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# UNIVERSE

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# March for Life love prevails in London

**Attacks by pro-abortion activists can't deter 7,000 from marching in support of the unborn**

**Andy Drozdziak**

Disruptive pro-abortion groups were unable to prevent 7,000 pro-lifers from making a big impact in this year's March For Life – and organisers now have their eyes set firmly on hitting back at plans to introduce abortion up to birth for any reason.

As peaceful marchers approached Parliament Square last Saturday, they found that pro-abortion groups had established themselves at the front of the stage, potentially preventing the March For Life from carrying out their talks and presentations. With marchers being pushed physically, and minimal police support, organiser Isabel Vaughan-Spruce warned police that it could be “chaos.”

A video showed a masked pro-abortion supporter shouting in the face of a teenager, Rufus, and apparently informing him that he was marching with the ‘far right’ before being escorted away by police.

“I am not a far right activist,” Rufus said. “Every human has great value – any human deserves to live.”

However, the marchers carried on and the pro-abortion supporters dispersed. “Those who were in the thick of it seemed to cope really well”, Isabel Vaughan-Spruce said. She added her belief that the in-



creasing aggression shown by pro-abortion supporters proves “they are worried”. “They have seen what has happened in America (where *Roe v Wade* was overturned in 2022). They're really worried that they are going to lose something

they want to keep,” she told the *Universe*.

“But this can't just be a once a year effort; we must make it a priority in our lives and create for ourselves a personal strategy today.”

Despite a national rail strike, po-

lice estimated that 7,000 pro-life attendees of all ages, including a large contingent of youth, met for this year's March for Life in Parliament Square, which followed the theme ‘Freedom to Live’.

Catholic bishops John Sherring-

ton, Richard Moth and John Keenan, took to the stage to address the marchers, alongside Monsignor Keith Newton of the Ordinariate and various Anglican priests.

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As schools and colleges re-start after the summer break, we take an in-depth look at some of our leading Catholic schools in a special 10-page supplement

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## Bishop calls for a 'conversion of the heart' to defeat abortion

**Andy Drozdziak**

Bishop John Sherrington used a homily at Westminster Cathedral before the March For Life to “pray for a conversion of heart” around the issue of abortion.

“A society is called to give each the freedom to flourish – abortion destroys the freedom to live,” he said. “We pray for a conversion of heart so that every life may flourish according to God’s plan.”

Bishop John shared his hopes that the march would influence people. “We pray that this witness will help to change hearts and minds and make women and men think again about the goodness of the dignity of unborn life in the womb,” he said.

“We pray that this witness will lead fewer women to choose abortion, fewer men to urge or support this choice, and more women and men to choose to protect the lives of mothers and their unborn children.”

Bishop John, who is Lead Bishop for Life Issues, also used the homily to encourage opposition to another key life issue – assisted suicide. He noted a growing movement to support legislation and called for re-



Bishops address the crowd at March for Life

newed focus and prayer.

“While the focus of this March for Life is about abortion, our prayers are also needed as the debate to provide legislation and permit assisted suicide, continues with great pace and public support,” he said.

“Such a choice is based on a freedom to choose which separates itself from the truth about the gift of

human life.”

Bishop John also prayed for women who have had abortions and ‘who bear the pain and wounds of that choice in a desperate situation.’

• The full homily can be read by clicking this [LINK](#):

Photos: [mazur/cbcw.org.uk](http://mazur/cbcw.org.uk)



**Continued from page 1**

One speaker, Lois McLatchie-Miller from ADF UK (Alliance Defending Freedom), emphasised the role of men in abortion, saying that the “mantra of ‘my body, my choice’ has resulted in men abdicating their responsibilities and leaving women to deal with pregnancies alone.

Another speaker, Ellie, told the crowd of her deep regret of the three abortions she had.

Scott Klusendorf, president of The Life Training Institute urged attendees to enter into conversations with those around them on abortion, but reminded them that “we need to have the confidence to make our case persuasively.”

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce shared

her experience of being arrested for praying silently near an abortion centre. “On the second time I was arrested I was told my prayers were an offence,” she said. “I’ll tell you what is offensive – that our country has the highest ever abortion figures, 100,000 of them annually being repeat abortions and the only response we see happening in or government is a clamp down on those who peacefully offer alternatives to pregnant women.”

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce believes the experience shows the pro-life movement “is growing like never before.”

“People from all walks of life are being alerted to the horror of abortion and the long term effects on the whole family,” she said.

“More and more people are recognising how this contradicts our most fundamental values and is an offence to basic human decency both for the mother and the child. We cannot be complacent or let this momentum slip – now is the time for everyone to do their part.”

Ms. Vaughan-Spruce pointed readers to the March For Life website for further information, with 27th October being set aside as an Abortion Act Anniversary awareness day in Westminster and a Re-think Abortion Day in London on 11th November (booking required) followed by a meeting for those wishing to become part of a new March For Life Mission Team. The website can be found at <http://www.marchforlife.co.uk/>





# We've got them rattled says pro-life doctor

**Andy Drozdziak**

A leading medic believes abortion supporters are concerned and realise they have “a real fight on their hands.”

Catholic cardiologist Dermot Kearney said there were a high number of counter demonstrations at this year's march for Life, showing pro-abortionists are “rattled”.

“There were more counter demonstrators this year compared with previous Marches,” he told the *Universe*. “This suggests that March for Life UK is having a real impact and the abortion industry realises this.”

“They are rattled. Supporters of abortion realise they have a real fight on their hands in order to maintain the current levels of political and legal support for the intentional destruction of young human lives.”

Dermot Kearney said it was important that the march had attracted many younger supporters, and that they were not “intimidated” in the face of “extreme elements.”

“It was very encouraging that the young pro-life advocates maintained their joy, dignity, discipline and self-control in the face of attempts by the more extreme element in the pro-abortion demonstrators to intimidate and frighten them,” he said.

The annual public witness, now in its ninth year, processed in a lively manner through Westminster before stopping for keynote speeches.

Dermot Kearney believes the future is bright for the pro-life move-

ment, due to the presence of many young people and families at the March For Life.

“The number of young families, young adults and teenagers was a particularly notable feature of this year's March. It suggests a very bright future lies ahead for the pro-life movement in the UK,” he said.

“This year's March for Life demonstrates that the prolife movement in the UK is growing and displaying increasing degrees of unity and discipline, in addition to an increasing presence of youth who are well-educated and articulate on prolife issues. They are courageous and determined and growing stronger.”



Fr Sean Gough, who was arrested for praying near an abortion clinic earlier this year

Above, marchers 7,000-strong take to the streets of London – despite attempts by pro-abortion activists to disrupt the event.

Above right, Sir Edward Leigh in Parliament Square

Right, marchers carry a statue of St Michael through London



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## In Brief

### North/South divide on beer prices

Drinkers face a deepening north-south divide on beer prices — with the cost of a pint in the centre of London three times higher than the cheapest towns. The average pint in Consett near Newcastle, is just £2.65 — a fraction of central London average of £6.63. Experts said that business rates, rents, and wages are responsible for the vast price differences, with customers' "willingness to pay" also playing a part.

### Hackers breach UK security

Hackers linked to Moscow have leaked top-secret security information on British military and intelligence sites, said *The Mirror*. The data could "help criminals get into the HMNB Clyde nuclear submarine base, Porton Down chemical weapons lab and GCHQ", said the paper. The secret information has been placed on to the dark web. Labour criticised the leak as further evidence of the UK's crumbling IT infrastructure.

### Body cameras for Tesco staff

Tesco workers are to be offered body cameras due to a rise in violent attacks, said the supermarket's chief executive. After the company saw physical assaults increase by a third since last year, Tesco boss Ken Murphy said the abuse his workers suffered was "heartbreaking". The British Retail Consortium found abuse against retail staff had almost doubled compared to pre-Covid levels. "The pandemic has normalised appalling levels of violent and abusive behaviour against retail workers," said a spokeswoman.

# Yousaf opposition to assisted suicide hardens after talks

Campaigners spearheading opposition to assisted suicide legislation have welcomed comments by First Minister Humza Yousaf, who says his views against the proposed law have hardened following talks with disability groups.

Dr Gordon Macdonald, Chief Executive of Care Not Killing (CNK), said: "When we look at how disabled people, the poor and those who are vulnerable are being pressured into assisted dying in Canada, while not being given the social supports they need to live, we can see how quickly any assisted suicide or euthanasia regime can become corrupted and driven by cost savings."

Speaking to the *Daily Record*, the First Minister, who earlier this year expressed his opposition to assisted suicide, said: "I feel even less persuaded after discussions with the

Glasgow Disability Alliance.

"They were incredibly strong in their opposition to assisted dying [suicide], given that they felt that they would be the one 'at the thin end of the wedge' when it came to it, as they put it."

"They were really worried, par-



**First Minister Yousaf is now firmly against assisted suicide after speaking to disabled groups**

ticularly after COVID. They told me the experiences that they had in terms of Do Not Resuscitate notices. So they were really worried and put forward a very passionate plea for me not to support assisted dying."

Liam McArthur MSP's bill, which would allow terminally ill adults to

request assistance to end their lives, is currently being backed by a cross-party group in Holyrood.

But the MSP has already come under fire from CNK after his consultation process was branded "misleading" regarding claims over the levels of public support.

It was claimed 76 per cent of those responding backed the legislation but, following detailed publication of the data, campaigners opposed to assisted suicide say the figure is substantially less, at just 63 per cent.

A press release issued by the Lib Dems also stated incorrectly there had been around 14,000 responses – but Dr Macdonald revealed the total responses was 17,014, and that the missing 3,352 responses were from Right To Life supporters.

He said: "Liam McArthur...

should not have discounted over 3,000 formal responses to his consultation which expressed concerns. Nor should he be quoting questionable polls which inflate the level of public support for his proposals.

"Polling has shown that 57 per cent of the public don't even know that the term 'assisted dying' refers to giving lethal drugs to people to kill themselves.

"Over 50 per cent of the public are concerned that should assisted suicide be legalised, some people would feel pressurised into accepting help to take their own life so as not to be a burden on others.

"78 per cent agree that "as a society we ought to try to do everything we reasonably can to reduce the rate of suicides, especially among men who are three times as likely as women to take their own lives".

## New low as 'death pods' readied for use

**Andy Drozdziak**

The announcement that 3D-printed suicide pods will be ready for general use within a year has been blasted as 'a new low' by groups which are against assisted suicide.

Sarco pods – short for sarcophagus – are personal gas chambers which enable people to control their death inside the pod by reducing internal oxygen levels. Nitrogen fills the device, quickly bringing oxygen down from 21 per cent to only 1 per cent in about 30 seconds.

Dr Gordon Macdonald, chief executive of the alliance Care Not Killing, spoke for the pro-life community in condemning the pods. "This marks a new low in the debate about assisted suicide and euthanasia," Dr Macdonald said.

Dr Philip Nitschke, who developed the pods, recently wrote to Liam McArthur, the MSP seeking to



legalise assisted suicide in Scotland, and urged him to introduce the Sarco Pod, by saying that "they lead to a peaceful, even euphoric death" – a claim rejected by Dr Macdonald.

"It is risible to claim these pods

will give people a quick, pain-free death," he said. "This was exactly what was said about the use of death row drugs in the handful of places that have introduced assisted suicide or euthanasia," he said.

Dr. Philip Nitschke, founder of pro-euthanasia group Exit International and nicknamed 'Dr Death' in the media, described the pods as 'comfortable' and convenient. He said the pods are in the final stages of being prepared for use in Switzerland. "We're ready ... we're talking to a number of people who are wanting to be the first to use it," he said.

Other pro-life groups were quick to condemn the pods. James Mildred, director at CARE, said they would only serve to "glamorise suicide and trivialise death".

"Suicide is a tragedy that good societies seek to prevent in every circumstance," he added.

SPUC has also criticised the pods, saying it was "disturbing to see more doctors seeking to usher vulnerable patients into early graves rather than improve their lives through appropriate provision and care."

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# PSNI officers told 'take your gun to Mass'

The head of the organisation representing Catholic PSNI officers says he has advised some of them to take personal protection weapons to Mass in the aftermath of the police data breach.

Representatives from various policing organisations gave evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs committee on the security impact of the PSNI data breach that occurred last month.

Personal details relating to over 10,000 PSNI officers and staff were mistakenly released in response to an innocuous freedom of information request.

The leaked data included initials, departments and locations for all currently-serving officers in the organisation, with the then-chief constable Simon Byrne revealing that this information was in the hands of dissident republicans.

Superintendent Gerry Murray is the chairperson of the Catholic Police Guild of Northern Ireland, a group that represents Catholic officers in the PSNI.

Mr Murray said Catholic officers were more likely to keep their professions a secret from their families and communities, and the potential for identification caused some members to ask if they should carry protection weapons when attending Mass.

"Our members are frightened, scared, have no idea what tomorrow will bring for them," he told the committee. "And I have incidents where young Catholic officers are asking me: do they carry their personal protection weapon when they go to Mass?"

He added: "That has happened, and the advice I've given: yes, you do. Because the idea is that they should feel safe while entering a

Catholic church and also leaving the Church, and there's no better way, the issue of the personal protection weapon is for that, for personal protection."

Mr Murray said that the security pressure stemming from the data breach, combined with budgetary constraints, would limit the PSNI's ability to recruit Catholic officers.

He said: "I would fear, given the length of service I have been in this organisation, that we will have a major difficulty. Probably we will survive with regards to retention, but with regards to recruitment, if you look at the last census in 2021, there it's something like 45 or 47 per cent Catholic."

Liam Kelly, chairman of the Police Federation of Northern Ireland (PFNI) which represents more than 6,000 rank-and-file PSNI officers, said their members felt betrayed by their information being leaked from the inside.

"So you ask what the impact has been of the data breach from my members and from my own perspective, we're appalled and we're shocked, we're dismayed, and we're scared about the implications about what has happened," he said.

Mr Kelly said some officers were already in the public domain, but those who had kept their identity hidden now felt vulnerable at the risk of identification.

"We're in a uniquely hazardous position as police officers in Northern Ireland, and it takes a lot of courage to be a police officer in Northern Ireland," he said.

"This data breach has not helped. And really, it's about what happens next to try and build, not only public confidence, but officer confidence, that the organisation has their back."



Superintendent Gerry Murray said he had recommended Catholic officers taking their gun to Mass



Amnesty International projected images of victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles on to the Houses of Parliament, ahead of the expected passing of the Government's controversial legacy Bill. Amnesty and some victims have asked the Government to scrap the legislation, which includes limited immunity for some perpetrators of crimes committed during the conflict.

## Shock bill of £200 would push us under, quarter of families admit

Nearly one in four adults say they could not afford an unexpected £200 bill, a survey indicates.

A survey carried out by charity Christians Against Poverty (CAP) found that 28 per cent of adults said the rise in the cost of living has made them financially insecure, with 23 per cent saying they could not afford any unanticipated cost of £200.

Over a quarter also admitted they were under constant pressure keeping up with bills and credit commitments.

CAP's director of external affairs Gareth McNab said: "Millions of

households in the UK are facing a devastating debt crisis right now.

"At CAP, we are supporting increasing numbers of people who have had to borrow money just to pay for essentials, like food, bills and energy.

"Income is just so low for many that a financial shock like a car issue or the boiler breaking can leave them facing spiralling debts."

CAP is calling for a UK-wide strategy to ensure that every person and household across the UK is receiving all the social security benefits they and their families are entitled to.

It said it also wants to see clear manifesto commitments to ending poverty by ensuring that incomes are "liveable" on, by reviewing the rates of social security and wages against minimum standards.

It should also be ensured when debts are deducted from benefits that there is still enough for people to live on, the charity said.

A Government spokesperson said: "We know people are struggling which is why we're bearing down on inflation and providing record financial support worth an average £3,300 per household."

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## UNIVERSE CATHOLIC WEEKLY COMMENT

### Martha's Rule needs to be brought in now

Martha Mills died of sepsis in August 2021, following catastrophic treatment failures at King's College Hospital.

Rather than celebrate what would have been her 16th birthday this week, her parents called for hospitals across the country to bring in 'Martha's Rule', giving all patients the right to an urgent second opinion if they feel their concerns are not being taken seriously.

The Health Secretary has said he is "exploring introducing" it.

Hierarchies, egos and fraught relations between different wards meant several opportunities to save Martha were missed. To many bereaved families, this may sound all too familiar. Martha's parents repeatedly, calmly, raised concerns, but were ignored. Nurses wrote that Martha was at risk of death seven days before she died, yet doctors never looked at their notes.

Where patient and family-centred escalation systems exist, the evidence is that they have saved lives. As Martha's mother has underscored, good doctors should welcome input from patients or their loved ones.

It is not enough for Trusts to offer apologies. Scandals are too prevalent in our healthcare service. In Stafford, between 400 and 1,200 people may have died from poor care between 2005 and 2009; in Shrewsbury and Telford, 201 babies died between 2000 and 2019; in 2015 and 2016, Lucy Letby murdered seven new born and attempted to murder six more.

The best functioning healthcare services have checks and balances on doctors, managers, and all other medical professionals. The NHS risks fostering a culture of cover-ups, while tilting the balance of power too heavily away from patients and towards those providing treatment.

Medical staff are fallible. Mistakes will be made, diagnoses will be flawed. Martha's Rule is a necessary intervention.

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# Nurse Letby case proves need to listen to NHS whistleblowers

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

**Robin  
Lewis**



The recent conviction of Lucy Letby, the neonatal nurse who murdered seven infants and attempted to murder six others while working at the Countess of Chester Hospital between 2015-2016, has raised fundamental questions about how something like this could have happened – and why it took so long to stop her.

The fact is attempts were made to stop her. Two medical consultants, Dr Stephen Brearey and Dr Ravi Jayaram, both raised concerns about unexplained infant deaths as early as July 2015. By October 2015, both brought specific concerns about Letby, who had been on duty during each of the deaths, to the senior director of nursing.

But both have related how they were rebuffed by hospital management at each stage of the process. Dr Jayaram even revealed he was told by management "not to make a fuss". It wasn't until June 2016, after repeated complaints, that Letby was finally removed from her clinical duties.

Common sense would dictate that if a senior doctor raised concerns with managers, even informally, it would be taken seriously. This apparently wasn't the case – nor is it the first time an NHS doctor's concerns have been ignored by senior management. This highlights an urgent need to change the structure of the NHS to ensure managers and executives are held to account for the decisions they make.

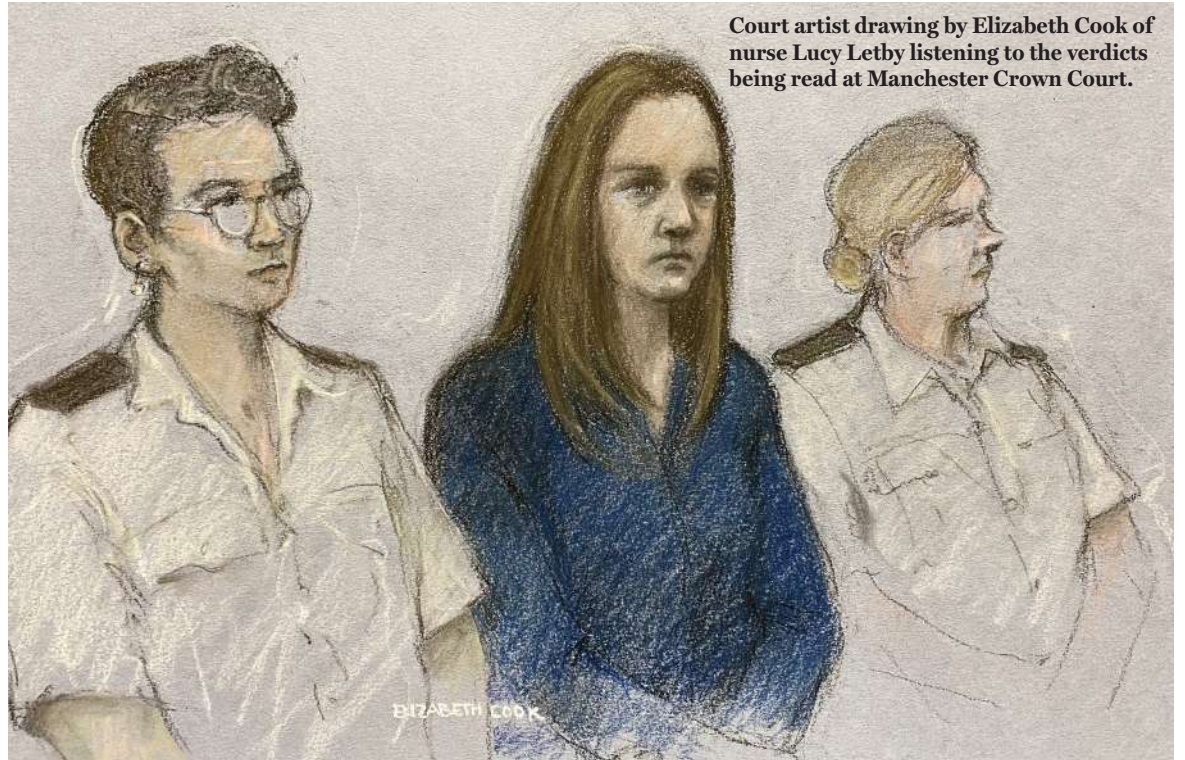
#### Refusal to act

The NHS is an inherently hierarchical organisation, with many layers of management.

Clinical managers are typically clinicians (such as nurses) with managerial responsibilities. These middle managers oversee operations in their own clinical areas.

