bigwig, points out the economic advantage to be gained by marrying an Osage woman who, like Mollie, has a headright to a share of the petroleum profits. But the screenplay, which Scorsese penned with Eric Roth, also establishes that Ernest and Mollie do all for each other before tying the knot.

There's a lengthening shadow hovering over the Osage community as they do so, however. A series of initially uninvestigated deaths have taken place that hardly seem attributable to natural causes. The remainder of the film, adapted from David Grann's 2017 bestseller, is devoted to exploring the effects of this ongoing rash of fatalities on Ernest, Mollie and Bill.

By the time Federal agent Tom White (Jesse Plemons) arrives to delve into the mystery, Scorsese has presented us with a panorama of the time and place that serves as the backdrop to an intense tale of love, corruption and racial

hatred. Top-flight writing, acting and cinematography all combine to make his outsized, three-and-a-half hour movie memorable.

Interestingly, Mollie is shown to be a devout Catholic who nonetheless practices various rituals traditional among the Osage. We're not given enough evidence, though, to judge whether this combination represents inspired DIY inculturation or some unacceptable form of syncretism.

Mollie's genuine faith stands in stark contrast to the religious hypocrisy of one of the other central figures. And it may account for the aura of tranquility she manages to maintain throughout the unfolding tragedy by which she, along with many others, is eventually victimised.

Mollie's enduring stillness at the centre of a human storm is just one of the powerful impressions viewers will take away from this subtle and unsettling saga. The fate of Ernest's Everyman character, as he makes decisive moral

choices that typify, in microcosm, a consistent theme in American history, is another. Overall, Scorsese's audience will be left with much to ponder.

Scorsese said he wanted to tell stories about American history. "It is a good thing for all of us to learn," he said. "This country is still very young. We have to pull it together, not tear it apart. To do that we must know what occurred in the past."

Killers of the Flower Moon is highly critical of the Osage killings, with Scorsese wanting to critique American history accurately. "You know, I am an American – even though it took me years to realise I was being excluded from many cultural aspects of America, due to my immigrant experience," he said. "I wondered if I fitted in at all with American society. Yet once I realised that I didn't, it was a relief because that still makes me American and means I don't have to be part of that society's values."

Britain's worst mining tragedy revealed the true price of coal

HISTORY

Ben Curtis



Keeping history alive is vital if we are to know the cost our ancestors paid in terms of 'progress'

Miners working at the Universal Colliery in Senghenydd, south Wales, were in the middle of their morning shifts 2,000ft below the ground when a massive explosion ripped through the deep pit at 8.10am. A spark from an electric bell had ignited a deadly mix of methane gas and coal dust, known to miners as "firedamp".

The blast on 14th October 1913 killed 439 men and boys, with another dying during rescue operations. It was, and remains, the worst coal mining disaster in British history and also the sixth worst in the world.

But disasters of this dreadful nature occurred with dismal regularity in the south Wales coalfield when the industry was at its height. South Wales was the most dangerous coalfield in what was statistically the most dangerous industry in the UK at that time.

Only a few miles away from Senghenydd, 290 miners had died in an explosion at the Albion Colliery in Cilfynydd in 1894. The Universal Colliery had itself suffered an earlier explosion, in 1901, which killed 81 miners.

Everyone in Senghenydd lost family or friends in the 1913 disaster. It left 542 children fatherless and made widows of more than 200 women. Ninety boys and young men aged 20 or less were killed, with the youngest victims being just 14 years old. One chapel in the village reportedly lost 60 per cent of its male members.

Although Senghenydd bore the brunt of the tragedy, its deadly effects were also felt further afield. A sizeable minority of the miners who were killed lived in the neighbouring village of Abertridwr and other nearby villages, while ten lived as comparatively far away as Cardiff.

The 1911 Census shows a large number of families and individuals from every part of Wales living or lodging in Senghenydd. It also shows that many of those who were killed in the disaster had come to the village from England and some from Ireland.



