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# Pope calls on faithful to support vital synod

**Holy Father launches a defence of autumn meeting as one of Church's most high-profile conservative clerics savages plans for sowing 'confusion, error and division'**

Pope Francis has called on the Catholic faithful to support next month's Synod of Bishops in Rome with prayers, by engaging with the process – and ignoring 'fake news' and tales of scandal surrounding the meeting.

His words came as often-controversial US cleric Cardinal Burke made an outspoken attack on the process, saying the pope's key project risked sowing "confusion, error and division" and "radically altering centuries of Church understanding."

The cardinal also claimed the Synod was being driven by "a contemporary ideology which denies much of what the Church has always taught and practised."

Whether the cardinal's comments, which are made in the foreword to a new book on the Synod, *The Synodal Process Is a Pandora's Box*, were behind the pope's defence is not clear, but Francis told Italian journalists "help me to narrate this process for what it really is, leaving behind the logic of slogans

and pre-packaged stories."

Pope Francis added that he realises how "speaking of a 'synod on synodality' may seem something obtruse, self-referential, excessively technical and of little interest to the general public," but the whole process, which began in 2021 with listening sessions on the local, national and regional levels "is something truly important for the Church."

At a moment in history "when there is much talk and little listening, and when the sense of the common good is in danger of weakening," he said, "the Church as a whole has embarked on a journey to rediscover what is meant to 'walk together'."

All the baptised must "walk together, question together, take responsibility together for communal discernment, which for us is prayer, as it was for the first apostles: this is synodality," the pope told the journalist group.

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**Cardinal Burke's view: see page 15**



## It's 9s all round

Delighted students from Cardinal Pole Catholic School in Hackney were celebrating a host of top grade '9s' in their GCSEs. Results round-up: see pgs 28-31

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# Media asked to take care of the vulnerable when covering assisted suicide

Andy Drozdziak

CARE has called for media outlets covering the issue of assisted suicide to signpost vulnerable readers to support services.

Speaking after a fresh round of media coverage this week, CARE spokesman Michael Veitch called upon media outlets to “signpost to organisations” which help vulnerable people.

“There’s been fresh coverage of assisted suicide at the start of this week, including a story about a UK woman who wants to travel abroad to take her own life,” Mr Veitch said.

“We would encourage all mainstream outlets covering this issue to signpost to support services for people at risk of suicide who could be deeply affected by this coverage.”

CARE has consistently expressed its opposition to a change to the law on assisted suicide in the UK. The charity said that it works “to support truly compassionate approaches to care at the end of life being articulated in our parliaments and assemblies.”

Mr Veitch’s comments come as disability rights activist and *Silent Witness* star Liz Carr, who has previously spoken of her concerns about assisted suicide, will explore the issue in a new BBC documentary called *Better Off Dead?*

Carr, also known for TV shows *The Witcher* and *This Is Going To Hurt*, said that “assisted suicide

Actor Liz Carr: “assisted suicide scares me... I’m unconvinced that any type of ‘assisted dying’ is the answer to this.”



scares me” ... I want everyone to have a good death and through this documentary, I hope to show why I’m unconvinced that any type of ‘assisted dying’ is the answer to this,” she explained.

Mr Veitch expressed concern about the language used in coverage of the issue – especially the term “assisted dying.”

“We oppose the term ‘assisted dying’, a campaigning term that has no standing in law,” he said.

“Campaigners want to see lethal medication given to people so they

can end their lives – something radically different from existing end-of-life care. ‘Assisted suicide’ is a more accurate and honest term for what is involved in activists’ proposals.”

**Anyone struggling can contact the Samaritans for confidential help. Samaritans say: “If you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won’t judge or tell you what to do.” Call 116 123**

or [CLICK HERE](#)

## Pope calls on faithful to support vital synod

Continued from page 1

The Synod assembly will run from 4th-29th October at the Vatican, and will bring together bishops, priests, religious and laypeople from around the world with the purpose of “listening together, discerning together, praying together.”

It’s ultimate aim is to shape the future direction of the Church and how it reflects modern society, while staying consistent to its rich history.

With so much of the world experiencing a “culture of exclusion,” the pope said, the Church can model a better way, one in which everyone finds a welcome and no one echoes the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke’s Gospel who says, “I thank you, Lord, because I am not like this, I am not like that” rather than thanking God for his gifts.

Pope Francis said that St. Paul VI reinstituted the Synod of Bishops at the end of the Second Vatican Council “because he realised that in the Western Church synodality had dis-

appeared, whereas in the Eastern Church they still have this dimension.”

“Please, let us get used to listening to each other, to talking, not cutting someone’s head off over a word,” but rather learning “to listen, to discuss in a mature way.”