There are also senior managers, who often have no clinical experience. These managers have little or no contact with ward staff. They manage the hospital at the executive level, looking at finances, human resources and the hospital's reputation.

In hospitals such as the Countess of Chester, most routine decisions are made by middle management. If there's problems with staff on the ward, it's normally up to the unit manager to decide whether or not these concerns are escalated to senior management.



Court artist drawing by Elizabeth Cook of nurse Lucy Letby listening to the verdicts being read at Manchester Crown Court.

The unit manager in this case presumably would have known Letby personally – and given that the evidence against Letby was largely circumstantial, it would have been very difficult to suspend or even investigate Letby at first.

Even once the unit manager and senior clinicians brought their concerns again to the attention of more senior management, evidence shared as part of the trial shows hospital executives pushed back – refusing to meet with them, shutting down suggestions that police needed to be involved and even ordering them to write an apology to Letby for raising concerns about her.

Brearey and Jayaram suggested that executives were attempting to minimise any reputational damage to the unit and, by extension, the hospital. The decisions of hospital executives will be investigated as part of a public inquiry.

#### Freedom to speak up

There's a long history in the NHS of lone whistleblowers being pilloried for trying to raise concerns about failings in patient care. This is what led to the Freedom to Speak Up review, which investigated how organisations dealt with concerns raised by NHS staff. Ironically, the report was published in 2015 – the same year the first concerns over Letby were raised.



*Focus needs to be moved away from managing hospitals as businesses to putting patient safety first. Holding NHS managers to account for their decisions may well be the best way to do this.*

The review found NHS employees were often afraid of raising concerns out of fear of victimisation or the worry they wouldn't be listened to. Many also faced isolation and bullying when they did speak up.

The results of the report led to the Freedom to Speak Up policy, which provides guidance for NHS staff on how they can raise patient safety concerns. A Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is also now present in every NHS Trust to ensure issues raised are responded to.

At the time Brearey and Jayaram raised their concerns about Letby, this policy didn't exist. It's clear from what has been reported so far that this policy may have made a big difference – and could have prevented lives being lost.

But the role that management plays in cases such as this cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, this isn't the first time that preventing reputational damage has been placed ahead of patient safety. Inquiries into various NHS scandals, such as at the Bristol Children's Hospital, highlighted management attempts to cover up failings in patient care and avoid negative publicity.

Even with the Freedom to Speak Up Policy, the British Medical Association reports that staff are still being victimised for raising concerns. Staff who raise concerns

are often dismissed under the "some other substantial reason" (SOSR) clause which enables organisations, not just the NHS, to sack employees without needing to prove misconduct or incompetence. Clearly, the policy needs to be improved and legislation passed that would protect staff from dismissal if they do speak up.

In the aftermath of the Letby case, Brearey and Jayaram have both called for hospital managers to be regulated. Regulation would ensure that managers would need to be registered to practise in the same way as health professionals are. This would ensure that managers are held to account for their decisions and that action is taken if they're found not to be acting in the interests of patient safety.

This will need a significant philosophical shift in the way the NHS is managed. Focus needs to be moved away from managing hospitals as businesses to putting patient safety first. Holding NHS managers to account for their decisions may well be the best way to do this.

Jane Tomkinson, Acting Chief Executive Officer at the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Following the trial of former neonatal nurse Lucy Letby, the Trust welcomes the announcement of an independent inquiry by the Department of Health and Social Care. In addition, the trust will be supporting the ongoing investigation by Cheshire Police. Due to ongoing legal considerations, it would not be appropriate for the Trust to make any further comment at this time." **Robin Lewis is a Senior Lecturer in Healthcare, Sheffield Hallam University**





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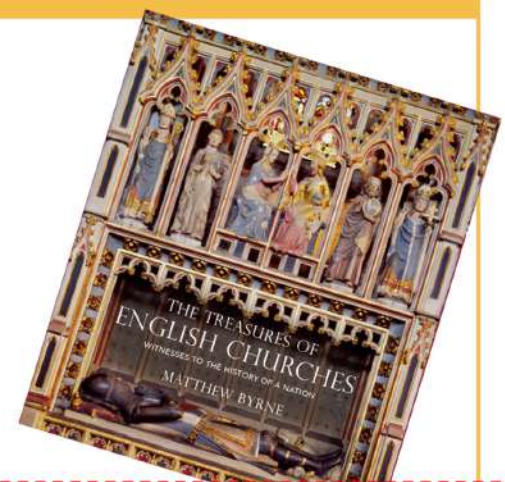
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CUW-Aug23



## COMMENT

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

## AI and ethical vision

Sir John Battle



Next November, at the Bletchley Park of war time code cracking fame, the Prime Minister is to host a session for global leaders on the development of artificial intelligence (AI). Pope Francis has now proposed that 'Artificial Intelligence and Peace' will be the theme of the next World Day of Peace, on New Year's Day 2024. The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced: "The remarkable advances made in AI are having a rapidly increasing impact on human activity, personal and social life, politics and the economy," adding "Pope Francis calls for an open dialogue on the meaning of these new technologies".

In *The Coming Wave: AI Power and the Greatest Dilemma*, Mustapha Suleman stresses that the two core technology challenges facing the future are AI and synthetic biology, and their coming together. Their potential conjunction is the new breakthrough. He writes that together they will 'usher in a new dawn for humanity, creating wealth and surplus unlike ever seen'. But he also warns that 'their rapid proliferation also threatens to empower a diverse array of bad actors to unleash disruption, instability and even catastrophe'.

The possibility is not only of developing mechanical muscles but creating new forms of biological life and moving in on reconstruction of brains as well as organs. The positive human advances in technology can also present new and dangerous occasions for sin against humanity and God.

In his great encyclical on social justice *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI devoted a chapter to 'technological progress with its astounding applications in the field of biology'. He warned that 'even peace can become a technical product' and that 'an exclusive reliance on technology, reason without faith, is doomed to flounder in an illusion of its own omnipotence'. We are in danger of 'losing the ability to distinguish what is human' and relying on a deep materialism.

Pope Francis stresses "the need to be vigilant and to work so that a logic of violence and discrimination does not take root in the production and use of such devices, at the expense of the most fragile and excluded".

Time is fast running out for an ethical vision on the dignity of the person and the future of human community in our common home to catch up.

# Don't let school uniforms be the next casualty of the gender war

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow



I was forced to review a long-held opinion about what girls should be wearing as part of their school uniform this week, when my teenage daughter announced that she had outgrown her school skirt and said that she would really prefer to choose the trouser option that has recently been introduced into her school.

Despite preferring the look of the traditional wrap-around kilt style skirt that most of her peers wear, I relented on hearing my teen's rationale. She wasn't especially bothered about the look of the uniform, but being on the autistic spectrum, she experiences sensory difficulties and said that she didn't enjoy wearing hosiery in colder weather and that trousers make her feel more comfortable, because she doesn't like the feeling of her legs being exposed.

It would be a hard-hearted parent who would insist that 'looks must trump comfort' and it helped that the specific pair of trousers could only be purchased from the official supplier, ensuring that they would be of the correct fit and length. My reticence was wholly irrational, perhaps based on my own rigid mindset that skirts are just what girls wear at school! Trousers are perfectly capable of being smart and modest and have been long accepted in the corporate world, so there ought to be no earthly reason why girls shouldn't be able to wear them in school. They also have the added advantage that unlike skirts they cannot be craftily rolled up at the waist in order to shorten the hemline...

All of which brings me onto the story of gender neutral uniforms, which it was announced this week have now been introduced into hundreds of schools across the country, including state primaries and secondaries run by the Church of England. If the devil's greatest trick was encouraging you to believe he doesn't exist, his second greatest trick is to convince you that he's rather a good thing, and so too, is the introduction of gender neutral uniforms.

On the face of things, allowing more options for pupils can be seen as a good idea and not something for old reactionaries like me to jump up and down about. As noted above, girls ought to be allowed to wear trousers if they want to, and



I've often thought how unfair it is that some secondary schools prohibit boys from wearing shorts in the warmer weather. Just half an hour ago, when I dropped one of my children off at a local Catholic primary school, I noted the headteacher looking extremely professional in a pair of tailored shorts and shirt, ready to brave the expected 32 degrees temperature today.

Similarly, I always feel sorry for girls in that secondary schools have not adopted the habits of our Australian cousins who allow their female pupils to wear cotton dresses in warm weather. I felt very sorry for my older two who had to travel to school wearing heavy tweed blazers and a mixed fibre shirt this morning.

There's a difference, however, between allowing a degree of flexibility and extending various uniform items available to pupils, and subscribing to an ideology that seeks to deny and erase all differences between males and females. The schools who have introduced gender neutral uniforms have also erased the words 'boys' and 'girls' from their uniform list, meaning that students get to choose to wear either uniform A, B or C, some of which

are clearly styled for individual sexes, and the third being a bizarre mismatch. Pupils are not allowed to mix and match between the different uniform sets but must instead wear one complete uniform.

It may seem a minor quibble, but this is in fact a worrying development because it seeks to erase the differences between the sexes and treats girls and boys as though they are one amorphous mass.

While we should be wary of gender stereotyping, what is clear is that boys and girls have different needs, whether that's in terms of physical facilities or in terms of educational approaches and especially when it comes to relationship and sex education.

Uniforms are designed and cut to take account of the differences in male and female physique. A trouser cut for boys will not suit female proportions and girls have smaller rib cages and narrower shoulders than boys. A gender neutral uniform does nothing to address these differences and is likely to make everyone look like a dishevelled slovenly mess; the likely scenario being that girls are forced into baggy utilitarian uniforms, while boys get the option to ditch

their ties in favour of an open necked shirt.

By asking children, in some cases as young as four or five, to decide whether or not they wish to present as a male or female, schools are asking them to make a political statement about themselves that they are far too young to understand. Getting to grips with playground politics and learning to get along with others is already complicated enough for young people, but now they are actively being asked how they would like other people to see them as and implicitly being encouraged to either accept or reject their God-given bodies. It's particularly egregious to see Christian schools foster and promote this ethos, because far from being kind, gender-neutral policies sow the seeds of confusion, gender dysphoria and all the accompanying mental health difficulties.

The whole point of a school uniform is to eradicate differences, especially between the rich and poor and to engender a sense of community and pride. It is kind to allow children, especially those with sensory processing difficulties more flexibility and options so that they can be comfortable while learning, but deeply damaging to force young people to ask questions about their biological sex.

It is not only the scandal of the crumbling of school buildings but also the attempted dismantling of biological sex and accepted understanding of who we are as human beings, that the Department of Education needs to urgently address.



*It is clear that boys and girls have different needs, whether that's in terms of physical facilities or in terms of educational approaches and especially when it comes to relationship and sex education.*



# Term start shambles as Raac fiasco hits schools

Andy Drozdziak

The Raac scandal has been labelled “shambolic” after a Catholic school in Durham was forced to hold lessons in hotels and playing fields as a new term began.

St Leonard's Catholic School in Durham was closed after dangerous Raac (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) was found in the building just before the start of term. It is planning to use the nearby Radisson hotel for two days this week for sixth form lessons, and staff were also looking at potential teaching space at the University of Durham.

North Durham Labour MP Kevan Jones said: “St Leonard's was one of the schools included in the Building Schools for the Future programme which was cancelled by this Government in 2010.

“13 years later, we are still waiting for a new school building and these problems have clearly arisen.

“The Government has got to take full responsibility for this while parents are facing this very worrying situation. The response appears to be shambolic, with no plan on what to do.”

Other Catholic schools affected by the scandal include Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Newark-on-Trent, which has also identified issues with Raac on site. Arrangements are currently being put in place to ensure the school opens as planned next week.

Meanwhile, the reopening of St Edward's Catholic Voluntary Primary, Swadlincote, Derbyshire has been delayed by a week, and Darlington Borough Council said St Teresa's Catholic Primary School will not open until 11th September.

Three of the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust's schools



St Bede's in Peterlee is just one of the schools affected by Raac problems

in the North East have been affected as having Raac: St James Catholic primary school in Hebburn, St John Bosco primary school in Sunderland and St Bede's, Peterlee.

The Trust said: “The education and safety of our pupils remains paramount, and we are currently working with headteachers to finalise alternative arrangements.” The Trust adding that it is ‘committed’ to ‘face to face’ learning or virtual if this is not possible.

At Holy Family Catholic Secondary School, Keighley, West Yorkshire, P Block and the kitchen have been taken out of use and pupils are set to return to school in phased stages by 11th September.

At St Thomas More Catholic Comprehensive, Eltham, the hall, gym, canteen, drama studio and boys' and girls' toilets are affected by Raac. The school plans to open mobile toilet blocks and is hiring a marquee as a space for the students to eat and prepare food.

At Corpus Christi Catholic School in Brixton, junior school pupils are

being relocated to a temporary location after Raac was found in a roof.

Education Secretary Gillian Keegan insisted the Government and her predecessors have done an “excellent job” in responding to the aerated concrete crisis, but Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) rejected this, saying that the concrete crisis in schools “reinforces” for parents the notion that the Government does not care about education.

## Edinburgh vote snub for Catholics labelled a ‘troubling decision’

The Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh has said Edinburgh City Council's decision to remove long-standing voting rights of religious representatives “sends a clear and troubling message” to Catholics.

SNP, Liberal Democrats and Green Party councillors voted to remove the rights of the Church reps sitting on the Education, Children and Families Committee, with Labour and the Conservatives voting to retain them.

A spokesman for the Archdiocese said: “Today's decision sends a clear and troubling message not just to Catholics, but to people of all faiths in Edinburgh.

“Councillors have ended a prosperous partnership that has existed between the Catholic community and the state since 1918, discarding decades of goodwill in the process, only a few years after the Scottish Government proclaimed it was an ‘unequivocal’ supporter of our Catholic schools.

“We have worked together in a spirit of openness and transparency with the council, which ensured we had an active voice in the running of Catholic schools.

Deputations were made at a

meeting in the City Chambers from concerned faith groups - Catholic, Church of Scotland, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and the Interfaith Community – and speeches were made by pupils from St Thomas Aquina's High School and St Peter's Primary.

Archbishop St Andrews & Edinburgh Leo Cushley, said: “Our schools have been entrusted to you, by us, for the benefit of our community. It is only right and just that we retain, not a veto, not a special voice, not special treatment, but simply an active voice in council, over the governance of a part of our heritage that is in your care.”

Margaret Barton and Melissa Gavan, the Religious Education Advisors for the Archdiocese, said: “The Church Representative represents all those families who send their children to Catholic schools.

“Having the vote was important in contributing to the good management of all schools in Edinburgh but particularly Catholic schools, and represented a significant proportion of people in Edinburgh. So this is a disappointing decision by councillors to remove the right for the religious representatives to vote on educational matters.”



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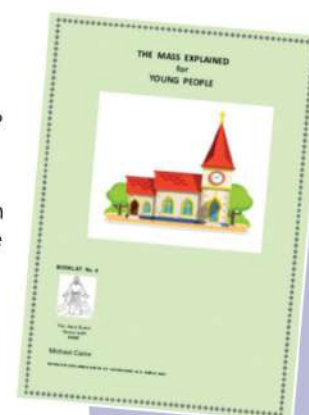
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- Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
- What's Communion about?

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## COMMENT

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

## In Brief

**Arrests after holiday rape claim**

Five Israeli men, aged between 19 and 20, have been arrested after a British tourist was allegedly raped in Cyprus. The 20-year-old told authorities that she was sexually assaulted by the men in the resort region of Ayia Napa. She said she was “taken by force” from the pool area of her hotel to her room.

**Pensioner quizzed over trans sticker**

A pensioner was questioned by police over a ‘hate incident’ after taking a photograph of a sticker that said ‘keep males out of women-only spaces’.

The 73-year-old woman took a photo of a transgender flag-themed poster, over which a sticker had been placed with the anti-trans message. She told *The Mail on Sunday* that police gave her a “long lecture about the sensitivity of the issue, and how something like this could cause harassment and alarm to the community”. She denied she had placed the sticker over the poster.

**Lost evidence halts murder probes**

Prosecutions involving 16 murders and more than 100 sexual offences collapsed before trial in England and Wales last year because key evidence was lost or missing. The findings, obtained by a Freedom of Information request, show that lost or unavailable materials were responsible for the pre-trial collapse of 7,316 cases between September 2021 and September 2022 in forces across England and Wales. They raise concerns about police handling of crucial evidence, such as DNA samples, CCTV footage, weapons, drugs and mobile phone data.

**Covid testing ramps up for winter surge**

Covid testing and monitoring will be scaled up for the winter, said the UK Health Security Agency. The news comes a month after experts said the UK was nearly “flying blind” because many of the surveillance programmes from the peak years of the pandemic have been wound down.

Experts said a return to indoor gatherings “will increase the risk of respiratory infections, including Covid, spreading”.

**School absence figures revealed**

One-in-five children in England are regularly missing school, and attendance is “struggling to get back to pre-pandemic levels”, said the BBC.

# Russia’s missile move to Belarus sends powerful signal to the West

WORLD AFFAIRS

**Veronika Poniscjakova**

## The implications of Moscow moving tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus are cause for concern

Russia is reported to have deployed nuclear weapons in Belarus, a step that was much telegraphed earlier this year, and recently confirmed by Poland. This move has caused concern in neighbouring countries and has affected security arrangements in Europe.

Russia reportedly has the world’s biggest nuclear arsenal, with (as of 2023) 5,889 nuclear warheads compared to 5,244 deployed by the US. But size (or, more accurately, numbers of warheads) should not be important.

Nuclear deterrence theory – with its related notion of mutually assured destruction – should mean no country wants to fire weapons first as it would pretty much guarantee their own destruction (along with much of the rest of the planet).

That said, the rhetoric from the Russian leadership since the invasion of Ukraine has regularly raised the threat of Russia’s nuclear stockpile. Both Vladimir Putin and the deputy chair of his national security council (and former president), Dmitry Medvedev, have made threatening comments, including this from Putin in September 2021: “If the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will without doubt use all available means to protect Russia and our people – this is not a bluff.”

### Different classes of nuclear weapons

This idea of mutually assured destruction is linked to strategic nuclear weapons – which can be used to strike big targets – such as cities – more than 3,500km away and carry huge payloads.

But the weapons reportedly being stationed in Belarus by Russia are tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs). It’s estimated that Russia has 2,000 working tactical warheads, and currently it is not clear how many will ultimately end up in Belarus.

There has been a long debate about what the term ‘TNW’ means. In 2018, then US defence secretary Jim Mattis, said: “I don’t



A Russian tactical nuclear missile launcher: Their presence in Belarus are a major concern as the war in Ukraine continues

think there is any such thing as a ‘tactical nuclear weapon.’ Any nuclear weapon used any time is a strategic game-changer”.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) defines a TNW as “any weapon that’s not been classified as ‘strategic’ under US-Russian arms control agreements (Salt, Sort, Start).” According to ICAN, these weapons can have explosive yields of up to 300 kilotons, or 20 times the force of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

In terms of delivery, they tend to have a shorter range of around 310 miles and can be delivered by missiles, torpedoes or dropped from aircraft. They are designed to be used on the battlefield. Russia is thought to have about ten times as many tactical nuclear warheads as Nato.

### Russia’s nuclear policy

Current Russian nuclear doctrine outlines four cases in which it would use its nuclear weapons. The first three cases are currently largely inapplicable given no one is attacking or threatening Russia with ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons.

The last case is rather intriguing, though, and creates real concern.

It says that Russia would use its nuclear weapons in case of “aggression against the Russian

Federation with the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is in jeopardy”. It is worth breaking down this scenario.

First of all, the concept of aggression means different things to Russia than to others. For example, Russia sees Nato’s enlargement as a hostile act.

Second, Russia has a different interpretation of what Russian territory entails, as the sham referendums organised by Russia occupied by Russian troops indicate. So retaking parts of Ukraine now seen by Moscow as Russian territory could count as “aggression against the Russian federation” under the guidelines.

Then there is Russia’s often contested policy of “escalate to de-escalate”. This essentially means that a key part of Russia’s nuclear doctrine holds that to de-escalate a non-nuclear (conventional) conflict, Russia would have to escalate it first through the threat of a limited or tactical nuclear strike.

This raises the questions of whether, if Russia’s war in Ukraine is in danger of failing altogether, the Kremlin might interpret the prospect of losing as a motivation to invoke this principle.

Medvedev expressed this most clearly in July when he said: “Imagine if the ... offensive, which

is backed by Nato, was a success and they tore off a part of our land, then we would be forced to use a nuclear weapon according to the rules of a decree from the president of Russia. There would simply be no other option.”

So the Kremlin’s decision to deploy some of its tactical weapons to Belarus gives these concerns an added dimension. Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko has warned about what he called “the rapid militarisation of eastern Europe and the increased military activities of the US and Nato”.

On a separate occasion he commented that: “God forbid I have to make a decision to use those weapons today, but there would be no hesitation if we face an aggression.” But it is generally accepted that any decision regarding the weapons would be taken in Moscow rather than Minsk.

Russia’s nuclear forces have been on high alert since February 2022, days after the invasion began. The country’s leaders have repeatedly warned of the possibility of their use. And now Moscow has deployed warheads in its client-state neighbour.

US president Joe Biden gave a fairly clear indication of his thoughts when he told political donors in California in June: “When I was out here about two years ago saying I worried about the Colorado river drying up, everybody looked at me like I was crazy. They looked at me like when I said I worry about Putin using tactical nuclear weapons. It’s real.”