Justice?

From the perspective of mining families, the official investigations into the disaster added insult to injury. The coroner's inquest into the disaster returned a verdict of accidental death.

Following the inquest, the colliery's manager was prosecuted for 17 breaches of the Coal Mines Act, while the company was charged with four breaches. But most of those charges ended up being dropped.

The manager was eventually fined a total of £24 and the company was fined £10 with £5 and 5 shillings costs. As the *Merthyr Pioneer* newspaper reported: "Miners' lives at 1s 1¼d each" – the equivalent of 5.5p per dead miner in today's money.

The Universal Colliery went back to work at the end of November 1913. It eventually closed in 1928 and the derelict site was demolished in 1963.

In 2013, on the 100th anniversary of the disaster,

the Welsh National Mining Memorial was unveiled on the old colliery site, to commemorate miners killed in the Senghenydd disasters and also to remember the victims of the other 150 mining disasters in Wales.

Hundreds of people gathered to pay their respects and to view the unveiling of the memorial. The scale of the public turnout to the commemoration showed the extent to which the people of the south Wales valleys are still aware of the terrible toll of death and injury that

The Welsh National Mining Memorial was unveiled in Senghenydd in 2013

“

Mining disasters continue to retain a contemporary resonance in the folk memory of south Wales ... this was seen in popular responses to a coal tip landslide in Tylorstown in 2020

the industry inflicted upon its workforce.

The memorial statue itself depicts a rescue worker helping an injured miner. Surrounding the statue is a walled garden, with tiles inscribed with the details of those killed in the two Senghenydd disasters as well as a "path of memory", which marks other colliery tragedies in Wales.

Although the disaster was widely reported at the time, it faded from memory for most people and is not well known beyond Wales by now.

It is possible that this was due to it being eclipsed by the outbreak of the first world war less than a year later. Or perhaps it was because there were just so many colliery disasters that memory of it merged into a broader, vaguer memory of death and danger in the coalfields.

Remembering

Although the collieries are all long gone now, mining disasters continue to retain a contemporary resonance in the folk memory of the south Wales coalfield region.

This was seen in popular responses to a coal tip landslide in Tylorstown in 2020, which is just 11km away from Senghenydd. It was reflective of the visceral horror at the Aberfan disaster of October 1966, in which 116 children and 28 adults were killed when a coal tip slid downhill onto a primary school.

Such latter-day commemoration, as often as not via social media nowadays, is perpetuated by people who in many cases have no personal memory of these disasters – yet nevertheless, we remember. The people of the valleys have never forgotten that coal was always stained with blood.

Ben Curtis is a historian at Cardiff University

Life and sport can be cruel – it's how we respond to adversity that matters

SPORT

Dr Colm Hickey

I once saw a dream job, to work with a Premier League football club. The successful applicant had to have a background in education (I had been a headteacher), leadership (I lectured in football at a university), international football (I am the director of education at a football academy in Africa).

I read the job description and the person specification, and it seemed as if it had been written for me. Now, at last it was my time. All my life had prepared me for this job. So, although it was daunting, I applied.

The first part of the application process was to write a 250 summary of my career, outlining my experience against the key requirements of the post. This is harder than it may sound, as you must make sure that every word counts, and that your application is both readable and concise.

After submitting the application, I had to go through a telephone interview. After that, I had a 45-minute Zoom interview and, following on from that, a final interview. I sent off the application, had the telephone interview and then the Zoom interview. That went very well, and I was nervous, but excited that I would get through to the final two or three.

You can guess what happened next – I did not make it through.

I was shattered and bitterly disappointed. I was offered a telephone debrief, which I took. I was told that, while the panel thought I was a very strong candidate, I did not have the global marketing experience that others had – and that, essentially, was what they thought was crucial.

These jobs do not come up often. I had prepared as well as I possibly could. I went through the qualifying rounds and lost in the knockout phase when the final prize was within my grasp.

Life can be cruel.