“This is a grace we all need in order to move forward. And it is something the Church today offers the world, a world so often so incapable of making decisions, even when our very survival is at stake,” Pope Francis said.

The Catholic Church, he said, is

“trying to learn a new way of living relationships, listening to one another in order to hear and follow the voice of the Spirit.”

“We have opened our doors, we have offered everyone the opportunity to participate, we have taken into account everyone’s needs and suggestions,” he said. “We want to contribute together to building a church where everyone feels at home, where no one is excluded.”

The Church is for everyone, he said. “There are no first-, second- or third-class Catholics, no. All together. Everyone. It is the Lord’s invitation.”



*The Church is for everyone. There are no first-, second- or third-class Catholics, no. All together. Everyone. It is the Lord’s invitation.*





# Come and join us – March for Life is open to all

**Andy Drozdziak**

March For Life UK say it's not too late to attend its annual march, the largest pro-life event of the year, which take place this weekend, on Saturday, 2nd September.

"With record numbers of abortions in our nation, there has never been a more important time to March For Life," the pro-life group said.

As reported in last week's *Universe*, March For Life UK is encouraging Catholics to respond to "wave after wave of new attacks on the preborn child".

"We believe women deserve better than this. If our answer to a woman's crisis pregnancy is to help her destroy her own child then we don't offer a solution at all but are simply swapping one problem for a far greater one," March For Life UK said.

The March is taking place against a backdrop of controversy surrounding 'buffer zones' and pro-lifers such as Isabel Vaughan- Spruce and Adam Smith-Connor being arrested for praying silently outside abortion facilities. The march is de-

scribed by March For Life UK as a "milestone event in the pro-life calendar." The first UK March For Life took place in 2012 with 70 people in attendance in Birmingham. Last year's event in London saw over 7,000 people gather.

Prior to the March, Mass will celebrated at 10.30am at Westminster Cathedral by Bishops John Sherrington, Richard Moth and John Keenan. Pro-life events, including talks, workshops and activities for young people will take place at the Emmanuel Centre, Marsham St. The march begins at 1.30pm and people are advised to be at the Emmanuel Centre by 1.00pm.

Keynote speeches will take place in Parliament Square, including Lois McLatchie-Miller from ADF UK, Scott Klusendorf from the Life Training Institute and a personal testimony from Ellie. The day will end by 4.15.

March For Life UK is also encouraging people to finalise travel plans ahead of possible train strikes.

**For more information, visit [www.marchforlife.co.uk/2023-annual-event-page/](http://www.marchforlife.co.uk/2023-annual-event-page/)**



## Season of Creation ready to inspire ecological conversion

A Catholic environmentalist has called for an "ecological conversion" at the beginning of Pope Francis' 'Season of Creation'.

At the beginning of the Season of Creation 2023, which runs from 1st September – 4th October, Pope Francis said: "In this Season of Creation, as followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again."

The Laudato Si' Animators serve their communities according to the Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical. Virginia Bell, who is part of the Laudato Si' Animators team, said she was hoping to "educate and inspire ac-

tion to tackle the environmental crises."

She has explored how different people have experienced an ecological conversion, with many inspired by the Laudato Si' Action Platform, which empowers people to "take concrete actions in the care of our common home" and "offers the Church tools and resources for the journey towards total sustainability in the spirit of integral ecology."

The 2023 theme is 'Let Justice and Peace Flow.'

**Laudato Si' II: see page 16**

**A full article on Virginia's work will be in next week's Universe.**

# Young Catholics urged to use energy of WYD and put faith into action

**Andy Drozdziak**

Archbishop John Wilson has called on young Catholics in the UK to "stand up and be counted" after their experience in World Youth Day.

The event drew millions to Lisbon and the archbishop believes the time is right for young people to "put faith into action."

"Be a player in your parish or chaplaincy, and in your local community," he wrote.

"Stand up and be counted for your faith. Live honourably and justly. Do your best to see Christ in everyone. Find a way to put your faith into action by serving others, not least those most in need."

American evangelist Bishop Robert Barron highlighted a recent statistic that 69 per cent of US Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Perhaps mindful that such statistics may be similar in the UK, the archbishop encouraged young people to prioritise Sunday Mass and to spend



time in eucharistic adoration.

"Make Mass on Sunday a priority, and during the week too if you can. Find out when there is Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament near you and make time to pray before your Eucharistic Lord. Find in Him your strength and peace," he said. He also encouraged young people to "check out" Bishop Barron's talks and his

Word on Fire resources.

The archbishop also pinpointed the importance of prayer and reminding young people of their call to "evangelise" their friends and family. "You are called to evangelise as a witness to Christ by your words and actions," he said.