**Veronika Poniscjakova is a Senior Teaching Fellow, Military Education, University of Portsmouth**

“

*Then there is Russia’s often contested policy of “escalate to de-escalate” ... to de-escalate a non-nuclear conflict, Russia would have to escalate it first through the threat of a tactical nuclear strike*



# Thanks UK, but struggle goes on says Bishop Ken

**Andy Drozdziak**

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski has thanked Britons again for their generosity and support for 'their Ukrainian sisters and brothers' – but warned "he cannot bring good news from the conflict."

Bishop Nowakowski, Bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, the UK 'diocese' of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, has been a popular spokesperson since the war started and a familiar face to UK Catholics and citizens.

He outlined the scale of the support for Ukrainians from the British public in a video message.

"It has been many since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian forces on 24th February 2022. Since then, over 180,000 Ukrainians have come to the UK, fleeing harm's way, and over 80,000 ordinary British people have opened their homes and their hearts to providing a safe place, shelter and kindness," he said.



"Unfortunately, I can't bring you good news. The war is not over yet. We still need your prayers and your help."

The considerable humanitarian effort from the Catholic church has come from, among others, CAFOD, CSAN and the Ukrainian Welcome Centre. The archdiocese of Liverpool has also made substantial contributions through its #Liverpool4Ukraine appeal, having made several visits to partner parishes in Ukraine to deliver essential goods and raising over £136,000.

Bishop Nowakowski paid tribute to the supplies of "much-needed humanitarian aid and pastoral care".

"Our bishops, both Ukrainian Catholic and Roman Catholic, and organisations like Caritas and St Vincent de Paul, continue to work very closely with each other in supplying much-needed humanitarian aid and pastoral care," he said, adding a plea for continued support.

"I would encourage all of you, if you can, to continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine (and) to support those who have already arrived here.

"And if you can make contributions to CAFOD, partnering with Caritas Ukraine, to provide humanitarian aid," he said.

**To support Ukraine, see [www.ukrainianwelcomecentre.org/](http://www.ukrainianwelcomecentre.org/)  
Or see Cafod  
Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)  
#Liverpool4Ukraine appeal**

# Maria urges faithful to back this year's World Mission Sunday

**Andy Drozdziak**

Missio has urged its supporters to surpass last year's World Mission Sunday donations of £616,251 in this year's appeal.

World Mission Sunday is described as 'a moment of grace to express solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are living in situations of poverty, violence, and oppression, through the tireless work of the missionaries who accompany them.'

This year World Mission Sunday falls on Sunday, 22nd October.

Money raised goes to help projects around the world, such as the Kidist Mariam Centre in Ethiopia. Last year Missio focused on the work of Spanish lay missionary Maria at the centre. She described how her team provides a safe, supportive, and educational environment for vulnerable women, so they no longer have to leave their families and communities to find work.

Because of the generosity of Catholics last year, "the Kidist Mariam Centre has continued to pro-

vide vocational training, including food preparation, hairdressing, and tailoring, despite the difficulties in Ethiopia," the charity said.

Maria wrote: "It is a great joy to express our most sincere gratitude for the help received from Missio in England and Wales.

"This project has contributed enormously to the empowerment of young women, both economically and personally."

In much of the developing world, many public services, such as hospitals and schools, are run by the Catholic Church. The global Missio network is entrusted by the Pope to support those in the Universal Church in need of support.

"World Mission Sunday is vital to the growth of the Church and the spread of the Gospel in predominantly impoverished and remote areas overseas," Missio explained.

"It provides the financial assistance needed to help struggling communities survive, and ultimately flourish, through the work of dedicated missionaries."

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## NEWS

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

## Stella Maris launches new port directory

Global maritime Catholic charity Stella Maris has launched a new version of its *Port Chaplain Directory*, which is described as a 'vital tool to help seafarers and fishers get access to pastoral, practical and spiritual support wherever they are in the world'.

The *Stella Maris Port Chaplain Directory 2023* lists telephone numbers and email addresses of the charity's 257 chaplains in 353 ports across 57 countries worldwide. It also highlights the ports in which Stella Maris Seafarers' Centres are located. These centres provide a welcoming space where seafarers and fishers can go to relax, pray, contact family, socialise, and speak to a chaplain away from the environment of their ships.

Stella Maris exists to provide spiritual and practical support to seafarers, fishers and their families. It is the largest ship visiting network in the world, and with chaplains operating in most of the world's major ports, the Directory provides a quick and easy source of information for crews to get assistance and advice from them.

Stella Maris CEO Tim Hill said the new directory would be hugely beneficial to seafarers. "Providing up to date and accurate details enables our network of chaplains to provide holistic care for seafarers and fishers in port after port worldwide," Mr Hill said.

"Our *Port Chaplain Directory* is a valuable resource both for crews and stakeholders in the maritime industry such as P&I clubs, shipping agents and port officials."

The new Directory is being given out to vessels coming into ports all over the world and has already made a positive impact. A seafarer on a vessel coming into Houston, Texas, had received sad news of a family bereavement and contacted the Stella Maris chaplain to request support directly before arriving in port. The local chaplain was able to meet the vessel and visited a couple of times to support the seafarer through a very difficult time.

The Directory was sponsored by Tindall Riley, managers of the Britannia Group, whose CEO, Andrew Cutler, said they were "delighted" to help provide care for seafarers in ports across the world.

Copies are available from the Stella Maris website ([click here to find our more](#))



# Newcastle rosary rally organiser calls on faithful to 'just do it'

**Andy Drozdziak**

A civil servant is calling on men in the North East to "just do it" and be part of an upcoming rosary rally.

The rally is being organised for **Newcastle on 7th October**. Organiser Peter Forbes, a civil servant, believes that, in the current "hostile" atmosphere towards faith, it is important for people to "stand up for their faith."

"We need to do this public prayer," Mr Forbes told the *Universe*. "Generally speaking, there's hostility towards religion, certainly towards Catholics. It's important to show people that we're Catholics and we're going to stand for our faith. We just have to do it anyway."

A rosary rally took place earlier this year in Newcastle, when more than 50 men and boys gathered on a Saturday in the city centre when Newcastle Utd were playing.

Peter Forbes missed out on that occasion. When he asked whether another one would take place, he was asked if he could organise one himself. Now one is in place, he is hoping that passers-by will take notice and be impacted by the public display of faith.

Rosary rallies around the world have become increasingly popular, in Ireland, USA, and Ukraine. They



Picture of previous Newcastle rosary rally, by Martin Macgregor

have also taken place in the UK, with men praying on their knees in town centres and prominent areas. On this occasion, the rosary rally is also open to women and children.

Peter Forbes is calling on the faithful to step out. "I'm not the bravest person in the world, but I

would advise people to 'just do it,' he said.

The rally will be part of a wider day of recollection, featuring Mass and fellowship. The day will begin at St Joseph's Church, Gateshead, for 11am Mass. The procession will cross the iconic Tyne bridge, start-

ing at 12.15, and moving towards Northumberland Street at 1.15pm before ending at St Andrew's Church on Worswick Street.

**For further information, email Peter Forbes: [the.real.pete.forbes@gmail.com](mailto:the.real.pete.forbes@gmail.com)**

# Catholic university in name change to reflect vibrant home city while honouring its saint

Newman University has officially changed its name to Birmingham Newman University.

The name change reflects Birmingham Newman University's rich heritage in Birmingham, along with its ongoing commitment to providing a first-class education and opening up life-changing opportunities for those who wish to live and work in the city and surrounding area.

The university is named after Saint John Henry Newman who dedicated much of his life to the people of Birmingham and who developed the tutorial system which is used across the university sector. Newman was beatified during the Pope's visit to Birmingham in 2010.

Birmingham Newman University is a Catholic foundation, which welcomes students from other Christian denominations, other faiths and people without faith.

Professor Jackie Dunne, vice chancellor at Birmingham Newman University, said the name change was a "significant development".

"It reflects our aim to better identify with the dynamic and ambitious city of Birmingham," she said. "This is a significant development, coming after the successful launch of our state-of-the-art School of Nursing and Allied Health."

"Birmingham is a vibrant city, with a strong history of innovation and social justice," she added. As the city continues to evolve as a hub of innovation, culture, and education, we look forward to developing our own part in that journey, expanding our offer to students from the West Midlands and beyond."

Located in Bartley Green, Birmingham, the



The official unveiling of the name change to Birmingham Newman University  
Photo by Mickie McNally.

University was founded in 1968 as Newman College. It operated first as a teacher training college and then achieved full university status in 2013.

Today, Birmingham Newman University offers a wide range of foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate degree courses, with subjects in-

cluding nursing, teacher training, business management, law and psychology.

The University will undergo a comprehensive rebranding process over the coming weeks to reflect its new identity and will hold an open day on Saturday 7th October from 10am to 3pm.



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## ROME: PAPAL VISIT TO MONGOLIA

Editorial: Andy Drozdziak – [news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:news@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)

Greeted with 'aaruul', a dried yogurt cheese, which he tried, Pope Francis arrives in Ulaanbaatar for a four-day visit (above). After the nine-hour, overnight flight from Rome, the pope's arrival was low key. Battsetseg Batmunkh, Mongolia's foreign minister, met him at Chinggis Khaan International Airport and had a brief meeting before the pope was driven into the city for a day of rest at the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Mongolia, the Apostolic Prefecture of Ulaanbaatar. During his flight from Rome, the pope, who had said he was going to the "heart of Asia," told reporters travelling with him that Mongolia is a vast country with a very small population and a great culture that needs to be understood more with the senses than with the intellect. He also suggested they listen to the music of 19th-century Russian composer Alexander Borodin, who wrote *In the Steppes of Central Asia*.



Pope Francis celebrates Mass in the Steppe Arena in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia  
Photo: Lola Gomez

# We're here to care not proselytise, says pope as he travels to the heart of Asia

Pope Francis wrapped up a small scale but poignant first ever papal visit to Mongolia by inaugurating a Church-run homeless clinic and shelter, insisting that such initiatives are not aimed at winning converts but are simply exercises in Christian charity.

Francis toured the House of Mercy, a three-storey structure housed in an old school, which the local Church has opened as an expression of the roots that it has put down in the three decades that the Catholic Church has had an official presence in Mongolia.

It was the final event of an historic four-day visit to a region where the Holy See has long sought to make inroads.

Several of the foreign-staffed Catholic religious orders in Mongolia run shelters, orphanages and nursing homes to care for a population of 3.3 million where one in three people lives in poverty.

But the new clinic for homeless people, people with disabilities and victims of domestic violence is aimed at showing the outreach of the Mongolian Catholic Church as a whole to its local community.

"The true progress of a nation is not gauged by economic wealth, much less by investment in the illusory power of armaments, but by its ability to provide for the health, education and integral development of its people," Pope Francis said at the shelter, urging Mongolians both

rich and poor to volunteer to help their fellow citizens.

Currently, some 77 missionaries minister to Mongolia's Catholics, who with around 1,450 people constitute one of the tiniest Catholic flocks in the world. But only two Mongolian men have been ordained priests, and no Mongolian women have decided to join religious congregations as nuns.

These foreign missionaries say the biggest challenge facing them is to cultivate a truly local Mongolian Church, with trained lay people who are well inserted into society.

That, they hope, will eventually lead to more religious vocations.

The Rev Ernesto Viscardi, an Ital-

ian priest of the Consolata missionary order who has been based in Mongolia for 19 years, said: "We have to make this a Church of Mongolia, one that has the flavour of this land, of its steppes, of its sheep, goats, of its ger."

"There are 77 of us missionaries. We're all great, all saints, everyone works well," he said laughing.

"But we have to think about making the local Church grow, so that the Mongolian people take their Church in hand. Otherwise we colonise Mongolia anew, and that makes no sense."

In urging everyday Mongolians to volunteer to help the poor, Francis said charity work was not just for

the idle rich but for everyone.

And he denied that Catholic charity was about winning new converts.

Francis said: "Another myth needing to be dispelled is that the Catholic Church, distinguished throughout the world for its great commitment to works of social promotion, does all this to proselytise, as if caring for others were a way of enticing people to 'join up'."

"No! Christians do whatever they can to alleviate the suffering of the needy, because in the person of the poor they acknowledge Jesus, the Son of God, and in him the dignity of each person."

Francis' comment was a tacit acknowledgement of the competition for souls in places like Mongolia, which banned religious observation during decades of Soviet-allied communist government.

Now, religious freedom is enshrined in the Mongolian constitution, and a variety of Christian and evangelical churches have taken root here.

Some, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, boast a much bigger presence in Mongolia and claim far more members than the Catholic Church. But in a sign that Catholics were not competing with the Mormons or other Christian churches, Francis invited their leaders to an interfaith meeting on Saturday in Ulaanbaatar to show their common concern for promoting a more peaceful and harmoni-

ous world.

In seeking to encourage Mongolia's tiny Catholic flock, Francis has insisted that their small size doesn't matter and that their success shouldn't be measured in numbers.

"God loves littleness, and through it he loves to accomplish great things," Francis told priests, nuns and bishops from around the region during a Saturday encounter in the cathedral.

Francis came to Mongolia to give a word of hope to the young church, but also to make a geopolitically important foray into a troubled region for the Holy See, particularly given neighbouring China's crackdown on religious observance.

The pontiff gave a special shout-out to the Chinese people at the end of his main Mass in Ulaanbaatar. He brought up to the altar the current and retired bishops of Hong Kong to demonstrate his "warm" affection for the Chinese people (*see facing page*).

But relations remain strained, particularly over a five-year-old agreement on nominating Catholic bishops.

The 2018 accord aimed to unite China's estimated 12 million Catholics, who have been divided between an official Church and an underground church loyal to Rome. The latter emerged when the Communists came to power and diplomatic relations between the Holy See and China ruptured.

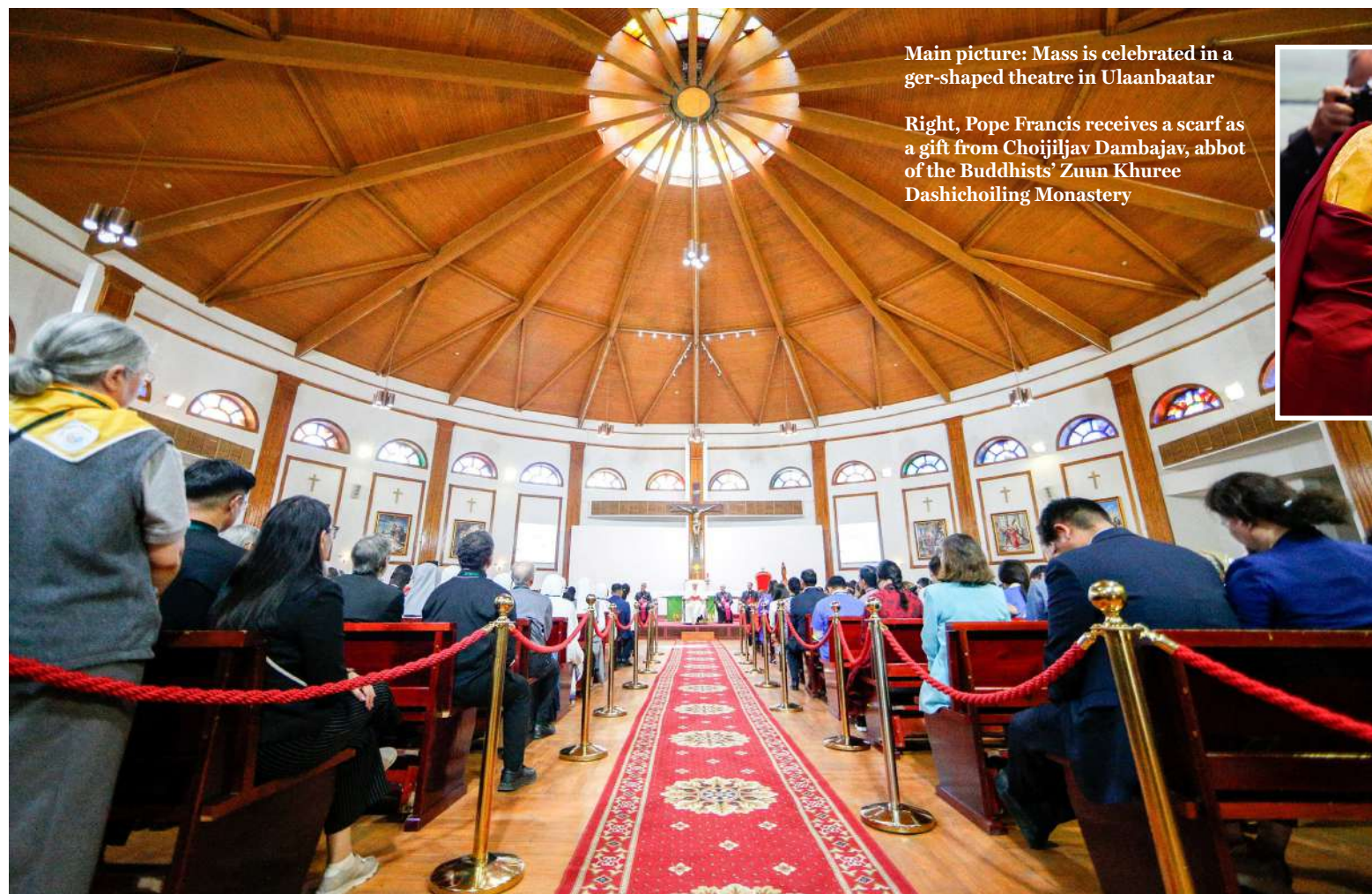


Pope Francis grasps the hands of retired Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong, left, and Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-yan of Hong Kong, right, as he introduces them to people attending his Mass in the Steppe Arena. Photo: Lola Gomez



Advertising: Andrea Black – advertising@universecatholicweekly.co.uk

## ROME: PAPAL VISIT TO MONGOLIA



Main picture: Mass is celebrated in a ger-shaped theatre in Ulaanbaatar

Right, Pope Francis receives a scarf as a gift from Choijiljav Dambajav, abbot of the Buddhists' Zuun Khuree Dashichoiling Monastery



## Harmony and dialogue will bring us peace

Pope Francis and other religious elders gathered in a ger-shaped theatre to speak of the earth and the divine, harmony and beauty, peace and the human family.

In Mongolia, where all religion was brutally repressed for seven decades under communist rule, Pope Francis paid tribute to Mongolia's Buddhists, the largest religious group in the country; beginning in the late 1930s, thousands of Buddhist monks were condemned to death and hundreds of Buddhist temples were destroyed.

The pope prayed that the memory of past suffering would give all Mongolians "the strength needed to transform dark wounds into sources of light, senseless violence into the wisdom of life (and) devastating evil into constructive goodness."

Leaders of the Buddhist, shamanist, Muslim, Evangelical, Seventh-day Adventist, Latter-day Saints, Hindu, Shinto, Baha'i and Russian Orthodox communities also spoke at the event in Ulaanbaatar's Hun Theatre.

They, like the pope, continually used the word "harmony."

"Harmony is that special relationship born of the creative interplay of differing realities, without imposition or amalgamation, but with complete respect for their differences, in view of a serene life in common," Pope Francis said. "I ask myself: Who, more than believers, is called to work for harmony among all?"

Close-mindedness and fundamentalism "destroy fraternity, fuel tensions and compromise peace," he said, but beauty is born of harmony, which "flourishes through kindness, listening and humility."

Harmony does not come from pretending there are no differences or from apologising for one's deeply held beliefs, he said.

"The Church offers the treasure she has received to every person and culture, in a spirit of openness and in respectful consideration of what the other religious traditions have to offer."



A mounted honour guard, dressed in armour, ride past Pope Francis and Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh during the official welcome

On Monday in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning was asked about the pope's Sunday greeting to the Chinese people.

"We have seen relevant reports, and my colleagues have introduced China's position earlier. China has always taken a positive attitude towards improving relations with the Vatican and has maintained contact and communication with the Vatican."

The terms of the 2018 deal were never released. But Beijing has made a handful of unilateral bishop appointments without papal consent, an apparent violation of the accord. The Vatican gave in and recognised the appointments after the fact.

Francis insisted that relations were "very respectful" and said he retained "great admiration for the Chinese people."

"I think there's more work to be

done on the religious aspect to understand ourselves better, so the Chinese citizens don't think that the church doesn't accept their culture or values, or that the church depends on another foreign power," he said. "So the relations are like this, under way."

## China bars priests from travelling to see pope

Despite being its neighbour, the Chinese Communist Party prevented any Catholic bishops or priests in the mainland from travelling to see the pope in Mongolia in what observers suggested underlines growing tensions between the Holy See and Beijing and its agreement for the running of the Chinese Church.

The only Chinese clerics on hand to welcome the Holy Father were from Hong Kong: retired Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong and Cardinal-designate Stephen Chow Sau-Yan of Hong Kong.

Both were called up to the pulpit during the papal Mass at the Steppe Arena.

Taking them by the hands, he told the crowd: "These two brother bishops – the emeritus of Hong Kong and the current bishop of Hong Kong – I want to take the opportunity of their presence to send a warm greeting to the noble Chinese people."

The pope said he wanted to wish the best to the entire Chinese nation, "and to Chinese Catholics, I ask you to be good Christians and good citizens."

While bishops and priests from the mainland were not permitted to travel to Mongolia, several small groups of lay Catholics from China did manage to cross the border to see the pope.

As Pope Francis rode around the arena in a golf cart before Mass, a few of them held up a large Chinese flag. The pope stopped and waved to them.