In the Rugby World Cup, the Ireland and England team players also felt pain. They had entered a tournament to win a fabulous prize. They prepared for it as well as they could. They navigated the early rounds and got through to the knock-out stage. For many players, it was their third or fourth world cup. For Irish talisman Johnny Sexton, the tournament would mark his last appearance for Ireland, at the age of 38.

The team played New Zealand in



Paris. It was a tough match and, in the last five minutes, Ireland launched a desperate, vital, 38-phase possession attack on the New Zealand line. It was close, oh so close, but it failed. As the final whistle blew and the All Blacks hugged each other in delight, the crowd, which was overwhelmingly Irish in number, was quiet almost silent, in sorrow, sadness and disbelief as it watched its heroes fall prostrate to the ground: devastated, demoralised, disappointed, and defeated. Their dreams were broken; four years of preparation had come to naught. The team would be broken up. They would never play another match together again.

A week later in Marseilles, England played the World Cup semi-final against the current holders, South Africa. It was a re-run of the 2019 final, which South Africa had won. England was the underdog. Although it had reached the semi-final, its progress had been unconvincing. Yet, from the first whistle, England took the game to their much-vaunted rivals. After three minutes, England was 3-0 up. It maintained its lead by kicking a few penalties and a

fabulous long range drop goal and yet, agonisingly, in the 77th minute, conceded a penalty which the South Africans kicked to win the game. Cue the scenes of Paris: exultant South Africans, exhausted English. Sport can be cruel.

Yet, although life and sport can be cruel, it can also be inspirational. We know that some few, very few, special sportsmen and women can reach the top yet by retaining their humility and, by doing good, can use their sport as a conduit to help create a better world. And of all the

great footballers that England has produced, arguably none was greater than Sir Bobby Charlton, who died last week.

According to Wikipedia, he has over 50 honours, from FA Youth Cups to the World Cup, from Football Writers of the Year to his knighthood. Yet, in many ways, this was not what defined made him. Nearly all his trophies and honours occurred after the most traumatic event in his life – the Munich air crash, which occurred on 6th February 1958 when British European Airways Flight 609 crashed on its third attempt to take off at Munich-Riem Airport in Munich, West Germany.

The aircraft was carrying the Manchester United football team, along with supporters and journalists. There were 44 people on board, 23 of whom died, with 21 survivors.

Charlton, strapped into his seat, had fallen out of the cabin; when United goalkeeper Harry Gregg (who had somehow got through a hole in the plane unscathed and begun a one-man rescue mission) found him, he thought he was dead. Charlton suffered cuts to his head and severe shock and was in hospital for a week.

Seven of his teammates perished at the scene. Charlton was the first injured survivor to leave hospital. He arrived back in England on 14th February 1958, eight days after the crash. He was still only 20 years old.

After the crash, Charlton was instrumental in rebuilding the team, winning one FA Cup, two League Championships, two charity Shields and the European Cup as well as, of course, the 1966 World Cup with England. He received a knighthood in 1994 and was an Inaugural Inductee to the English Football Hall of Fame in 2002. On accepting his award, he said: "I'm really proud to be included in the National Football Museum's Hall of Fame. It's a great honour. If you look at the names

included, I have to say I couldn't argue with them. They are all great players and people I would love to have played with." He was also the (honorary) president of the National Football Museum.

To me, Sir Bobby Charlton is more inspirational because of how he overcame adversity. What greater trauma can you suffer than the loss of your loved ones, your friends, your teammates, your fellow passengers? How do you recover? Can you ever fully recover? Somehow, in some ways, Sir Bobby did. He recovered from the crash and then rose to become one of the greatest players the world has ever seen.

In all of this, he retained a common humanity. He was never arrogant. He supported charities. He loved all football. I am proud that, since 2005, he was the President of my football club, Middlesex Wanderers, the club that exists to do three things: to promote a good fellowship among football clubs and other sporting organisations throughout the world, to send teams of British footballers on tours abroad; and to play occasional football games in the British Isles and such other games as the executive committee may approve.