**The archbishop's letter can be read in full at [HERE](#).**



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## IN BRIEF

**Check on your blood pressure, sir?**

The NHS will offer blood pressure checks in barber shops so that men can have a test while they have their hair cut, reported *The Times*. British men have been urged to “get a grip of their unhealthy lifestyles” after a major study revealed they are twice as likely to suffer heart attacks as women.

Cardiologists said men can reduce their heart risk and add years to their lives by taking steps such as “swapping their pub session for a gym session”.

**Train firms admit closure risks**

Rail companies have admitted passengers will be put at risk of being “swindled by crooks” and railway stations made to “feel less safe” by shutting ticket offices.

Damning documents, written by the rail companies themselves, lay bare the true impact of the closures on disabled, elderly and vulnerable passengers.

RMT General Secretary, Mick Lynch, said “the fact that train companies’ own equality impact assessments show the detrimental effect of ticket office closures means it must be scrapped”.

**Pressure on Starmer on economy**

Dozens of leading economists are calling on Keir Starmer to break with Conservative spending plans. 70 prominent academics say they are “concerned” at the party’s programme for government and warn that failing to reverse cuts would “deepen the poverty and hardship many face”. The signatories include South Korean economist Professor Ha-Joon Chang, as well as professors Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson.

A party spokesperson said a Labour government would “have to make tough choices”.

# Welsh Vice-Chancellor so proud as he meets Pope Francis for talks

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales has been given an audience with the pope.

Professor Medwin Hughes, DL, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, was given the papal audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican earlier this summer.

It was arranged as part of discussions with the Pontifical Foundation over the establishment of a strategic alliance between Wales and the Pontificia Scholas Occurrentes, Pope Francis’s international youth initiative.

It also offered an opportunity to share plans for the establishment of a new International Foundation in Wales. This would focus upon youth leadership, global futures and sustainable development.

Scholas Occurrentes’ roots are in educational projects created for children in poor regions of Buenos



**Professor Hughes at his audience with the pope**

Aires. It was created by the pope when he was Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio. It has since grown to become a worldwide network of schools with common objectives,

giving special attention to those most in need. It seeks to answer the call to create a culture of encounter and bring young people together.

Professor Medwin Hughes said

his papal audience was a “moving experience.”

“This was a great privilege and honour,” he said.

“It was a most moving experience to be presented to the Holy Father. It offered an opportunity to share with him our plans to establish the Foundation for Global Futures and how this new initiative will build upon our current UNESCO partnership and further Wales’ commitment as articulated in the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act (2015).

“Wales is leading the way in building strong international partnerships which will focus upon educational programmes in the area of Youth Global Leadership and Resilience”.

A delegation from the Pontifical Foundation will be visiting Wales in the autumn to further the strategic engagement.

## Workers’ rights must include faith, MPs told

The Catholic Union and two other Christian groups have urged a parliamentary inquiry to investigate concerns about religious freedom in the workplace.

Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights is running an inquiry into human rights at work and is due to report later this year.

The Catholic Union, Christian Institute, and Evangelical Alliance have written to the Chair of the Committee, Labour MP Harriet Harman, calling for religious freedom to be made a “key part” of the inquiry.

While the terms of reference for the inquiry include “freedom of thought, conscience and religion”, the Catholic and Evangelical groups are concerned that this section risks being overlooked. They have called for a stand-alone evidence session

on religious freedom at work to inform the final report and recommendations to the Government.

In their letter, the groups say that “too many Christians are unable to bring their whole selves to work, and in some cases face disadvantage or discrimination because of their

**Labour MP Harriet Harman has been asked to make faith a key part of her inquiry**



faith, despite laws that should prevent this from happening.”

They have urged the cross-party Committee of MPs and peers to “shine a light on these concerns and put forward recommendations for improvement.”

Catholic Union Director, Nigel

Parker, said: “Sadly, we know it is becoming increasingly difficult to be a faithful Catholic in many workplaces in this country.

“Our survey on religion in the workplace earlier this year found that almost one-in-three respondents had experienced disadvantage at work because of their faith, with nearly half of people saying they did not feel able to talk about their faith openly with colleagues.

“Our concerns are shared by people from other denominations and other faiths as well. This joint letter shows the strengthen of feeling about this matter. We strongly hope that the Committee will take these concerns seriously.”

Christian Institute deputy director, Simon Calvert, said: “Religion has long been the Cinderella strand of discrimination law. Christians

who take their faith seriously can feel overlooked, or even marginalised, by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion industry.

“Many employers show little interest in seeking to understand the challenges faced in the workplace by devoutly Catholic or evangelical staff. I hope the Joint Committee on Human Rights will give a voice to these people.”

Evangelical Alliance director of advocacy, Danny Webster, said: “It is essential that Christians, and people of other faiths, are able to bring their whole selves to work.