While flying over China on the way to Mongolia, the pope sent a telegram to Chinese President Xi Jinping, offering his good wishes and assuring him of his "prayers for the well-being of the nation."

It is a custom that has been followed in every recent papal overseas trip, to send a welcome down to the countries the Holy Father flies over.



Pope Francis and a woman named Tsetsege leave a ger on the grounds of Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Ulaanbaatar. The Mongolian woman, who uses only one name, found a statue of Mary in a garbage landfill and gave it to missionaries; it is now venerated in the cathedral as Our Lady of Heaven. Later the pope reminded members of the country's catholic community that faith and unity must be at the center of their lives. "Without daily prayer and respect for the structure and unity of the Church, our strength will fail, and our pastoral work will risk becoming an empty delivery of services, a roster of duties that end up inducing only weariness and frustration," the pope said.



# Synod won't be televised, confirms pope – but there's nothing to scare the faithful

**Cindy Wooden**

The Synod of Bishops is not a television show or a parliamentary debate, and its discussions will not be open to the public or to reporters, Pope Francis said.

"We must safeguard the synodal climate," the pope said during an informal press conference on board his plane returning from Mongolia.

"This isn't a TV show where you talk about everything; no, it is a religious exchange."

The synod process began in October 2021 with a succession of listening sessions on the parish, diocesan, national and regional levels focused on creating a more synodal Church, where each person feels welcomed, valued and called to contribute and to share the Gospel.

An initial idea was to livestream the discussions from the synod hall or at least allow reporters access.

But Pope Francis made it clear that would not happen. An official summary of the day's discussions – without saying who said what – will be made by the synod's communication committee. Journalists will also try to interview participants to at least get individual points of view about the day's synod work.

Pope Francis told reporters that each synod member – including women and laymen for the first time – would have three or four minutes to address the assembly, followed by three or four minutes of



silence "for prayer."

"Without this spirit of prayer, there is no synodality, it's just politics, parliamentarianism," he said.

Having a committee summarize the discussions for the press is necessary "to safeguard the religiosity (of the synod) and safeguard the freedom of those who speak" but may not want to do so publicly, he said.

"But more open than that, I don't know," he said. "The commission will be very respectful of the speeches of each person and will try not to gossip, but to recount things about how the synod is progressing that are constructive for the Church."

The pope also admitted to jour-

nalists that he understood why Ukrainians had taken offence over his comments saluting the Russian heritage "of Peter the Great, Catherine II", both of which were aggressive expansionist leaders who invaded and conquered neighbouring lands.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has evoked them both as role models in his war on Ukraine.

"Russian heritage is very good, it's very beautiful; just think of the literature, music," the pope said. "Perhaps it was not the best way but speaking about the 'great Russia' – culturally – was what we were taught in school."

Careful not to mention Putin and

his war on Ukraine, Pope Francis said Russian culture "has a beauty, a great depth that should not be erased because of political problems."

"It is true I was not thinking about imperialism when I spoke; I was speaking about culture," he said. "It's true there are some imperialisms that want to impose their own ideology, but I'll stop there."

He also said a love of "ideology" was behind much of the criticism of the Synod of Bishops.

The pope insisted people must learn to "distinguish between the culture of a people and the ideology of some philosopher or politician who belongs to that people."

"This is true for the Church as well," he said. "Many times people propose ideologies that detach the Church from the life that flows from its roots and the Holy Spirit. It is an ideology incapable of incarnating itself. It's just ideas, but an ideology that gains strength and becomes politics usually ends up a dictatorship with an inability to dialogue and to move ahead with cultures."

Another reporter asked Pope Francis about a book recently published with a foreword from US Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, warning of the potential damage the synod discussions could unleash.

In response, the pope repeated a story he has told on other occasions.

"A few months ago, I phoned a Carmelite monastery and asked

how the nuns were doing. The prioress responded and at the end, she told me, 'But, Your Holiness, we are afraid about the synod.'

"Why?" I asked. 'We are afraid it will change the Church's doctrine.'"

At the root of those fears, the pope said, are ideologies who want to frighten Catholics and divide the Church. "In the Church, whenever someone wants to interrupt the journey of communion, they always use an ideology and accuse the Church of this or that," the pope said. "But they never accuse it of what is true or sinful."

Instead, he said, "they defend a 'doctrine' in quotation marks that is like distilled water, it has no flavour and it's not true doctrine as in the Creed."

Pope Francis was asked about Vatican-China relations in the light of China's decision to not allow bishops or priests from the mainland to go to Mongolia to see him.

While educational and cultural exchanges are becoming normal, the pope said, "I think we must focus more on the religious aspect, so we understand each other better and so that Chinese citizens don't think the Church does not accept their culture and values and that the Church there depends on a foreign power," meaning the Vatican.

Relations are "underway," he said. "I have great respect for the Chinese people."

## Mexico steels itself to be kicked again in US election

An off-the-cuff remark by a Republican presidential hopeful has led to an outbreak of soul-searching in Mexico over its relationship with its northern neighbour.

During the first debate among Republican candidates, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis suggested he would send US special forces into Mexico to "take out fentanyl labs and other drug cartel operations."

"And I will do it on day one," he said.

The response among Mexicans was a mixture of horror, amusement and exasperation, that once again their country would be an easy target for US politicians looking to score easy points at their expense.

Julia Young, a historian of migration, Mexico and Latin America, and Catholicism at The Catholic University of America in Washington, said that such campaign promises "are very typical of politicians who speak about complex issues such as immigration, US-Mexico relations and narco-trafficking."

"They offer simplistic, headline-grabbing solutions to very complex problems," she said. "DeSantis seems to think that taking

out cartels would be easy and a solution to the USA's drug problem."

Young said that even assuming a hypothetical President DeSantis "could get congressional approval, it would be considered an act of war by Mexicans, who are keenly aware of the many times that the United States has invaded their country," she said. "Given that there are multiple cartels, and they are decentralised organizations whose operations are in very remote rural terrain as well as embedded in large cities and towns, it would also be a very challenging military exercise, impossible to carry out on 'Day One.'"

DeSantis' comment was met with condemnation, including from Democratic lawmakers.

"Republicans cheering for war with Mexico are taking the United States down a dark, dangerous path," said Congressman Joaquin Castro, a Democrat from Texas.

Mexican President Andros Manuel Lopez Obrador called DeSantis' comment "cheap politicking."

"Unfortunately, we have to get used to this bravado, because elections are coming up in the United States," he said. "This Mr. DeSantis



**The Rev Arturo Carrasco, an Anglican priest, blesses images of Mexico's missing persons at an ecumenical service in Mexico City. More than 110,000 people remain missing in Mexico, with many disappearing during the country's ongoing crackdown on drug cartels.**

wants to pass (Donald) Trump to the right and that is why he appears more anti-immigrant than Trump."

The rising rhetoric against Mexico came in a climate of escalating tensions between the two countries,

much of which stems from a growing use of the drug fentanyl in the US – which Americans claim is produced in Mexico. However, much of it is believed to come from China.

Observers noted that Lopez Ob-

rador has blasted some Republican politicians for their border rhetoric, but never President Trump when he was in office. Rather, he was seen as the American's 'migrant enforcer', using tough tactics to intimidate migrants passing through his country. Many of the people trying to enter the USA via Mexico come from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala – and they don't receive a warm welcome in Mexico, despite that country's history of migration over the decades. A recent survey found that 55% of the public considered Mexican policies toward migrants as "too permissive," with even more saying the government should not provide "any humanitarian assistance" to migrants.

In the US there is a belief that immigration will capture a lot of attention during the upcoming presidential campaign – but not as much as many believe. Illegal immigration ranked lower than issues such as inflation, health care costs, partisan cooperation and gun violence in terms of voters' top priorities – though it was more important to Republicans than Democrats voters.



# Rwanda president's threat to 'arrest' Catholic pilgrims stirs reaction amid Church's silence

**Fredrick Nzwili**

Days after President Paul Kagame of Rwanda warned Catholic pilgrims who "worship poverty" that he would round them up and jail them, Catholic clergy in the East Africa nation remained tight-lipped, even as the warning reverberated across the region.

A representative of the clergy said they could not speak on the matter; they were "yet to understand" the context of Kagame's threat, or even if it should worry the Church.

"The Church doesn't think it should be so concerned about this. It's decided to ignore it and stay quiet."

Kagame made his controversial comments to 2,000 youth at the 10th anniversary celebration of YouthConnekt, a platform that seeks to enhance young people's knowledge, experiences and skills.

"I learned that many young people, as many as thousands ... wake up in the early morning, walk for three days to go to (a place) where a vision appeared, a pilgrim land, a place associated with poverty," Kagame told the youth conference.

"I thought that when you pray,



President Paul Kagame

you are praying for what can help improve your lives, praying to get rich and get out of poverty," he said.

"No one must worship poverty. Do not ever do that again. ... If I ever hear about this again, that people traveled to go and worship poverty, I will bring trucks and round them up and imprison them, and only release them when the poverty mentality has left them," said Kagame, who is himself a Catholic.

The comments shocked Catholics across eastern Africa. Several Church leaders said they felt the president was not against the Church and had rather used colourful language to encourage the youth to work hard instead of spending time looking for miracles in shrines. Some admitted he had used "very strong words."

The prelates, however, refused to go on the record, a sign that they may fear the president's powers.

The US recent criticised Rwanda's dire human rights record. In its annual human rights assessment the Department of State said Rwanda operated a prison system that includes harsh and life-threatening conditions, arbitrary detention and serious restrictions on free expression including the imprisonment of journalists.

Rwanda also restricts the freedom of association and has no effective system of collective bargaining.

In a clarification of Kagame's remarks to youth, Yolande Makolo, the president's spokeswoman, told Agence France-Presse that the leader "did not at any point mention a specific pilgrimage site, and certain-

ly not Kibeho," referring to the most famous shrine in this eastern part of Africa. She said he was probably speaking about a little-known site in the western part of Rwanda.

Makolo said the president's "point was to encourage young Rwandans to be ambitious and work hard, instead of getting caught up in cultlike rituals."

But in Rwanda, the local media has interpreted Kagame's reference as pointing to an annual pilgrimage undertaken by thousands of youth to Our Lady of Kibeho shrine, where several Marian apparitions occurred in the 1980s. The Vatican declared the testimonies of three witnesses authentic in 2001.

Since then, Catholics from around the world visit the shrine, the only Church-approved Marian apparition site in Africa, hoping to get cure for illnesses and miracles.

The Kibeho shrine attracted thousands for the feast of the Assumption, on 15th August; large celebrations at the site draw as many as 20,000 pilgrims.

Such is its popularity that the Church is seeking \$3 million to expand the pilgrimage site.

## In Brief

### Mexico court ends abortion ban

Mexico's Supreme Court has overturned a state-level ban on abortion, instructing local congresses to revise legislation to allow terminations.

The court also ordered the state to guarantee access to abortion in its hospitals.

"The court's argumentation sets a binding precedent for all judges ... it is Mexico's *Roe v. Wade*," Luis Martinez, Human Life International, said. "Even if the constitution is pro-life, abortions could be done."

12 of Mexico's 32 states have decriminalised abortion since Mexico City approved the first law doing so in 2007. "This brings us closer to the decriminalisation of abortion throughout the country," Martinez added. "It is a shock in a conservative Catholic nation."

### Israel to deport African migrants

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu says he will deport all African migrants from Israel after Eritrean groups were involved in violent clashes. The controversial move came 24 hours after "bloody protests" by rival groups of Eritreans in south Tel Aviv left dozens of people injured. However, under international law Israel can not forcibly send migrants back to a country where their life or liberty may be at risk.

### 'War room' to protect Biden

The White House has opened a war room as it launches an "aggressive counteroffensive" against Republicans calling for an impeachment inquiry into Joe Biden. The administration is gearing up for a "high-stakes showdown" and has appointed two dozen lawyers, legislative experts and communications staff. Kevin McCarthy, a Republican and the House Speaker, has indicated that he could begin impeachment against Biden over his alleged foreign business dealings.

### France to ban vegan terms

The French government is planning to ban meat terms like 'steak', 'grill' and 'spare ribs' being used to describe plant-based products. Agriculture minister Marc Fesneau said the decree is "an issue of transparency". Farmers have objected to terms like 'plant-based burger' or 'vegan sausage', claiming that they confuse consumers.

## Kim Jong Un ready to meet Putin over arms sales

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un may travel to Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin as the Kremlin tries to acquire military equipment for use in its war in Ukraine.

The US expects Mr Kim to make the trip within the month, probably to the Pacific city of Vladivostok.

Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu travelled to Pyongyang last month to persuade North Korea to sell artillery ammunition to Russia.

It is believed Kim Jong Un expects these discussions to continue, to include leader-level diplomatic engagement in Russia. Any sales would be "on North Korea's terms," suggesting an increasingly desperate Russia would pay a hefty price in terms of cash and exports to facilitate the deal.

Russia is believed to be running low on stocks of ammunition as its war with Ukraine passes 18 months.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that Russian and North Korean talks on a weapons sale were advancing "and we would suggest will be confirmed in early October."

## Turkey still hopeful it can broker deal on Ukraine grain exports

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said a landmark deal that allowed Ukraine to export grain safely through the Black Sea amid the war will not be restored until the West meets Moscow's demands on its own agricultural exports.

Ukraine and its western allies have dismissed the Kremlin's demands as a ploy to advance its own interests.

Mr Putin's remarks dashed hopes that recent talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan could revive the agreement, which is seen as vital for global food supplies to Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Russia refused to extend the deal in July, complaining that a parallel agreement promising to remove obstacles to Russian exports of food and fertiliser had not been honoured.

It said restrictions on shipping and insurance hampered its agricultural trade, though it has shipped record amounts of wheat since last year. Mr Putin reiterated those complaints, while saying that if those commitments were honoured, Russia could return to the deal "within days".

Mr Erdogan also expressed hope



Turkish President Erdogan still has hopes he can save the grain deal to allow Ukraine exports through the Black Sea, though Vladimir Putin has demanded concessions from the West

that a breakthrough could come soon. He said Turkey and the UN — which both brokered the original deal — have put together a new package of proposals. "I believe that we will reach a solution," Mr Erdogan told journalist in the Russian city of Sochi, where the leaders met.

German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock lashed out at Mr Putin, saying his "game with the grain agreement is cynical".

"It's only because of Putin that the freighters don't have free passage again," she told reporters in Berlin.

A lot is riding on the negotiation. Ukraine and Russia are major sup-

pliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other goods that developing nations rely on. 57 per cent of Ukraine's went to developing nations, though the top destination was China.

Grain prices shot up after Russia pulled out of the deal but have since fallen back, indicating that there is not a big crunch in the market right now, said Tim Benton, a food security expert at the Chatham House think tank. But the long-term picture is uncertain.

"I am more worried about the future, where the El Nino (weather phenomenon) might make 2024 the year to watch," he said.



# da Silva risks his reputation as he backs oil exploitation in the Amazon

**Church environmentalists are worried about oil drilling at mouth of Amazon River says Eduardo Campos Lim**

Church activists in the Amazon are becoming increasingly concerned about Brazilian Government's plans to exploit oil in a marine area close to the mouth of the Amazon River.

Oil drilling, an issue discussed in different meetings over the past months by ecclesial movements and environmentalists, has been a problem in several regions of the Amazon.

While there was relevant progress recently in the struggle to restrain the oil companies' operations in the rainforest, the pressure from those corporations is immense, and it will take a huge amount of effort from Catholics inspired by Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical to secure the protection of the their 'common home' in the Amazon, activists say.

The oil project, 300 miles northeast from Amazon River's mouth, has put top government officials on opposite sides. On one side is Environment Minister Marina Silva, who argues that technical studies showed that the operation would have a huge impact on the environment and local communities, and on the other is most of President Luiz 'Lula' da Silva's cabinet.

da Silva believes it is possible to go on with the project without harming the environment. It was among the topics discussed by Lula and the presidents of the other nations of the Pan-Amazon region during a summit in Belem, Brazil, last month. The region consists of nine countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Suriname, Guyana and French Guyana.

But his reassurances are not working, says Fr Dario Bossi, a member of the Integral Ecology and Mining Commission of the bishops' conference. "The summit failed to address key elements concerning extractivism in the Amazon. All decisions should be unanimous and there was no consensus on those issues," he said.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro argued that oil drilling should be forbidden in the Amazon, but other leaders avoided discussing the issue. Brazil, as the biggest nation in the group, tends to dominate proceedings, often seeing the Amazon as its 'territory' rather than a landmass shared by many nations.

Social movements and Church groups had campaigned since



A swathe of Amazon rainforest felled for agricultural planting. Moves to protest the Amazon are progressing, but the decision to allow oil exploitation in a critical area near the mouth of the river shows that activists and the Church have a long way to go before the region is save from further exploitation and damaging deforestation

January to gather as many members of the civil society to attend activities at the summit. About 40,000 people gathered in Belem, according to Fr Bossi, and handed their demands to the presidents.

Although they were disappointed with the final document – not only due to the oil theme, but also due to the absence of a collective goal of reducing deforestation – the simple fact that they were there is a reason to celebrate, Fr Bossi said. For some time it felt that environmental controls of the Amazon were off the table but the return of the summit gives room for hope. Parallel summits by activists are being



planned for future meetings of the Pan-Amazon group.

Members of the Bishops' Conference of the Amazon also were disappointed with the Amazon summit. "The region's governments are not trying to put an end to extractivism and look for economic alternatives," Franciscan Sister Laura Manso told reporters.

According to Sr Manso, social resistance to the "economy of destruction," as she defined, has not always been enough to cancel major building and extractive projects being undertaken in the Amazon, given that large companies, politicians, and even organised crime are behind them.

The bishops were particularly critical of the oil drilling plans for the Amazon's mouth and in Yasuni National Park, in Ecuador. The continuity of oil exploitation in that reservation, considered to be among the most biodiverse in the Amazon, was submitted to a referendum on 20th August, with

the majority voting to end oil exploitation in Yasuni.

"That victory is certainly an important symbol. But only a small portion of that area will now be free of oil drilling. In most of the Ecuadorian Amazon, mining and oil exploitation keep polluting the environment," said Carlos Azcona, a Spanish-born lay missionary who works in the Aguarico vicariate, in the Orellana province.

Another referendum was promoted on the same day for the residents of Ecuador's Quito region, called Pichincha, concerning mining. The voters also rejected any new projects.

"The harms caused by those extractivist operations cost more than the wealth they produce. People get sick and die as a result of them, but the governments do not care," Azcona said.

The local bishops were very active in the campaign against oil drilling and mining, as were some groups of laypeople.

"Our hope is with those groups. They are small, but they will bear fruits," Azcona said.

For Fr Bossi, the repudiation of extractivism in the Amazon by the Ecuadorians should inspire all Church and environmental activists in the region.

"It was historical. The people's voice was heard and prevailed over the extractive industry's false promises. The governments always say that oil will bring wealth, but such wealth never gets to the poor," the priest said.

Fr Bossi said that if President da Silva approves oil exploitation in the Amazon, "his reputation as an international leader in the protection of nature will be disputed, and developed nations will not agree to negotiate with him instruments of environmental compensation."

In June, da Silva said rich nations need to pay for "historic environmental damage" done in developing nations. He made the comments at an event organized by a sustainable development advocacy group called Global Citizen that took place during the Paris Summit, where leaders of poor and rich countries discussed how to reach a financing pact to address consequences of climate change.



*If President da Silva approves oil exploitation in the Amazon, his reputation as an international leader in the protection of nature will be disputed*



# Newman's way of the fathers – and how they helped him come 'home' to the Church of his dreams

**Mike Aquilina looks at how the journey St John Henry Newman made in converting to Catholicism was inspired by his reading of the Fathers of the Church**

At the heart of St. John Henry Newman's conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism was his study of the early Christians, the fathers of the Church.

As an Anglican clergyman, he believed that they held the answer to his denomination's perennial problem – fragmentation in doctrinal and practical matters. He sought a purer reflection upon scripture in the writings of the fathers, an interpretation untainted by modern politics and controversies.

Yet his methods were – and remain – particularly appealing to modern readers. I confess I've filched them shamelessly as I prepared my books, especially *Roots of the Faith*.

Newman, whose feast day the Church celebrates on 9th October, read the fathers deeply, and not merely to extract theoretical propositions. He wanted to enter their world – to “see” divine worship as they saw it, to experience the prayers as they prayed them, to insert himself into the drama of the ancient arguments.

He immersed himself in the works of the fathers so that he could recount their stories in his brief *Historical Sketches*, in his book-length studies and, later, in one of his novels.

After decades of such labours, he concluded that “of all existing systems, the present communion of Rome is the nearest approximation in fact to the Church of the Fathers. Did St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose come suddenly to life, it cannot be doubted what communion he would take to be his own.”

An interesting thing had happened. Newman's study of the fathers of the Church had caused him to desire *The Church of the Fathers* (yet another of his book titles). He wanted to place himself in real communion with the ancients, with Athanasius and Ambrose. A notional or theoretical connection wasn't enough, and could never be. He wanted to move

out of the shadows of hypothetical Churches, based on a selective reading of the Church fathers, and into the reality of the fathers' actual Church.

In declaring Cardinal Newman a saint in 2019, Pope Francis has held up his life as worthy of imitation. And, in the matter of encountering the fathers, it should hardly be a burden.

Like Newman and his contemporaries, so many people today hold a lively curiosity about Christian origins. Many ordinary Christians would like to move beyond the rather petty pre-occupations of today's tenure-track historians and documentarians (gender and conflict, conflict and gender). They would like to find their own imaginative entry into the world of the Church fathers. They would like ‘Historical Sketches’ that were vivid enough to see with an attentive mind's eye.