Of the club he wrote: "I am proud to be the President of such a unique and historic club, one that has played a pivotal role in the development of football throughout the world. The club continues to espouse the highest standards of sportsmanship and of fellowship in the greatest game of all. Long may it prosper."

Thank you, Sir Bobby, for everything you did for football and for showing us that, while life can be cruel, and sport can be cruel, what defines is not the adversity but the human spirit that overcomes adversity. That is why you are an icon and an inspiration to so many people through the world. RIP Sir Bobby Charlton.



“

To me, Sir Bobby Charlton is more inspirational because of how he overcame adversity. What greater trauma can you suffer than the loss of your loved ones, your friends? How do you recover? Can you ever fully recover? Somehow, in some ways, Sir Bobby did. He recovered from the crash and then rose to become one of the greatest players the world has ever seen.

A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



Above, children sit on the Neill Strain art display on Motcomb Street as part of Belgravia's annual Pumpkin Trail, running until Hallowe'en on 31st October.

Right, photo issued by the Guinness World Records (GWR) of the Nelson family, Ian, 59, Louise, 60, and their 33-year-old son Tom, who have become Guinness World Records holders after creating 'spook-tacular' Tim Burton-inspired mosaic, made from over 10,000 pumpkins and squash. Sunnyfields Farm received a GWR for the Largest Cucurbita Mosaic, which depicts Jake Skellington's iconic moonlight stance from Tim Burton movie *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Cucurbita is the class that covers pumpkins, squash and other related vegetables.



Above, a curator holds a rare Jacobite wine glass which along with Bonnie Prince Charlie's sword, will go on display when the new Perth Museum opens next year. The Jacobite wine glass features the Duke of Perth's family motto, '*Gang warily*'. The sword was made by Perth craftsman James Brown and believed to have been given to Bonnie Prince Charlie by James Drummond, the third Duke of Perth.

Left, Flooded fields in Powys in Wales, after Storm Babet battered the UK, causing widespread flooding and high winds. Storm Babet led to three deaths and hundreds of people being forced to leave their homes after a 'risk to life' notice was posted in areas of Scotland, South Wales and England's North East and East Midlands



A Sumatran tiger searches for Halloween treats hidden inside pumpkins at ZSL

Right, members of the Jewish community attend a Solidarity Rally in Trafalgar Square calling for the safe return of hostages and to highlight the effect of the Hamas attacks on Israel.



LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I
Sunday, October 29: 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Exod. 22:20–26; Ps. 18:2–4, 47, 51, r.2; 1 Thess. 1:5–10; Mt. 22:34–40

Monday, October 30: Rom.8:12–17; Ps.68:2,4,6–7,20–21; Lk.13:10–17

Tuesday, October 31: Rom.8:18–25; Ps. 126; Lk.13:18–21

Wednesday, November 1: All Saints Rev. 7:2–4,9–14; Ps. 24:1–6, r.6; 1 Jn. 3:1–3; Mt. 5:1–12

Thursday, November 2: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls) Isa. 25:6–9; Ps. 27:1, 4, 7–9, 13–14 r. 1; Rom. 5:5–11; Mt. 11:25–30

Friday, November 3: Weekday in Ordinary Time or St Martin de Porres, Religious; St Winefride, Virgin (EW) Rom.9:1–5; Ps. 147:12–15,19–20; Lk.14:1–6

Saturday, November 4: St Charles Borromeo, Bishop Rom.11:1–2,11–12,25–29; Ps.94:12–15,17–18; Lk.14:1,7–11



St Charles Borromeo

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I promise, O Blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favour granted me by God and to always honor you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you.

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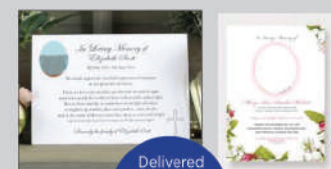
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