And what would we see in the works of the fathers? What would we see as we gazed through the window provided by archaeology of early Christian sites? We would see many familiar sights and sounds, fragrances and gestures:

• **A Church gathered around the Eucharist.** This emerges most vividly, not only in the scriptures, but in the generation immediately after that of the apostles, the generation of the so-called apostolic fathers.

The document called *The Didache* (circa AD 48) includes the earliest Eucharistic prayers. Clement of Rome (circa AD 67) sets out the different roles of clergy and laity as they come together for Mass. Ignatius of Antioch (circa AD 107) describes the Eucharist as “the flesh of Christ” and treats the sacrament as the principle of the church's unity.

By the time we get to Justin Martyr (circa AD 155), we find a full description of the Roman Mass that's recognisable enough to be reproduced verbatim in the church's catechism today.

• **A Church that practices sacramental confession.** The fathers argued among themselves about whether the Church should be strict or lenient in dispensing penance – but none of them denied that this was the right and role of the Church and her clergy. The fathers heard confessions. They pronounced absolution.

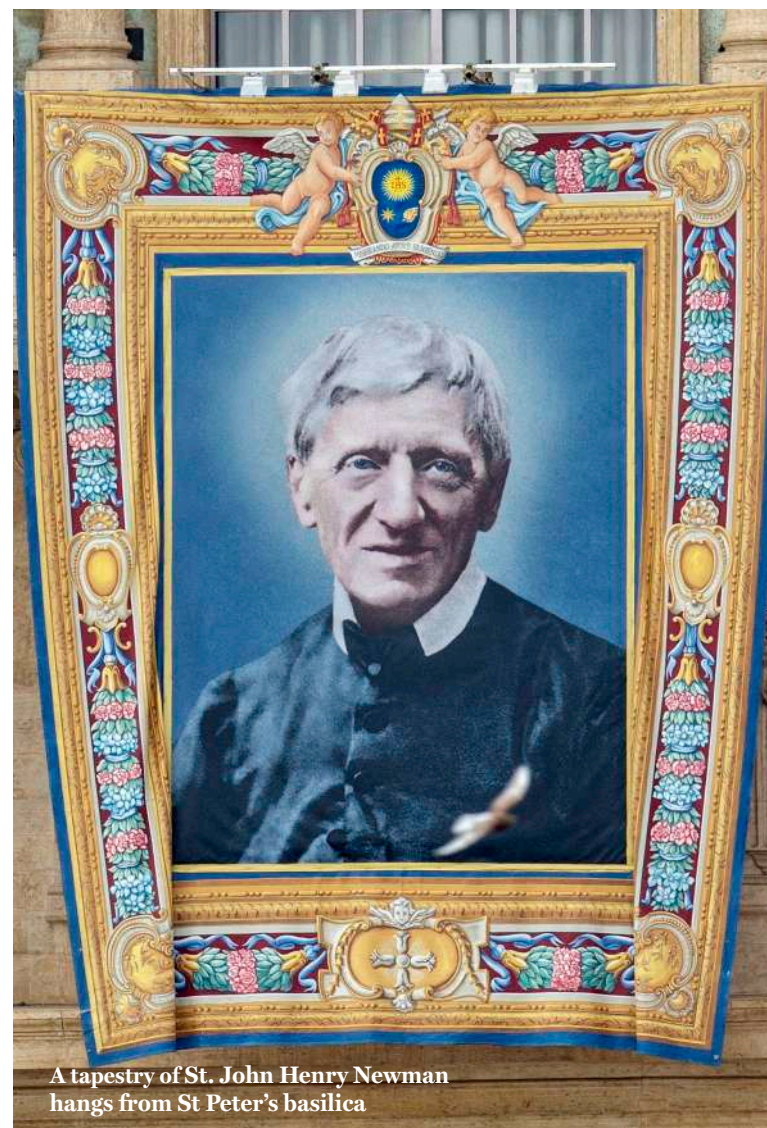
• **A Church whose members make the sign of the cross.** At the end of the second century, Tertullian spoke of the sign as if it were the hallmark of ordinary, everyday Christian living. Among his wife's beautiful qualities he mentioned the way she made the sign of the cross at night.

• **A Church whose members bless themselves with holy water.** The prayer book of St. Serapion of Egypt (fourth century) includes a blessing for holy water. Eusebius (late third century) describes the familiar font at the entrance to a church.

• **A Church with an established, sacramental hierarchy.** St. Ignatius of Antioch shows us that, as the first century turned over to the second, the order of the Church was already well established everywhere. As he wrote letters to various churches, he assumed that each one was governed by bishops, presbyters and deacons. He didn't explain this. He didn't argue for it. He just assumed it. At the turn of the next century, Clement of Alexandria also presented this order as traditional – an imitation of the hierarchy of angels in Heaven.

• **A Church that venerates the saints.** This shows up in the graffiti on the walls of the Roman catacombs. It shows up in the art of the cemeteries of the Fayoum in Egypt. It shows up in many lamps and medals and signet rings.

St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine wrote numerous homilies on the lives of the saints.



A tapestry of St. John Henry Newman hangs from St Peter's basilica

The most ancient liturgies invoke their intercession. This is especially true of the Virgin Mary, whose prayers are included in canonical collections by the early third century.

• **A Church that prays for the dead.** In the 100s, devotional literature describes votive Masses celebrated at gravesides. The earliest tombstones in Christian Rome ask prayers for the deceased. The prison diary of St. Perpetua (North Africa, early third century) includes a vision of purgatory – whose existence is explained theologically by Origen (Egypt, third century). At the end of the 100s, Tertullian describes prayer for the dead as already an ancient practice.

• **A Church with a distinctive sexual ethic and clear ideas about marriage and family.** The early Christians stood almost alone in their refusal to acknowledge divorce, to engage in homosexual activity, to procure or practice abortion, or to use contraception. Their view of sex as sacred made them a laughingstock in the pagan world, where sex was cheap and degrading, and people were, accordingly, miserable.

That's just a glimpse of the early Church, but it's enough to make it recognisable as Catholic. Nor did the fathers see their life as in any way opposed to scripture. Scripture and tradition coexisted in harmony because they had been received

from the same apostles. The New Testament shows us the apostles writing letters, yes, but also observing rites, customs and disciplines.

Moreover, the Church of the apostles pre-existed the New Testament and shows us that authority, for Christians, does not rest simply in the scriptures.

“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation” (2 Pt 1:20).

For the fathers, interpretation belonged to the Church and her bishops. St. Polycarp of Smyrna took that lesson well from his master, the Apostle John. In the middle of the second century, he wrote: “Whoever distorts the oracles of the Lord according to his own perverse inclinations, is the first-born of Satan.”

Polycarp's great disciple and doctor of the Church, St. Irenaeus of Lyons, made that one of the foundational principles of his multivolume work, *Against the Heresies*.

St. John Henry Newman knew that, standing apart from the Catholic Church, he was standing not with the Church of the fathers, but rather with the heretics.

So he came home, and his way – the way of the fathers – has been traversed by many non-Catholics since then.

**Mike Aquilina is executive vice-president of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology and the author of more than 70 books.**



## HEART OF THE MATTER

VIRGINIA BELL

# Ecological conversions of the animators

**Catholic environmentalist Virginia Bell, a Laudato Si' Movement (LSM) Animator, is calling for an 'ecological conversion' during Pope Francis' 'Season of creation'. Here she explains why**

With the Season of Creation now in full swing until 4th October, I wanted to take a closer look at what an 'ecological conversion' entails.

Pope Francis has some causes which are very close to his heart. Ecumenism and inclusivity, for instance. Tackling clericalism and environmental degradation are two more.

All of them matter, but the one I am concerned with here is ecological conversion. In fact, the Pope doesn't think that we can tackle environmental degradation, which has reached a critical stage, without undergoing an ecological conversion.

In his talk to young people in France in 2020, Pope Francis explained that his ecological conversion occurred during the eight years between 2007, when he attended the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Aparecida, Brazil, and 2015, when he wrote *Laudato Si'*: "From Aparecida to *Laudato Si'* was, for me, an inner journey, a journey of ecological conversion", was how he described it

He said: "There will be no new relationship with nature without a new human being". The human heart needs to be healed from its selfishness, its greed, its pride and its claim to be the master and despot of the world, he said. To him, an ecological conversion means the harmonising of thinking, feeling and doing, with tenderness imbuing all. He wants us to realise that our roots are interrelated with nature, because that realisation will encourage us to live in harmony with creation.

The Laudato Si' Movement (LSM)'s Animators – those people, mainly Catholics, who have taken the online course provided by LSM to educate and inspire action to tackle the environmental crises – have embraced ecological conversion.

Having looked at Pope Francis' personal interpretation of ecological conversion, I wondered what individual animators' interpretations of it might be. So I asked them.

John told me that *Laudato Si'* changed his life. Indeed, I think it changed all of our lives. He thinks that "any eco-conversion has to start with yourself and a serious

Pope Francis is pictured behind a sapling during a meeting in Rome, May 2022.



look at your home life".

Lockdown gave him the opportunity to clear out loads of stuff from his home, the sort of in-essentials that we all seem to amass. It also enabled him to start the practice of contemplating creation in his garden. This spiritual exercise has boosted his ecological conversion. He sees his tasks now as, among other actions, working to spread knowledge of the Encyclical and the Laudato Si' Action Platform in his parish and in wider communities.

Susan, like John, saw the positive side of lockdown, in that it provided an opportunity to pause and reflect on our lifestyles. It forced people to face the environmental crises and to realise that we humans, individually and en masse, are responsible.

She tells me that, through studying the LSM Course in 2020, she learned to read nature

and creation as a revelation of God. "The way I practise my religion now is totally different," she says. Her life has undergone "fundamental changes". Like John, she spends more time with nature, which has increased her sense of wonder "at the beauty and balance which exists there". To reduce packaging, she buys unwrapped fruit and vegetables, and to reduce her carbon footprint she is trying to eliminate meat from her diet. She has taken to cycling as a way of exercising while at the same time appreciating nature.

Martin shares John and Susan's feeling that connecting with nature is a priority for achieving an ecological conversion. He thinks we should make time every day to do this, to help us see God in everything.

Anne studied hard as a way to understand ecology and the natural environment, which she was deeply interested in, and she worked to help reduce poverty.

What sparked her ecological conversion was 'The Time is Now' lobby of Parliament in 2019.

She realised, for the first time, that poverty, life expectancy and environmental breakdown were the result of the climate and environmental crises, and that supporting overseas aid was tackling the symptoms, not the causes. The situation would not improve unless and until the climate and environmental crises were tackled. That was her ecological conversion.

She looked to her home life, as



**Let Justice and Peace Flow**  
Season of Creation 2023

Susan and John did, and, along with other changes, she reduced dairy consumption, cut out meat, insulated her house and reduced dependence on car transport. She has also taken the message to her parish and beyond.

Like more and more Catholics, she realises that more must be done, and that we need to join with others to take direct action. "We can't allow this degradation of our environment and loss of life to continue," she says.

Sean was attracted to nature by the Bristol Natural History Unit (he lives in Bristol). He began to notice the scarcity of wildlife in the nature reserves the unit filmed in their programmes. Then he noticed the alarming drop in insect numbers and species. His experience of an ecological conversion is that it never stops. It is always continuing and evolving.

To keep his spirits up, he occasionally visits areas in Scotland where wild bird and mammal species that are generally disappearing can still be seen and heard. And, as is the norm for an animator, he takes the Encyclical's message to his parish.

Menchu's eco conversion came slowly, bit by bit. She had always loved plants. When she was very young she lived in the Sahara Desert, so she learned from an early age how precious a resource water is. She learned about botany and ecosystems at university, but it was when she started studying German that she learned a lot about the eco-friendly things they were doing in Germany – home-composting, recycling etc – which started her on the same path.

When she lived in Spain she felt the climate and environment problems at first hand; water scarcity, droughts and fires. It was in England that her 'war' against plastics began, especially after she took the LSM Animators' Course in 2021. She now helps other animators find their way in the course.

So, her ecological conversion has been slow but sure, the result of following the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit – "the Holy Spirit has led me softly here". As with Sean, her conversion is still continuing.

Peter's ecological conversion started when the OU Course he took in 2009, 'Innovation: Designing for the Environment', opened his "heart and conscience for our abused ecology". When in the same year typhoon Ondoy devastated the north of the Philippines, Peter's home country, climate change became very real to him. Further typhoons swept over the country, firmly nailing his personal commitment to tackling the environmental crises.

He was involved in fundraising projects, but, like Anne, he realised that the cause of the problems needed tackling.

He started with changing his lifestyles. He switched to energy provider Ecotricity, reduced car journeys and changed to a much more plant-based diet.

After Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical on the care for our common home in 2015, the Laudato Si' Movement promoted the creation of Laudato Si' Circles around the world. These circles, where people pray, reflect and act together, very much attracted him. It took time, but eventually Peter was able to form a Laudato Si' Circle in his parish, and he now also actively campaigns in his wider community.

His ecological conversion took him many years, 12 or more, to reach his current stage of personal eco-journey.

For myself, I loved animals as a young child, which surely most children do, but hearing of no other people who felt as I did, I accepted the way of the world. Then, in 1972, or thereabouts, I saw a poster for a jumble sale on behalf of the Anti-Vivisection Society. After seeing this example of campaigning for justice, nothing could hold me back. And my campaigning embraced the natural environment, which is the home for all beings, and which people knew was being destroyed since the publication of the book *Silent Spring* in 1962.

My ecological conversion – or perhaps ecological confirmation would better describe it – can be stated as learning and living the lesson that you have to actively follow your eco-conscience, even if you think you are the only person in the world with your view.

“

*I have developed a sense of wonder at the marvels of nature... we can't allow this degradation of our environment and loss of life to continue”*



# UNIVERSE

## EDUCATION SPECIAL



*'Keeping your faith in education'*

### Inside...

**A Universe 10-page celebration of Catholic education**



**Educating the whole child is Ratcliffe way**

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**Inspectors' report delights college**

– pg 24



**Fine tradition of academic excellence**

– pg 26



**St Mary's University is on the rise**

– pg 30

## 'Muddy boots' ecologist hopes to let Laudato Si' flourish

**Universe Catholic Weekly talks to Professor Claire Ozanne, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University, as she looks forward to the challenge of leading one of the UK's four Catholic universities...**

Professor Ozanne gained her DPhil from Oxford University and her work has focused on habitats influenced by human activities, leading multidisciplinary projects in the UK, Australia, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Guyana.

Formerly the Deputy Director and Provost at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, and in 2017 seconded to be Principal at Heythrop College, she was a former Vice Provost at the University of Roehampton.

But the office is a long way from her academic roots... Professor Ozanne is a Professor of Ecology, which stemmed from an early interest born out of walks in the countryside with her family during which she was encouraged to explore and ask questions about the natural world. An inspirational school biology teacher and university tutor helped keep her on the same path.

Professor Ozanne said: "I was fortunate to be able to bring together my love of trying to understand how systems work and that of the outdoors – I often describe myself as a 'muddy boots' biologist."

She believes Catholic higher education institutions can play a role in implementing Pope Francis's encyclical Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home in several ways.

This includes integrating two of the Laudato Si' goals, Cry of the Earth and Cry of the Poor, through teaching and research; providing opportunities for students to engage in practical ways of living in harmony with the Laudato Si' goals and skills to advocate for them when they graduate; and for universities to minimise their footprint on the planet.

"As a field ecologist I am always aware of the interactions between ecosystems and people in terms of resource needs and conservation," Professor Ozanne said. "We need to provide solutions to the complex problems of stewarding our planet, and championing climate justice."

The university's ecumenical ethos is manifested in a connection to qualifications that serve the common good. This is reflected in recognition of the importance of education studies, teaching, health and social sciences, as well as the arts and humanities and their contributions to human flourishing.

Professor Ozanne said: "As vital as STEM subjects are, we need to acknowledge the

significance and contribution of theologians, historians, philosophers, writers, composers and many other scholars from the broad range of the arts and humanities subjects.

"We want to enable our students to be ready for the work of the world, as well as the world of work."

The move to virtual learning during lockdowns enabled thinking about offering education in different ways, particularly in terms of international, postgraduate education or professional development where there are opportunities for more flexible, hybrid and on-line learning.

There have also been longer-term effects on how research is conducted, with opportunities for new methodologies and international partnerships.

Professor Ozanne said: "All universities are challenged by the increased marketisation of higher education, our Catholic universities in England are relatively small and so not able to

take advantage of the economies of scale of large universities.

"Catholic universities in the UK have also to rise to the challenges of increasing secularisation, and a diminishing knowledge base and points of reference related to faith and Church in our communities."

Liverpool Hope is one of three universities within the world-famous city, and its areas of research strength in the humanities, environmental sustainability, Artificial Intelligence and future technologies complement neighbouring institutions John Moores and the University of Liverpool.

Local and regional Catholic primary, secondary schools and colleges are partners with Liverpool Hope's School of Education. They support trainee teachers on the university's initial teacher training programmes, providing high quality mentors and rich, formative learning experiences.

**Continued on page 22**

**Professor Claire Ozanne: "Catholic higher education has a vital role to play in implementing the pope's vision as laid out in Laudato Si' "**





# Ratcliffe College: A family-orientated community, in pursuit of all-round excellence

## Learning and Growing in the Light of the Gospel

Founded in 1847 by the Rosminian Fathers, Ratcliffe College is steeped in history and tradition. Set in 200 acres of beautiful grounds, students benefit daily by working and playing within a truly inspirational physical environment.

The College's inclusive Catholic ethos is complemented by the outstanding quality of the community through which the College's Mission, 'Learning and Growing in the Light of the Gospel', serves to nurture resilience and develop maturity. Young people leave Ratcliffe with a strong sense of who they are and their purpose in the world, equipped to make a difference to the communities in which they live and work.

Ratcliffe College has been judged 'Excellent' in all areas, following the recent Focused Compliance and Education Quality ISI Inspection, held in May 2022.

### Academic excellence

We are committed to getting the very best out of our students and provide every opportunity for them to exceed expectations, realise their full potential and achieve the highest grades possible.

With a winning combination of excellent teaching, small class sizes and state-of-the-art facilities, our pupils benefit from a rich learning environment and consequently attain significantly higher grades than predicted. In the summer of 2023, 81% of all A Level grades were A\*-C, 32% achieving A\*/A, with a pass rate of 99.5%.

**"Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and considerable willingness to participate across all areas of their education."**

ISI Inspection Report, 2022



### Co-Curricular programme

To succeed academically, we believe that young people need to grow and learn outside the classroom too. Our programme provides the perfect balance of academic and co-curricular activities. Pupils have the choice from an enormous range of clubs, societies and new experiences weekly. Our co-curricular programme revolves around the

'Big Six' – Chaplaincy, Sport, Music, Drama, Combined Cadet Force, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

### Outstanding facilities and campus

Ratcliffe College benefits from outstanding facilities and cutting-edge academic spaces, inspiring a love of learning for all. The college campus and facilities encourage students to

excel and provides a safe community and environment in which to live and grow.

The College's state-of-the-art facilities include:

- Sixth Form Centre, with a modern business café and independent study facilities
- Refurbished Boarding accommodation and communal spaces
- Indoor swimming pool
- Carbon-zero English Language Centre
- A £1.3 million Fitness Suite
- The tranquil Lockhart Garden
- Athletics Track
- High-performance theatre and music facilities
- Two sports halls
- Floodlit and all-weather pitches for tennis, rugby, hockey and netball

### Boarding at Ratcliffe

Our vibrant, warm and welcoming boarding community enjoys a strong international flavour, something that has long been part of the College's history. Students aged 11 and above can choose from full, weekly, regular, and occasional boarding, becoming part of a diverse boarding community.

Our boarders are supported by a dedicated pastoral team and enjoy a comprehensive programme of activities and excursions, arranged for evenings and weekends.

### Open Morning – Come and visit us

Our next Open Morning takes place on **Saturday, 23rd September, 9.30am – 12pm**. Prospective families and students will have the chance to visit the Nursery, Preparatory School and Senior School and Sixth Form.

You can reserve your place at our Open Morning at

<https://www.ratcliffecollege.com/visit/>

We welcome enquiries and visits to the school at any time during the school year. Please contact our Admissions team on 01509 817072 or visit

<https://www.ratcliffecollege.com/admissions/>.

*Ratcliffe College benefits from outstanding facilities*



## 'Muddy boots' ecologist hopes to let Laudato Si flourish

### Continued from page 21

The university also works to support the archbishop's and bishops' vision for multi-academy trusts, with representation on director and governing boards, and with research supporting Diaconal training, liturgical and children's music.

It also facilitates a local choir, gardening groups and works with residents' associations and churches to support community activities, as well as businesses and charities for the improvement of the Liverpool City Region.

Undergraduate and postgraduate international students come for full degrees or a semester abroad experience, some because of its Catholic roots and ecumenical ethos. They also come to the university from global partner institutions with Christian foundations and similar commitments to student-centred education and support.

Professor Ozanne said: "I believe that many choose Liverpool Hope because of its true sense of community.

"We are a university that knows its students by name. We are a smaller university than our fellow higher education institutions and this, combined with our ethos of educating students in the round means that we offer students a personalised educational experience that includes any academic or pastoral support that they need to get the most out of their time at university."

Ultimately, the new Vice-Chancellor's vision for the university is of a transformational education for students, continuing its excellent research into providing solutions to local and global challenges. It is also as an anchor institution in the North West, contributing to the development of a skilled, future-ready workforce, and for partnerships nationally and internationally to realise a more equitable society.

She said: "I also want to ensure that our values of faith, hope and charity, our strong sense of community and our ethos of educating and developing the whole person are embedded in what we do."

**"As Vice-Chancellor, I want to ensure that our values of faith, hope and charity, our strong sense of community and ethos of educating and developing the whole person are embedded in what we do..."**







Scan here to book  
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 Saturday 23rd September 2023

 9.30am - 12pm

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Achievement of pupils and academic development - **Excellent** ✓

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Encouraging **Big Ideas**



# Stonyhurst delight as it is rated 'Excellent' in all areas

**Inspectors offer particular praise for pupils' outstanding academic achievements, attitudes to learning and personal development**

**Stonyhurst College and its Prep School, Stonyhurst St Mary's Hall, have been awarded the highest possible rating of 'Excellent in all areas' following an inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).**

This latest report maintains its global reputation for outstanding teaching and care in the competitive independent school sector.

Stonyhurst underwent a comprehensive inspection of its teaching, pastoral care, facilities and extra-curricular provision in April 2023 as part of the regular inspection procedures for independent schools. The key findings of the report acknowledged the excellence of the school in every area under inspection.

The dedication of the school in fulfilling its aims and the outstanding achievements of the pupils in academic studies and attitudes to learning, in addition to personal development, were subjects of particular praise.

The report recognised the high standards of academic achievement of the pupils, stating that 'pupils of all ages and abilities display excellent attitudes towards their learning', and 'possess strong study skills and take an inquiry-based approach to their studies' with their academic and other achievements being 'wide and varied, and highly accomplished'.

Pupils were found to be 'highly articulate and speak with eloquence when addressing others'.

From a personal development perspective, the report documents that 'pupils of all ages show excellent levels of self-understanding'



STONYHURST  
COLLEGE

and 'show strong levels of perseverance when faced with challenges'. Pupils were found to 'demonstrate high levels of self-esteem'.

On global matters, 'pupils have a highly developed sense of social awareness; they are passionate about making a difference and fully committed to helping others through service and voluntary work', 'pupils have a strong appreciation for the multi-cultural nature and diversity of the school community', and 'the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy and, respect and tolerance of other people', a reflection of Stonyhurst's aim to develop men and women with a global outlook who can play a positive role in the world as outstanding people of the future.

**"The report recognised the high standards of academic achievement ... pupils were found to be highly articulate and speak with eloquence when addressing others..."**

**Click here for details on Stonyhurst Open days in September & October**



## Sacred Heart pupils just love to learn, says Ofsted

Ofsted has praised pupils at a Fenham Catholic primary school as 'eager to learn' and 'showing excellent behaviour'.

'Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. They are committed to developing pupils' character, values and behaviour,' says the inspection report for Sacred Heart Primary, part of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

"Leaders are ambitious, and want all pupils to achieve the best they can. They have designed a curriculum with reading at its heart. This helps pupils to be confident and fluent readers, ready for secondary school," the inspector adds. "A love of reading runs through the school. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and genres. Their choices are often inspired by story time and recommendations from teachers and peers. Leaders work with a charity that celebrates the world of children's books to select

thought-provoking and topical books for pupils to discuss," the report says.

Maths is also a strength of the school and teachers focus on developing mathematical language and reasoning skills.

Pupils also make positive contributions to the community, giving them the chance to be active citizens. A fundraising day to help a school in Malawi, and regular Canny Friday events to help the local food bank, were highlighted.

"Leaders develop pupils' skills and personal qualities beyond the academic curriculum. They encourage pupils to be responsible members of the Sacred Heart family of schools by showing excellent behaviour."

Overall it concluded, "pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards their learning."





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# Mount St Mary's continues its fine tradition of academic excellence



## Fantastic results at Mount St Mary's College

Students at the Mount are rightly celebrating excellent results for Summer 2023!

Headmaster Dan Wright said: "I am delighted that in a period where the press forecast significantly lower grades at the very top level, our performance at grades A\* and A was actually higher than last year. Our CTEC students also performed exceptionally well, with nearly half of all grades at Distinction level.

"My sincere congratulations to a cohort that has known so much disruption for their first set of public examinations!"

A-level economics students recorded a 100% A\* – C for their results, 80% of which were A\* – B. This feat was replicated in chemistry and English Literature students, with all candidates achieving between A\* – B in their exams this year.

70% of Maths students achieved A\* – B at Mount St Mary's, and students who took the

EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) should also be thrilled, as 75% achieved A\* – A and all received A\* – C in this course.

It's easy to see why the college is enormously proud of the results achieved this year. They were testament to the hard work of the students and the excellent teaching that they have received in preparing them for success.

### About Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall

We are a Jesuit, co-educational independent day school and nursery for children aged three to 18. We work to inspire a love of learning from the moment your child joins us, to the day they leave. From the classroom, to the sports track, from the extra-curricular, to the great outdoors, there's more to discover at the Mount.

Educating children in the spirit of the Jesuit ethos is fundamental to the way we care for and develop children to the best of their academic abilities, as well as encouraging their extra-curricular interests. We care for



the whole person – seeing each child as an individual and catering for each of their needs.

Our facilities mean children get to explore a vast range of subjects. Each site has its own swimming pool, science laboratories and expansive grounds, allowing children to pursue their passions and expand their interests, safely ensconced in the Derbyshire countryside.

Our pupils perform to a high academic standard and both our Senior and Prep schools have been featured in the Sunday Times top Independent Schools in the country.

While we are always striving for excellence, our school is a place full of laughter. Every corridor, every classroom emulates our

Mount Spirit, which is what make Barlborough Hall and Mount St Mary's truly wonderful places to be.

### Come and see for yourself

We truly believe the best way for you to experience the school, is to come and see for yourself. Discover more at our Open Events in September and October for school places in September 2024.

Register now at [www.msmcollege.com](http://www.msmcollege.com).

We very much look forward to welcoming you at Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall School, a place truly inspiring young hearts and minds to go forth and set the world on fire.

## Prayer garden bench fitting memorial to much loved priest

St Peter's Catholic Primary School in Warrington has unveiled a permanent new memorial to remember its much loved former parish priest, Fr John Gildea.

Fr John served as parish priest of St Peter and St Michael in Warrington from September 1998 until his death in October 2022 at the age of 84 following a short illness. He was just one year short of celebrating his diamond jubilee in the priesthood when he passed away. He was ordained in Upholland in 1963.

The new parish priest, Fr Mark Drew, led the service and blessed the bench, which sits in the school's prayer garden. An inscription on it reads: *'Father John Gildea, much loved and missed parish priest. He loved to hear the children pray and sing and we know he is watching over us'.*

After the blessing, the children sang *Our God Reigns*, which was one of Fr John's favourite hymns. They also sang the hymn at his funeral, which took place at St Oswald's in nearby Padgate.

After the blessing, headteacher at St Peter's, Helen Lea, said: "The children use the prayer garden for individual prayer, class collective worship and whole school collective worship. They can now sit on the bench and remember Fr John."







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# School praised for its 'oasis of calm where respect is guaranteed'

A Newcastle Catholic school provides an 'oasis of calm' where everyone is welcome and treated equally, according to its latest Ofsted report.

**Our Lady and St Anne's Catholic Primary School**, a member of the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, has high expectations of its pupils and an ambitious curriculum, said the inspector. "Pupils are polite, respectful and welcoming .... The behaviour policy supports particularly the most vulnerable pupils well. Behaviour is good. Pupils focus on their learning in class without distraction," the report adds.

"Leaders are working in partnership with the trust to develop an ambitious curriculum. The curriculum is clearly sequenced. Important knowledge and skills are mapped out to ensure that they are practised and revisited. Pupils develop their understanding over time and they remember what they have been taught," says the report. The school retained its 'Good'



Headteacher Samantha Henzell

status following the inspection, which does not give new grades to schools, but can recommend a re-inspection if needed.

The school has 236 pupils ranging in age from three to 11 and was graded as a Good school in 2020. It welcomes children from all faiths and those with none and has been awarded a School of Sanctuary recognising its inclusiveness and welcoming culture.

"The school provides an oasis of calm where pupils feel safe. The values of respect, tolerance, patience and kindness underpin the



school's ethos," the report says.

"Relationships with families are incredibly strong. Parents and carers describe staff as approachable. They value the good communication with the school and the support of staff," notes the

report.

A variety of after-school clubs, covering a range of interests from football to cookery, is offered, and the pupils are both happy and eager to attend school which prioritises reading for all children.

"Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively to access learning alongside their classmates. Adults provide extra support when needed. Teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' individual needs."

## St John Plessington lands prestigious conservation award

A Catholic school in the Wirral has won a prestigious award at the 2023 Chester Zoo Conservation School Awards after St John Plessington Catholic College, Bebington was named the Outstanding Conservation School – Secondary School.

The award marks how the school embeds conservation throughout its curriculum, with educational projects looking at conservation and sustainability.

St John Plessington was recognised by Chester Zoo for the clear voice that students hold.

"The importance of student voice is clear with extracurricular clubs



being involved in numerous campaigns," Chester Zoo said. "This includes the Chester Schools Sustainability Network; Chester

Zoo's School Takeover events and Youth Symposium with young people sharing what they have learnt about oceans, conservation

and fast fashion in particular. Campaigns in school have focused on encouraging pupils to think about their own behaviour and how small changes can make a big impact."

Members of the school's Junior Leadership Team work with students from the Eco Club and SJP Farm Club to explore environmental issues, with the award noting their strong speaking skills and leadership abilities.

The school's extracurricular clubs get involved in numerous campaigns, including Chester Zoo's School Takeover events.

Students' involvement with Youth Symposium sees them discussing topics like fast fashion, the ocean, and conservation as a whole.

Headteacher of St John Plessington Catholic College, Peadar McLoughlin, said: "We are thrilled to have been honoured with the 2023 Outstanding Conservation School – Secondary School award in recognition of our curriculum and the efforts of our fantastic students.

"Their passion for conservation and the work they have done to raise awareness about this at school and within the local community is inspiring."

Students from St John Plessington and St Bernard's schools – both part of the Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust – were recently filmed by BBC and ITV cameras at Chester Zoo's Takeover event, educating visitors about environmental issues such as plastic pollution and fast fashion.

Andy Moor, CEO of Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust, said: "We are dedicated to inspiring and transforming the lives of our students. As environmental issues unfortunately impact our planet at an alarming rate, we recognise that this will play a role in our students' lives, and we are committed to educating students on how this can be tackled. Congratulations to St John Plessington Catholic College."



**Mini Vinnies at Catholic Primary school St Philip Neri, Dunston, were delighted to welcome Ian Mearns MP to their school.**

**The Mini Vinnies had written to their MP regarding the cost-of-living crisis and invited him to hear what they were doing to support families – and so they could find out what the Government was doing to help people locally.**

**After giving Mr Mearns a school tour, they asked him many probing questions about how people can feel supported in these difficult times.**

**It was a great opportunity for advocacy – the children felt listened to and empowered to continue their good work.**

*Mr Mearns is pictured left (back left) with the Mini Vinnies.*





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# St Mary's University: committed to the Church's education mission

**St. Mary's aims to stand as a testament to the enduring relevance of a Catholic education**

**Originally founded in 1850, St. Mary's University, Twickenham is committed to the mission of the Catholic Church in higher education.**

Located in the heart of Strawberry Hill and close to central London, it seamlessly blends a London location with a beautiful campus, tradition with modernity, faith with reason, and knowledge with spirituality.

St. Mary's University's deep-rooted Catholic ethos is evident in every facet of its existence. It has established excellence in provision across a wide range of academic areas, highly-respected research centres and courses, pastoral care provision, partnerships and public engagement.

As an institution founded upon a committed Catholic identity and mission, it offers a unique educational experience that not only imparts academic excellence but also cultivates its students' holistic development. St.

Mary's University has some of the best student satisfaction ratings in London, was the largest riser of any university in the country in the most recent research rankings and is now ranked 51st in the *Good University Guide*.

At the core of its mission lies the belief that education is a transformative journey that extends beyond the classroom. St Mary's seeks to instil in its students a strong sense of social responsibility and an understanding of the common good. This resonates deeply with the values of Catholic social teaching, emphasising the dignity of every human being, solidarity, and care for the marginalised.

Through various 'service-learning' programmes and community engagement initiatives, students are encouraged to live out their faith in action, making a positive impact on society.

One of the hallmarks of St. Mary's University is its diverse theological courses and the provision of training and continuing professional development for teachers in both religious and secular schools, with special provision for those intending to teach in Catholic and other Christian schools.

It also has a wide range of Master's

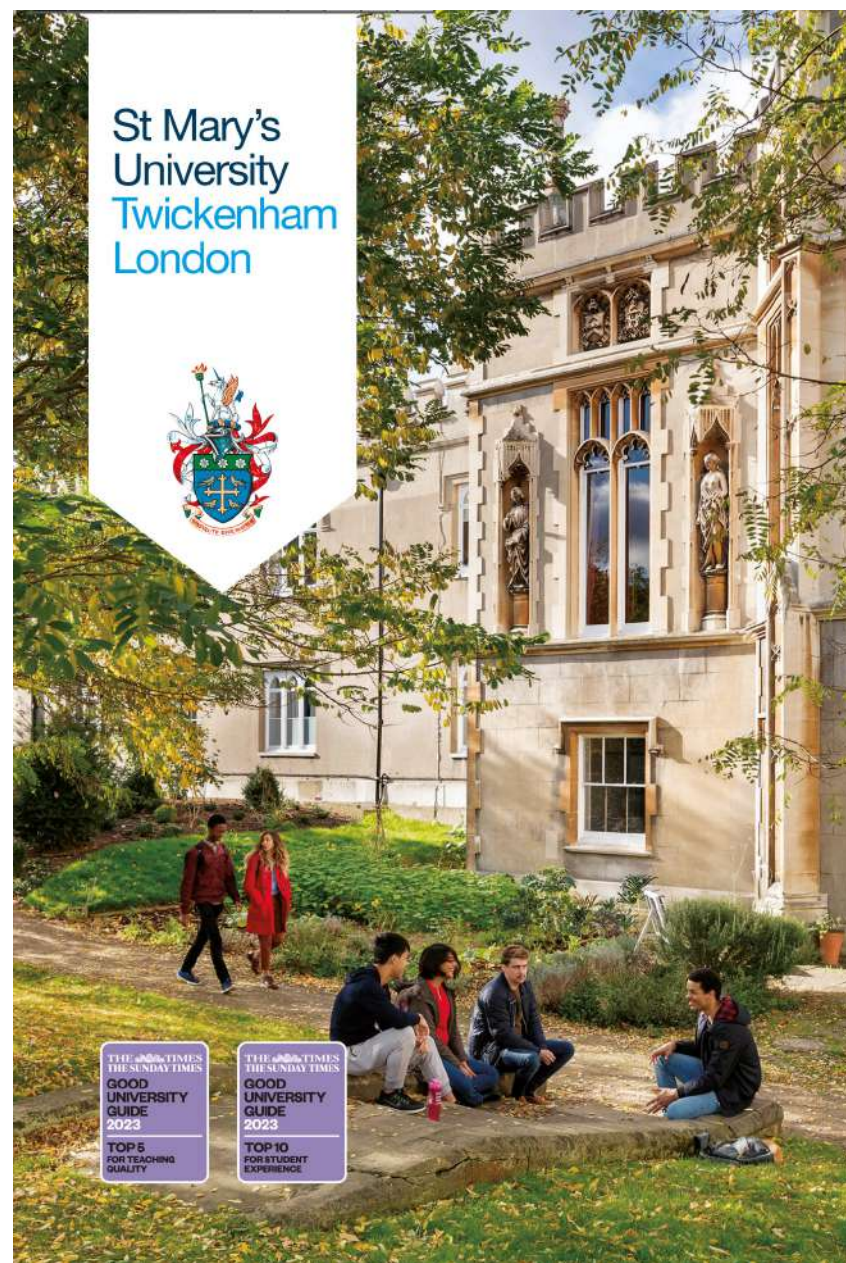
programmes, as well as opportunities for postgraduate research study (for example, PhD and professional doctorates in theology and education). Taught Masters' programmes in fields such as Christian spirituality, bioethics, Catholic social teaching, trafficking, education and social justice, and Catholic school leadership, as well as many others, can support the development of your faith and help you put your faith into action.

St Mary's also offers a Master's programme in Applied Catholic Theology at the Gillis Centre in Edinburgh. Most of these programmes can be undertaken with flexible approaches to learning.

Furthermore, the university's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its various disciplines beyond theology. Whether pursuing studies in sports, education, law, business, criminology, or many others, students are encouraged to integrate their faith with their chosen field of expertise, thereby becoming catalysts for positive change in their respective spheres.

In a world marked by rapid change and evolving societal norms, St. Mary's University Twickenham, London aims to stand as a testament to the enduring relevance of a Catholic education.

**"St. Mary's University has some of the best student satisfaction ratings in London and was the largest riser of any university in the country in the most recent research rankings ..."**



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## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

# The Ark of the Covenant

I recently came across a Gospel at Mass, an Old Testament story about King David moving the Ark of the Covenant to a special place he'd had prepared. It answered something that had been puzzling me for some time, and I wondered how many people had given, what I believe to be a puzzle, a great answer.

My problem was all to do with what I had been taught by the Sisters of Charity at St Joseph's primary school in West Melton, South Yorkshire and at the Catholic grammar school called De La Salle College in Sheffield. Sadly, both places no longer exist.

In very simple terms, we'd been told that God had made us a great promise, that if we want to get to Heaven when we die, then we must obey his Commandments.

I've always believed this, without any proof, but the Gospel I recently heard was, to me, a superb proof, even though on the face of it, it looks as if it has nothing to do with God's great promise.

I've realised for some time that the universe we live in is extremely complex and started with a tremendous outpouring of energy, scientists call the Big Bang. This resulted in the universe being made up of galaxies, which in turn are made up of solar systems, which in turn are made up of Suns with orbiting planets, moons, and debris. It's a very complex yet organised entity, governed by universal laws.



When trying to decide how it all came about, logic repeatedly told me that such a complex entity could not have been created by an accident of cosmic nature or accidentally in any way. The only true answer is that it was created by an extreme intelligence, which I believe is our one true God.

This reasoning brought with it a real problem. I could not believe that such a being would create anything which did not have a purpose, and I continually asked myself what purpose is there in creating the universe. I tried hard

to find one but couldn't.

The only answer I could come up with is that maybe *the introduction of life gave it a purpose, but how?*

I racked my brain for some time, but couldn't come up with any sort of logical or scientific answer. It was only when I looked at the Bible that I found one.

This book was initially written by Moses, a prophet of God, who with guidance from God, made the Egyptian Pharaoh set free the Israelite slaves. He also wrote about what had happened to the Israelites before this time, which were stories

handed down by them through time, by word of mouth.

After Moses, other prophets continued writing the history of the Israelites, all the way to the birth of Jesus Christ.

All these writings, even those handed down by word of mouth prior to Moses, had one important factor. This was God telling people how they should conduct their lives if they wanted to be rewarded with a great eternal life after their death.

When Moses was leading the Israelites to the Promised Land, one of the things that happened

was God giving him a list of rules that the people should obey during their daily lives. These were written in tablets of stone by God and are called the Ten Commandments. This was God's covenant with the Israelites. If they obeyed these commandments of his, they would live with him in paradise for all eternity when they died.

To the Israelites at that time these stone tablets were so sacred that God designed equipment for them to be carried in, which was called the Ark of the Covenant.

It was such a sacred container, that if people touched it they immediately died.

Only a special sect of the Israelites called the Levites was allowed to carry the Ark by using special poles. To me, **this covenant with God gives the creation of the Universe a purpose.**

The reason I say this is because of all life on earth, both animal and plant, only human beings have the intelligence enabling them to accept such a covenant. No other life force can understand it.

I was now happy that life gives existence a purpose, and the story of King David building a truly special place for the safe keeping of the Ark of the Covenant and its contents illustrated to me how these ancient Israelites realised their supreme importance as a covenant with God, made by God.

Ask yourself, do you try to live by this wonderful covenant created by God?

## JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



## The other 9/11

Mention the 11th of September, or 9/11 as it has come to be known, and your memory is likely to flash back to dust clouds filling the streets of Manhattan after the Twin Towers had been hit by hijacked aircraft, costing many innocent lives.

The reality of terrorist attack had come to New York City, and the world gasped.

Now go back to that same date, September 11th in 1973. This time to South America, and that narrow strip of land that runs like a ribbon from north to south of the west coast. The country of Chile and its capital Santiago in the shadow of the Andes.

There the presidential palace, home of Salvadore Allende, is

under attack by forces led by General Pinochet. He was to lead a military dictatorship for the next 13 years; cruel years of arrest, torture and killings.

Many fled the country or went into hiding. One person was Pablo Neruda, Chile's national poet who under threat of death was forced to leave the country.

Two fragments of Neruda's writing:

*"The books that help you most are those which make you think that most. The hardest way of learning is that of easy reading; but a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty."*

When soldiers came to search his apartment, his response was swift:

"Look around, there is only one thing of danger to you here, poetry."

I wrote these few lines in the December of that year.

### The Chilean Coup of last September

*I see you O my people in the streets and in the passageways of night. I see your frightened faces like posters, peeling from walls soon forgotten in the no-where time that follows the insistent knock upon the door.*

*I no longer hear your voices for a thousand hurting cries have filled my ears and echo still between my yesterday and your tomorrow.*



*I remember your September smells from years gone by.*

*Cannot forget the acrid smell of tear gas and exploding shells that cleared our city streets*

Pablo Neruda

*hiding the sun beyond a blackened sky.*

*And you ask me why I leave you when we shared our food together when you hid me in the daytime in the darkness of your cellar. And you ask me where I'm going as I rise above the mountains on a one way ticket eastward from my home.*

*I go from here to exile to try to put together the tired and troubled pieces of my mind.*

Two identical dates, years apart, two stories of violence in the city, both in need of reconciliation. Remember peace in time of prayer.



# We rise up when we follow Christ in our lives

**“Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.”**

## The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 16:24

The cost of discipleship cannot be avoided or toned down or filtered or softened. God knows we are all tempted to make a dash for cheap grace, to skirt the real issue of cross-bearing.

But, we cannot ignore the message in today's scripture, plain to be seen: “whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”

Jesus was concerned about the troubling direction of his popularity. Following the extraordinary miracle of the Transfiguration, the confidence of his followers, especially Peter, was boundless. They saw his star rising and they expected to rise with him too. They had everything to gain and nothing to lose by following such a miracle-worker.

This, they thought, was the dream of dreams; the good and wonderful life at its best.

Is it any wonder that Peter would hear nothing of Jesus's suffering and death at the hands of the chief priests and scribes? “God forbid,” Peter cried, “No such thing shall ever happen to you.” And, what was Jesus response? “Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

(Matthew 16:23).

The giddy enthusiasm of fair-weather friends turns on a six pence, and Jesus had to speak directly to the whole issue at hand in today's scripture. He absolutely insists that he and all who would follow him must take up the cross; must lose life in order to gain life. (Matthew 16:25)

Two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, who were spurned on by their mother, thought differently at the beginning of their ministry, and asked Jesus if they could expect to be rewarded by juicy promotions in his kingdom. Jesus rejected this notion of careerism in his kingdom, insisting that his disciples must deny themselves and follow him. No room for career promotions in the Lord's kingdom; only a life of self denial and loving service.

Our calling or vocation is to follow Christ, not to lord it over others in the name of Christ. Many people make the mistake of confusing career with vocation. A vocation is not a career. It is a way of life, and, for the Christian, that way of life is one modelled on the life of Christ.

Regrettably, few seem to appreciate this to the detriment of Christ's Church on earth.

Cardinal Gantin was the prefect for the congregation of Bishops at the Vatican. Upon his retirement he decried the curse of careerism among bishops who often



pressured him to promote them to bigger dioceses. Evidently, these bishops ignored or forgot the admonition of Christ against

careerism in his kingdom. How sad!

Following Christ is not about obtaining positions of honour or

authority in His kingdom; it is about embracing a life dedicated to loving one another as He has loved us.

## God catches us when we fall or stray from the path

### Gospel of John 21:19

The vocation of every Christian is to follow Jesus. By this, will people know that you are a true disciple.

The words, “Follow Me” in the gospel of John 21 : 19 were spoken by Jesus to Simon Peter after he asked him three times if he loved him. Simon Peter was not perfect. He loved Jesus but he had also denied him three times before his crucifixion.

Now, Jesus turns a bad situation into a good one. He rehabilitates Peter to his former relationship, not by recriminations but by love. And, Peter would go on to prove his love for the Lord by laying down his life for him.

Christianity is a way of life, it is an extraordinary love-affair rather than an ideology. This is something Pope Francis likes to emphasise. He is a pastoral Pope, in the tradition of the Second Vatican Council which emphasises the following of Christ over inane recriminations or disputations that divide rather than unite.

Jesus first called simple fishermen to follow him. These fishermen abandoned their nets and old lifestyles to follow the good news of Jesus's gospel. They put up with persecution, opposition, slander, imprisonment and much suffering in the exercise of their calling, but throughout their trials they remained faithful to Christ. Responding to that call was

difficult for them back then just as it is difficult for us today. But, they did it lovingly, and people, especially their enemies, took notice.

Like the early disciples, we may be led where we do not want to go. We will, like them, stumble like children who have



**The good news is that God has our back. He is always there, in good times and in bad... he is there for us...**

much to learn. But, the good news is that God has our back. He is always there, in good times and in bad, urging us along, teaching us, seeking us out and sometimes catching us out whenever we tend to stray from the path.

We are a privileged people to be called to follow Jesus who blesses us in our journey through life with His gifts of faith, hope and love. Faith in Him provides us with meaning; hope in Him provides us with purpose; and love of Him shows us the way. He is the Way ( Love ), the Truth ( Faith ), and the Life ( hope ) all wrapped up in one.

What more can anyone ask for in this life!



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# The enemy we all face is that of sin

10th September 2023 – 23rd Sunday, (A)

We have a moral obligation to correct blatant wrongdoing, whether in the family, the workplace or society. But it is incumbent on those who have others in their care to offer correction with love and respect. The old dictum, “hate the sin but love the sinner” is a good guideline in many situations, as is St Paul’s principle: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another.”

**Ezekiel 33:7-9: As a preacher, Ezekiel has the responsibility to warn sinners to repent**

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows, “You, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, “O wicked ones, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.”

**Responsorial: Psalm 94:1-2, 6-9**  
R./: *If today you hear his voice!  
Harden not your hearts.*

*Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;  
hail the rock who saves us.  
Let us come before him, giving thanks,  
with songs let us hail the Lord.  
(R./)*

*Come in; let us bow and bend low;  
let us kneel before the God who made us  
for he is our God and we  
the people who belong to his pasture,  
the flock that is led by his hand.  
(R./)*

*O that today you would listen to his voice!  
‘Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as on that day at Massah in the desert when your fathers put me to the test;  
when they tried me, though they saw my work.’ (R./)*

**Romans 13:8-10: Paul condenses all the commandments into “love one another”**

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You



Jesus said to his disciples, “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.

shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

**Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20**  
**Fraternal correction within the Christian family**

Jesus said to his disciples, “If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the Church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

**Where the buck stops**

In recent years, disclosures about paedophile priests have shocked and dismayed many Catholics. Old priests with long experience of dealing with sinners and their sins, with all their sordidness, were known to have broken down and wept. That a fellow-priest betrayed

his sacred trust with the most innocent of all victims, a child, was beyond their comprehension. What angered people most of all was that his superiors knew about his child abuse aberration for years. How many victims might have been spared had those superiors removed him from ministry.

This issue is clearly linked to today’s Gospel where Christ said to his disciples: “If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother.” Then there is a further process if he does not listen, and finally, “if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.” One wonders whether Christ had anything as heinous as child-abuse by a disciple in mind, when he gave them those practical instructions.

Ironically some who preach against permissiveness can be guilty of its grossest forms. Permissiveness, with its tragic consequences, is symptomatic of our times. From bishops to bosses, politicians to policemen, parents to teachers, “passing the buck” is rampant. We want the privileges of power without its burdens. We shy away from problems, cast a blind eye, shirk the responsibility to speak out. And when the scandal leaks out we want to claim we didn’t know. But such ignorance is rejected in Ezekiel where the Lord says: “I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel.” And he went on to state plainly: “If you do not warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then I will hold

you responsible.”

American President Harry Truman had a card on his desk in the White House declaring THE BUCK STOPS HERE! This message would fit in any office where people are “their brother’s keepers.” But nowhere would it fit better nowadays than on the kitchen mantelpiece, with its four simple words pointing straight at us like an accusing finger. For people with others in their care, the main task is not to be popular but to be of help. And we help most by accepting our responsibility.

**The watchman should warn**

The homilist might take a leaf from Ezekiel’s book. This prophet borrowed an image from war and its threat to national survival. He knows that a people under threat needs its sentries. The real threat that sentry Ezekiel sees, is not an attack from without, but failure of the community from within, a breakdown that leads to death. The danger that he must warn about is the threat of sin. This warning of Ezekiel is not directed to the community as a whole but to the individual within it. Individual responsibility takes on a new force in his message.

Our own era too is preoccupied with problems of national and international peace and security. For us, the watchman on the city wall is no longer a sufficient form of security. Our world leaders feel the need of sophisticated ‘early-warning’ devices, so that our peace hangs upon a balance of terror. The threat of our times is no longer the

fall of a city but a holocaust.

When Ezekiel preached he was a prisoner in enemy territory and he could warn that it was not external force, but the enemy within, that is the real threat to life – that enemy is sin, the abandonment of God. It is the prophetic role of the Church to continue this preaching (even if its voice is treated like something coming from foreign soil.) The gospel of Christ is that life and peace come from faith in God and the doing of his will. This gospel calls us to repentance but is no mere denunciation of sin. Christ brought the gift of reconciliation and life. One might develop this further by reflecting on how we as a community can be a sign of what we preach, a repentant community that has found the life and peace offered by Christ.

A reconciled community: Today’s readings confront us with two aspects of the question. First, the need for a sense of individual responsibility in the way of conversion. Ezekiel certainly made it clear that the individual is addressed by the Word of God calling for repentance. There is no way out of this.

But all of this should not be seen simply in terms of what the individual owes to the community. The whole Church is called to be supportive of each person who seeks reconciliation. This is especially important in a world where so many people feel threatened by the alienating force of impersonal state structures. The Church is not called to be mega-corporation.

Individuals who are perplexed by their own failures or the weakness of others, need a community that does not drive them further into isolation but one which calls them through forgiveness and love into fellowship. Living in this fellowship does mean that we owe debts to one another, and as Paul reminds us today the only obligation that ultimately counts is the debt of love we owe one another.

This reconciled community will be an effective sign to the world not because it creates a superficial harmony, but because it faces the reality of sin in itself. It finds forgiveness as the solution to this threat. Renewal of the ministry of reconciliation in the Church takes the form of communal services of penance, linked to the celebration of the sacrament. This is an effective way of bringing home to people that all sin effects the community and reconciliation must include the community.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

JENNA MARIE COOPER



# Priests are only human so of course, they can get it wrong sometimes

## Q: Can priests be wrong?

A: Taking your question at simple face value—yes, of course priests can be wrong! Priests are mere human beings, not all-knowing demigods or supercomputers running on perfect algorithms. And no priest is going to be an expert in all areas of knowledge. Like the rest of us, priests can and will be wrong about at least some things some of the time.

Priests do receive quite an extensive training in graduate-level theology, so, in general, when a priest explains Church teaching, he is speaking as qualified professionals in his field.

Many priests have roles of authority (like, for example, running a parish) which empower them to make practical decisions. So even if we believe that our priest is “wrong” in his prudential decision-making in a given instance, it may nevertheless be a choice the priest is legitimately able to make.

We Catholics also have a concept of “papal infallibility,” which means that the Pope is protected from error in certain very specific circumstances, namely when he “proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals” (See *Lumen Gentium*, 25). That is, the Holy Father is infallible when he specifically and deliberately raises some aspect of established Catholic teaching on faith or morals to the level of infallibility. But this is a rare occurrence; the last time it happened was in 1950 with the proclamation of the dogma of Mary’s Assumption. There is no belief that the Pope would be infallible in areas unrelated to faith or morals.

## Q: Is it a sin to go to a sports match and wish bad things for the other team?

A: I suppose that depends on what is meant by ‘bad things’. It’s not a sin to go to a football match and hope – or perhaps even pray – that our preferred team would win. And naturally, prayer for the victory of one team implies our hope that the other team would lose.

The other team potentially losing is a ‘bad thing’ that is baked into the very nature of the game as a possibility, so hoping that our team



Mass is livestreamed on Facebook. ‘Acts of spiritual communion are meant as a way for those who cannot receive communion at a particular point to try to “bridge the gap” between their current circumstances and their desire to receive Jesus sacramentally.’

will win, even at the expense of the other, is entirely legitimate.

However, it would be wrong to harbour a wish or a desire for anyone’s serious and real harm. It likely would be a sin to, for instance, hope specifically that the star player on the opposite team sustains a career-ending injury, or that some other tragedy would befall the team or its players.

**Q: The lockdowns from a few years ago led to a rise in online Masses. We’ve been wondering about the wording in the prayer used for those who attend Sunday Mass virtually. The phrases: “Come AT LEAST spiritually into my heart” and “I love You AS IF You were already there” don’t reflect good theology. Don’t we believe that the Bible and our faith assure us of God’s constant presence and unconditional Love? Please address this question, since it is used by most parishes every weekend.**

A: The prayer you mention sounds like what would be traditionally called an act of “spiritual communion.” That is, it’s a prayer that is meant to be said by those who would like to be receiving Jesus in the blessed sacrament, but who are unable to do this for whatever reason. It makes sense that this prayer would be said specifically for the benefit of those who are watching the Mass via livestream, since those who are

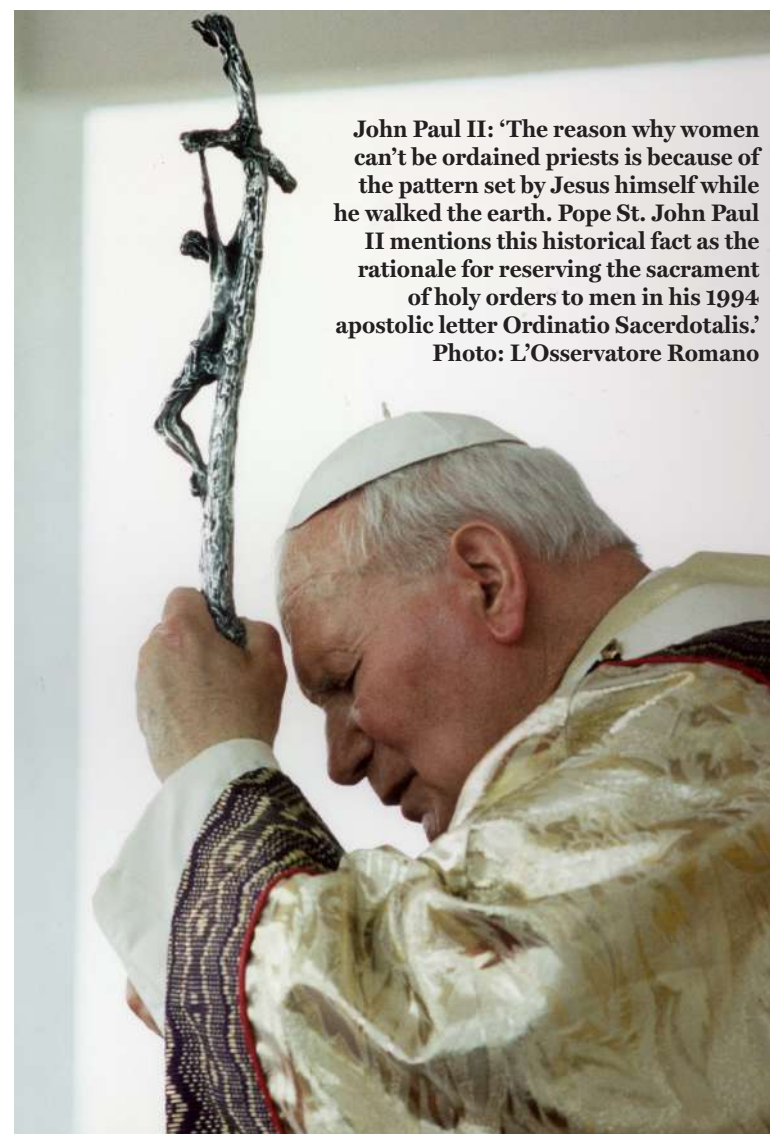
not present at Mass are obviously not able, in that moment, to receive communion in the same physical way that most of the assembled congregation would be.

A prayer of spiritual communion is not meant as a global theological statement on God’s omnipresence in general. God is, indeed, present always and everywhere, and he loves us unconditionally no matter where we are. It’s not as though God is somehow absent from us unless (or until) we say a certain prayer.

Yet at the same time, as Catholics we believe in the doctrine of the “real presence,” meaning that the prayers of consecration at Mass literally turn the offered bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. Because the bread and wine become Jesus’ body and blood, we believe that during the Eucharist He becomes present to us in a uniquely intense and physical way; and that, on an individual level, his presence to us is especially intimate when we personally receive him in holy communion.

Acts of spiritual communion are meant as a way for those who cannot receive communion at a particular point to try to “bridge the gap” between their current circumstances and their desire to receive Jesus sacramentally.

You could look at a spiritual communion as a way of making ourselves especially open to God’s constant presence.



John Paul II: ‘The reason why women can’t be ordained priests is because of the pattern set by Jesus himself while he walked the earth. Pope St. John Paul II mentions this historical fact as the rationale for reserving the sacrament of holy orders to men in his 1994 apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.’  
Photo: L’Osservatore Romano

## Q: Why does the Church not allow women to be priests?

A: The reason why women can’t be ordained priests is because of the pattern set by Jesus himself while he walked the earth. Pope St. John Paul II mentions this historical fact as the fundamental rationale for reserving the sacrament of holy orders to men in his 1994 apostolic letter ‘*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.’

The original 12 apostles were the first bishops; the priesthood is deeply connected to and flows out from the office of bishops. All bishops start as priests, and only a bishop can ordain new priests. We know from scripture that Jesus called only men to be apostles. As several saints and scholars have noted over the centuries, Jesus didn’t even call Our Lady to be an apostle, even though, after Jesus, she was the holiest person ever to be born.

Of course, some people say that Jesus was only following the customs of his time in calling only men to ordained ministry. But Jesus was truly God, so if he wanted to call women to the priesthood, he certainly would have had the power to do that.

We also have many instances in the Gospels where Jesus did treat women as equals, even when the culture of his time would not have seen women this way. For example,

in chapter 10 of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus encourages Mary (sister of Sts. Martha and Lazarus) to sit at his feet as a student, at a time when ordinarily formal studies were considered something proper to men. And St. Mary Magdalene was the first witness of the Resurrection—even while women, under Jewish law at the time, could not be witnesses in formal court cases.

Some argue that it’s not fair for men to be able to be priests when women can’t. But priesthood—and really, any position in the church—is not about power or prestige, but about service to others. Priests are priests so that they can serve the rest of the church, not so that the church can serve them.

Even though Jesus’ actions are the reason why we can’t have women priests, professional theologians sometimes make educated guesses on why Jesus may have made that choice. There are a lot of really interesting writings out there on the idea that men and women have different but equal and complementary vocations in the church, even if these writings are not official church teachings at this point.

**Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist. Send your questions to [CatholicQA@osv.com](mailto:CatholicQA@osv.com).**



## SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



# The sense of the sacred: a return to the faith of our Fathers

In a talk that I have just recorded in a series that I am giving on prayer, I tell how, as the director of the diocesan retreat and conference centre in London, I handed out an anonymous questionnaire to priests who attended the courses from 1972 to 1981. I was horrified to discover that no priest at all had any training in personal prayer. There were no exceptions and my findings were confirmed over and over again when lecturing in Rome on mystical theology and on my travels in subsequent decades as a travelling lecturer.

This is not only how the sense of the sacred has been lost but how so many of our priests have been lost too, to the terrible hurt and irreparable harm of so many innocent men, women and children.

The sense of the sacred in the Catholic Church is the external expression or manifestation of the inner life of prayer, where God is encountered. Take that away then the sense of the sacred is lost.

I do not just mean in what are sacred places, objects, or liturgies, but in people too; people made in the image and likeness of God. Without prayer they soon just become, objects to be used, abused, or ignored.

## The Heresy of Quietism

Profound prayer to contemplation was taken out of Catholic spirituality over 400 years ago as a direct result of the condemnation of a seriously flawed form of pseudo-mystical prayer called Quietism. Its founder was a Spanish priest stationed in Rome called Molinos. He and his false mysticism was condemned in 1687 and he was given a life sentence. In order to experience what St Teresa Of Avila called the prayer of the Cross in her masterwork *Interior Castle*, his followers were taught to do absolutely nothing in prayer, but to be quiet. If temptations came they were still taught to do nothing.

The consequences were that Molinos' followers were led into a practical Protestantism and gross sexual sins. People who regularly perform seriously sinful acts can become porous to evil and the consequences can be literally diabolical. These consequences were detailed at his trial, as described by Monsignor Ronald Knox in his book *Enthusiasm*.

## Mystical theology lost

In the aftermath of the condemnation of Quietism all



'For a hundred years or more after the Council Of Trent the Tridentine Mass in all its glory was the centre of a new Catholic renewal as part of the Counter Reformation. It was satellited by a profoundly mystical spirituality in which mystical prayer was seen as its consummation and its summit.'

forms of prayer that had the slightest whiff of Quietism about them were understandably condemned. The profound teaching of mystical theology that had been the heart and soul of Christianity from the beginning was taken out of Catholic prayer, and so therefore was the experience of divine love. In future, personal prayer was never allowed to develop to the experience of mystical contemplation for fear that Quietism may return. The works of St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila were quietly hidden away.

A little slogan was coined to warn the faithful against any such occurrence in future: 'Mysticism begins in mist and ends in schism'.

The consequence of the fear of false mysticism was that 'the baby was thrown out with the bathwater'. In short, true mystical prayer in which the love of God was experienced was all but cancelled and cancelled permanently.

## The sense of the sacred deteriorates

Over subsequent centuries the sense of the sacred in our Catholic faith has gradually deteriorated. Further to this, the experience of God's love was never allowed to develop in the lives of priests and religious, who took vows of chastity, so the consequence was that so many have turned to illicit love instead. St Thomas Aquinas said that if we do not experience the love of God, then we will seek

substitutes elsewhere.

In order to try to rectify this I am at the moment running a free course on **Prayer for The Essentialist Press**. The first talk will be available for all in a weeks' time; see website details below.

I have discussed these matters and the remedy in my latest book – *The Primacy of Loving – The Spirituality of the heart* – which takes us back to the teaching and practice of our most ancient and hallowed teaching on prayer.

Instead of trying to remedy the situation, the Church in Rome at the moment is trying, not just to play down and grant mercy to sexual abusers but, at the forthcoming Synod, to sacralise what only a few years ago was considered gross sexual behaviour.

The solution to both the problem of the loss of the sense of the sacred and the loss of chastity among the clergy, is back to prayer. That is why I am running this free course sponsored by The Essentialist Press. If the family of the new remnant are going to stay together then they must learn to pray together, because our Saviour is not some woke and wanton wisdom of the world, but the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ and a renewed prayer life that opens us to receive it.

## A century of mystics

For a hundred years or more after the Council Of Trent, the Tridentine Mass in all its glory was the centre of a new Catholic

renewal as part of the Counter Reformation. It was satellited by a profoundly mystical spirituality in which mystical prayer was seen as its consummation and its summit. Monsignor Ronald Knox put it this way in *Enthusiasm*: 'The 17th century was a century of mystics. The doctrine of the interior life was far better publicised, developed in far greater detail than it had ever been in late-medieval Germany or late-medieval England. Bremond, in his *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, has traced unforgettably the progress of that movement in France. But Spain too, the country of St Teresa and St John of the Cross, had her mystics; Italy also had her mystics who flourished under the aegis of the Vatican. Even the exiled Church in France produced in Father Baker's *Sancta Sophia* a classic of the interior life' (Chapter XI page 232).

This is the profound spirituality that nourished our forefathers in penal times when it meant death to celebrate this sublime Mass for the faithful. And those who welcomed priests into their home to celebrate Mass were sentenced to death while those who refused to forsake the Mass and attend the local Anglican service and receive communion had to pay a fine of £20. This was an enormous sum of money in those days, more like £2,000. Those who refused were thrown into prison where many died in terrible unsanitary conditions. The block house prison

at Hull where the Anne Family from Padley Hall were incarcerated was perhaps the most feared of all, for the prisoners were soaked twice a day with the incoming tide. At high tide the salt water came up to their necks., Even the rats would not stay there.

## The faith for which our forefathers suffered and died

Today we all too easily take for granted their faith from which our forebears suffered so grievously. It is time to unite in the faith of our Fathers, for all the signs are that we are about to be asked to forsake the faith of our fathers for a new form of orthodoxy, that seems prepared to bless the woke and wanton wisdom of the world.

This so called new orthodoxy makes a mockery of the Faith of Our Fathers, to which we must return without delay.

Find out more about David's teachings at <https://www.davidtorkington.com>

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



# Mummy's all gold - and it will keep her happy for centuries to come

HISTORY

**Maiken Mosleth King**



**Archaeologists have discovered a mummy wrapped in gold – here's what it tells us about ancient Egyptian beliefs**

In January 2023, a group of archaeologists excavating tombs in the ancient necropolis of Saqqara, near Cairo, discovered the mummified remains of a man named Hekashepes, who lived circa 2300BC. Found inside a limestone sarcophagus in a burial shaft, the body and its wrappings are unusually well preserved for the period.

In the 5th century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus described the elaborate way Egyptians preserved their dead. The brain was removed through the nostrils with a hook, while the inner organs were removed through a cut in the abdomen.

The cut was then stitched up and the body rinsed with wine and spices. The body was left to dry in a natron solution (a substance harvested from dry lake beds and used to absorb moisture) for up to 70 days. After this period, it was carefully wrapped in linen bandages and finally laid to rest inside a coffin.

By the time Herodotus wrote this, Egyptians had been practising mummification for more than two millennia, gradually perfecting the technique through experimentation.

The pre-dynastic mummies of the fourth millennium BC were so well preserved by the dry desert sands – without human intervention – that their tattoos are still visible. The earliest attempts to replicate this outcome by artificial means were less effective so Hekashepes represents an early example of successful preservation.

## Why did ancient Egyptians mummify their dead?

Egyptians had long observed that bodies interred in graves without direct contact with the drying sands tended to decompose and sought to prevent this for religious reasons.

Without a physical body to which it could return, they believed the Ka (soul essence) could not partake in food offerings brought to the



The temples and pyramids of Saqqara

cemetery and was instead left to roam the world of the living as a harmful spirit.

Mummification techniques were developed in order to preserve the body for the Ka. The earliest methods, which emerged no later than the time of state unification circa 3100BC, involved wrapping the body with resin-soaked linen bandages. However, as the intestines were left in place, the body eventually decomposed.

The lack of preserved human remains from this early period means that archaeologists have limited data on demographics, population health, life expectancy and diet. For this reason, the discovery of Hekashepes' remains is highly significant.

Scientific examination of the body will provide important insight

into the mummification techniques used. Scientific analysis of the skeleton and teeth might also shed light on where Hekashepes grew up, what kind of food he ate, his health, his age and the cause of his death.

## How was Hekashepes preserved?

Hekashepes' arms and legs had been individually wrapped to give the body a life-like appearance, and the head was painted with eyes, a mouth and dark hair. More striking, however, are the gold leaves that had been carefully applied to give the illusion of golden skin.

According to Egyptian beliefs, gold was the colour of the gods, and gilding the bodies of the dead expressed the idea that they acquired divine qualities in the afterlife.

As such, Hekashepes' loved ones could take comfort in knowing that he would be reborn and rejuvenated in the afterlife, enjoying his favourite food and drink with the gods for all eternity.

## What does the discovery teach us?

The archaeologists who uncovered Hekashepes' sarcophagus also discovered, in a nearby tomb, a group of well-preserved limestone statues depicting men, women and children. These images, which only the wealthy could afford, were made to accompany burials as "reserve bodies" for the Ka to inhabit.

The beautiful statues, on which paint is still visible, depict men with athletic bodies and reddish-brown skin. The women are curvy and pale. Both sexes are depicted with luscious dark hair.

The images reflect gender roles in which men took on active roles in the public sphere, while women stayed indoors and looked after the home. Some of the statues depict women engaged in domestic tasks like grinding grain and baking bread, demonstrating the importance placed on women's labour in the household.

The statues of married couples depict the husbands and wives

affectionately linking arms. Some are shown with their children standing or kneeling by their feet.

The images of married couples and families emphasise the importance of the family as the basic social unit in ancient Egyptian society. Kinship ties were maintained in death and the living had an obligation to provide food offerings to sustain their relatives in the afterlife.

The Egyptians believed that, in return for the offerings, the dead could be called on for assistance. They could also act as intermediaries between the living and Osiris, the divine ruler of the underworld.

Although it is easy to get the impression that the ancient Egyptians were obsessed with death, the care with which they treated their dead reveals a love for life and a sincere hope of continued existence after death.

The discovery of Hekashepes' body gives us hope that more well-preserved human remains from the period will come to light and increase our understanding of life in the age of the pyramids.

**Maiken Mosleth King is a Lecturer in Ancient History, University of Bristol**



*The images of married couples and families emphasise the importance of the family as the basic social unit in ancient Egyptian society... kinship ties were maintained in death and the living were obliged to provide food for the afterlife*



# Amid the pride and the tears, what's next for women's football?

SPORT

**Beth Clarkson**

**Lionesses returned home from the World Cup with pride – but here's what the FA needs to do to win with the stars of the future**

England was rightly proud when its footballers reached the 2023 Women's World Cup final, even if they were left deflated by the defeat to a Spanish side who were tactically intelligent and dominant in possession.

But vocal support for the Lionesses was unwavering as the minutes counted down and devastation looked increasingly likely. Scenes from watch parties across the country on that Sunday morning showed fans full of passion. They roared when goalkeeper Mary Earps saved a potentially game-killing second-half penalty and held their breath when star performer Alex Greenwood received medical attention. The support received for England's World Cup journey was nothing short of phenomenal.

But now the dust has settled on the World Cup, the question has to be, what's next for women's football? How can the country capture this enthusiasm and excitement to push the game in to the next level?

As my colleagues and I have recently found from research, greater visibility for the women's game leads to more scrutiny – and more pressure on those in charge.

Those in leadership positions in women's football at the Football Association should now turn their attention to building on this support, keeping interest in women's football high – and most importantly, giving England's women the best chance of going one step further at the next World Cup and the one after that.

## Winning with kids?

The Spanish team was defined by their youth – they were the youngest team to reach a Women's World Cup final since 1995. But England were a young team too. Their average age of just under 26 years makes them the youngest England squad to reach a major



tournament since 2009.

On the face of this, it seems that both countries have a bright future as these players develop in experience. But the best national teams in the world are consistently successful at youth as well as senior levels.

This demonstrates the strategic importance of a talent pipeline, and with it the quality of talent identification and player pathways in the domestic women's game. The Spanish women's team are current holders of the under-20 Women's World Cup title and have won the last two under-17 Women's World Cup tournaments. Spain star Salma Paralluelo has won both these competitions, and now the World Cup too.

Many of the women in England's team have stories of adversity overcome on their path to become professional footballers: low wages, travelling to remote training facilities and working multiple jobs. Making the path to becoming a Lioness smoother and focusing on developing young talent will be vital.

Keeping girls playing football is the first step. Before the Lionesses' Euro 2022 win, only 63 per cent of schools in England offered equal

access to football for both boys and girls. Following an open letter from the tournament-winning England squad, the Government pledged equal access. England's injured captain Leah Williamson recently published a book aimed at persuading girls to keep following their passions.

The second step is ensuring the structures that girls play in best supports a senior career in professional women's football. Training environments vary a lot between clubs, but girls in club academies will generally train once or twice a week and play up to one competitive fixture each week.

## Investing in youth

This is a far cry from the men's game, where boys will train and play far more regularly. They receive high quality sport science support to help them train effectively. The long-term strategy of the Premier League's elite player performance plan (EPPP) has improved the quality and consistency across audited men's academies over the past ten years to become a world-class youth development system.

While the levels of investment might be vastly different, there are



Mums backing the game: Left, Leanne Judge with her daughter Sophie and above, Kimberley Grundy with her daughter Alice.

Both of the young girls are goalkeepers, and their mums said the performance of England World Cup star Mary Earps (below) would have a "huge impact" on inspiring the pair to carrying on playing in goal.



strategic principles that the women's game can learn from the men's.

Shortly before the Women's World Cup, the Football Association announced 20 club licences were being awarded to some Women's Super League and Women's Championship clubs under a new player pathway named FA professional game academies. These will replace the current Women's Super League academies.

Clubs have been awarded either a Category One licence, meaning that the FA will support the development of two age groups, or a Category Two licence (one age group supported).

The revamped pathway offers some youth level consistency at the very top. It is a fantastic step in the right direction to support high-performing players who come from the FA's Emerging Talent Centres into women's academy football.

But with only 20 clubs signed up, my fear is that this investment and change doesn't go far enough.

My latest research with colleagues shows women's football in England is at a crossroads. Revenue is increasing – but so is debt. Strategic improvements to domestic governance,

commercialisation and financial sustainability are needed. But as well as improving the professional game, more attention must be paid to the youth system.

Unless there is an overhaul of the youth development system in the women's game, stories of adversity in our Lionesses will continue – and our ability to consistently produce international tournament-winning squads at youth and senior levels will by no means be a given.

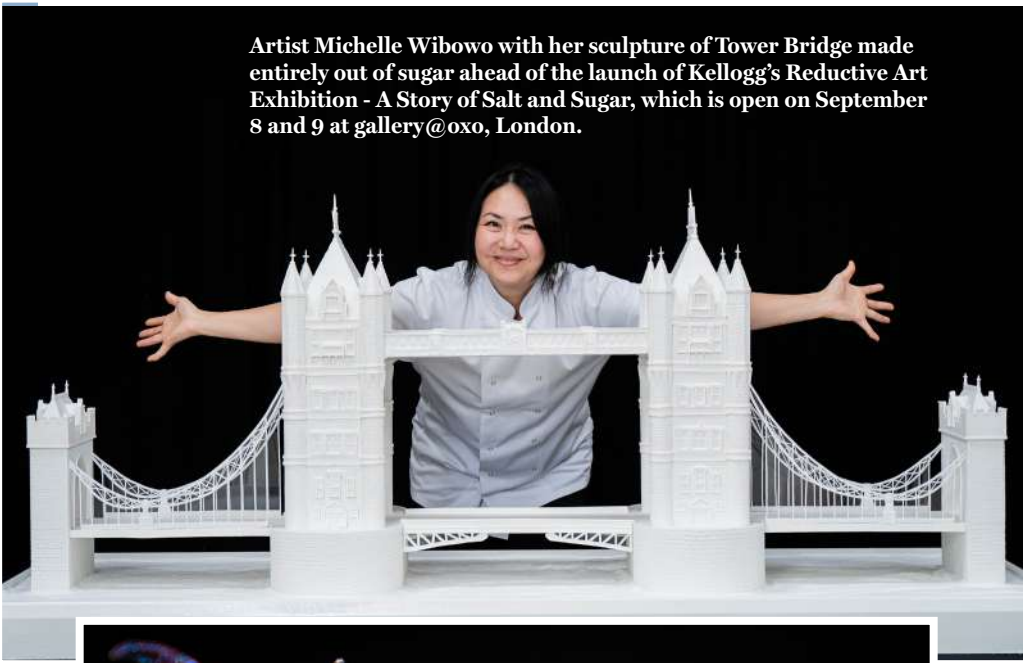
**Beth Clarkson is a Football Consultant & Visiting Senior Lecturer in Strategy and Governance in Women's Football, University of Portsmouth**



# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



The RAF Red Arrows display team during the Bournemouth Air Festival in Dorset.



Artist Michelle Wibowo with her sculpture of Tower Bridge made entirely out of sugar ahead of the launch of Kellogg's Reductive Art Exhibition - A Story of Salt and Sugar, which is open on September 8 and 9 at gallery@oxo, London.



Left, A portrait of former Prime Minister and current MP for Maidenhead, Theresa May, by artist Saied Dai. The painting will eventually hang in Portcullis House, London



Wallace Chan's Sea of Joy, during a preview of Christie's forthcoming Wallace Chan: The Wheel of Time exhibition, in London. The exhibition of the Chinese jewellery creator's work runs until 10th September



Above, artists from street performance group Dogs of Doom during the Freedom Festival in Hull.

Left, actors during the dress rehearsal for theatre production Nest, which was co-produced and co-commissioned by LEEDS 2023 and National Youth Theatre, at St Aidan's RSPB Nature Park located between Leeds and Castleford



## LITURGICAL CALENDARS

### Ordinary Form

**Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I**  
**Sunday, September 10:** 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Ezek. 33:7-9; Ps. 95: 1-2, 6-9, r.7-8; Rom. 13:8-10; Mt. 18:15-20

**Monday, September 11:**  
Weekday in Ordinary Time or St Deiniol, Bishop (W)  
Col.1:24-2:3; Ps. 62:6-7,9; Lk.6:6-11

**Tuesday, September 12:**  
Weekday in Ordinary or The Most Holy Name of Mary  
Col.2:6-15; Ps. 145:1-2,8-11; Lk.6:12-19

**Wednesday, September 13:**  
St John Chrysostom, Bishop, Doctor of the Church  
Col.3:1-11; Ps.145:2-3,10-13; Lk.6:20-26

**Thursday, September 14:** The Exaltation of the Cross  
Num. 21:4-9; Ps. 78:1-2, 34-38, r.7; Phil. 2:6-11; Jn.3:13-17

**Friday, September 15:** Our Lady of Sorrows, 1 Tim.1:1-2,12-14; Ps. 16:1-2,5,7-8,11; Jn.19:25-27

**Saturday, September 16:**  
Ss Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop, Martyrs  
1 Tim.1:15-17; Ps. 113:1-7;



St John Chrysostom

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- 2 Compose your wording, obtain photos, etc
- 3 Call us to book your advertisement


**CALL Andrea Black on 07918 560608 or email [andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andrea.black@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)**

We will need your wording, any images, special instructions and dates ad is to run. Payment will be taken over the phone at the time of booking

### STYLE A

**The best way to remember your loved ones...** with personalised memoriam cards, bookmarks and acknowledgements, notelets and other stationery. All styles. Also bespoke funeral Mass cards and Orders of Service, personally designed to reflect your loved one.

Contact Kendall Print, on **01234 567890** for free advice on the best style and a free no-obligation quote. Alternatively, call in person for an informal chat at **22 Haig Road, Bolton, Lancs**




- Up to 70 words
- Heading of your choice
- From just £30 per week
- More words can be added, prices on application

### STYLE B

**Remembering your loved ones...**

Personalised memoriam cards, bookmarks and acknowledgements, notelets. All styles. Delivered in just 48 hours **guaranteed!**

Kendall Print, 22 Haig Rd, Bolton  
Call us on 01243 624356

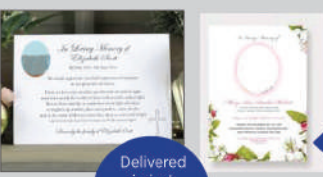


- Fully styled classified advert
- Free design service
- Heading of your choice
- Include photos, logos
- From just £45 per week

### STYLE C


**Remember your loved ones in style...**

- Personalised memoriam cards
- Bookmarks
- Acknowledgements and notelets.
- Orders of Service
- Funeral Mass cards



Delivered in just 48 hours **guaranteed!**

Kendall Print, 22 Haig Rd, Bolton. Call us on **01243 624356**

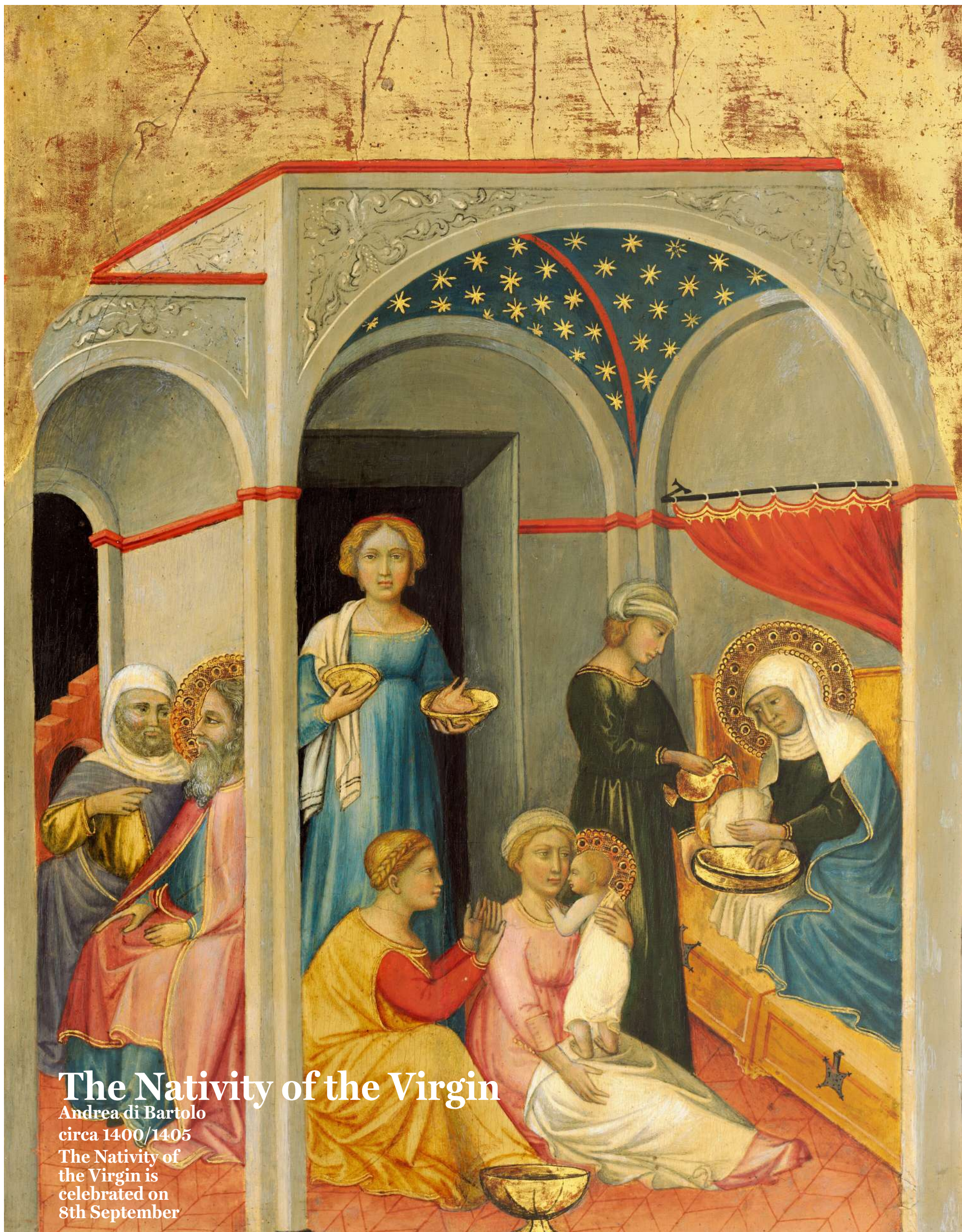


- Two columns wide.
- Free design service
- Heading of your choice
- £80 per week. Discounts for multiple week bookings

**Best Value, Biggest Impact**

Universe Classifieds | Universe Classifieds | Universe Classifieds |





# The Nativity of the Virgin

Andrea di Bartolo

circa 1400/1405

The Nativity of  
the Virgin is  
celebrated on  
8th September