“Someone’s faith is not an optional extra that can be disregarded or ignored but an integral part of their lives. We encourage the Joint Committee on Human Rights to make the role of faith in the work place a central part of their inquiry.”

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# Former Education Secretary backs call to lift cap on Catholic school admissions



Ruth Kelly

## Andy Drozdziak

Former Education Secretary Ruth Kelly has followed several bishops in backing the Catholic Union's campaign to scrap the cap on faith-based admissions to new free schools – and is encouraging more people to sign up to the scheme.

Ms Kelly, who is a Vice President of the Catholic Union, called the policy “frustrating” and said that lifting the cap was a “very sensible approach”.

“Catholic schools are some of the best in the country,” Ruth Kelly said.

“The care and quality of the teaching is recognised by parents and pupils of all faiths and none.

“It is clearly frustrating that a policy designed to make it easier to open schools outside local authority control has actually made it harder in some cases.

“Lifting the cap, and allowing the Catholic Church in this country to take part in the free school programme along with other groups in society, is a very sensible approach. I’m pleased to be supporting this campaign from the Catholic Union.”

The 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions applies to over-subscribed free schools with a religious character in England. Introduced by the Coalition Government in 2010, the cap has made it impossible for Catholic Bishops to sanction new Catholic free schools since it would lead to pupils being turned away on the basis of their Catholic faith.

Ms Kelly’s words follow those of Catholic Education Service Chairman Bishop Marcus Stock, who said it is “vital” to lift the admissions cap.

“The cap has made it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open as the policy is incompatible with Church law,” Bishop Marcus told the *Universe*. “The Catholic Education Service, the Catholic Union, and all those who benefit from the diversity provided by our Catholic school sector, regard it as vital that the admissions cap is lifted.”

The Catholic Union is urging people to add their names to an open letter, available to sign on the Catholic Union’s website, calling for the cap to be lifted.

Over 700 people have now signed the letter to the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan. The Catholic Union is making a final push for signatures ahead of Education Sunday on 10th September.

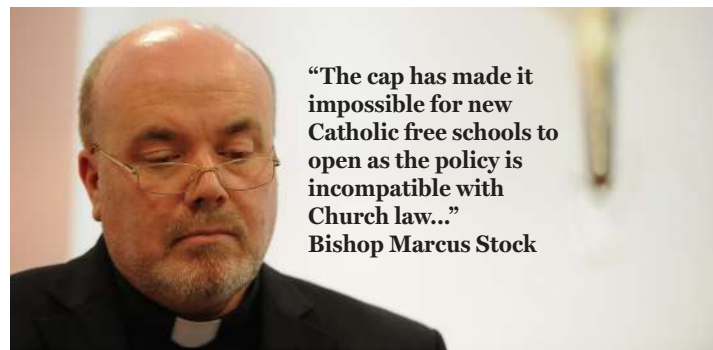
The endorsement from Ruth Kelly, who served as a Minister under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, builds on the backing from several Catholic Bishops in England. Other bishops to have backed the campaign so far include Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley, Bishop of East Anglia Peter Collins, Bishop of Northampton David Oakley and Bishop of Lancaster Paul Swarbrick.

The Catholic Union, along with the Catholic Education Service and others, has been calling for the policy to be reversed since it was first introduced.

The 2017 Conservative manifesto committed to lifting the cap, but this was never achieved.

Professor John Lydon, Chairman of the Catholic Union’s Education Committee, said: “The letter to the Secretary of State is a timely intervention and I encourage people to add their names in support.”

**The open letter can be found by clicking [HERE](#).**



“The cap has made it impossible for new Catholic free schools to open as the policy is incompatible with Church law...”  
Bishop Marcus Stock

## Fringe show is sick joke as it laughs at abortion

Right To Life UK has said that abortion is “no laughing matter” after an ‘all-singing, all-dancing comedy cabaret show’ about having multiple abortions trivialised the subject.

*All Aboard! At Termination Station* has been taken to the Edinburgh Fringe festival this summer. Billed as an ‘autobiographical comedy cabaret about abortion’, the show tells the personal stories of the playwright’s own abortions.

Right To Life UK spokesperson Catherine Robinson said: “It is deeply sad that we live in a society that has trivialised abortion to the extent that so-called comedies are being made about the coming of the lives of multiple babies in the womb”.

The play is written and performed by Lilly Burton, an executive committee member for the group Abortion Rights UK. She describes the show as “my campaign to normalise and destigmatise abortion”, adding

that she should be able to laugh about her abortions.

Burton has also worked with Abortion Rights UK to organise a fundraiser called *All Aboard! Abortion Rights* to create workshops aimed at young people to “smash abortion stigma”.

Burton said that she wanted to show an account of abortion where there is “no victim” but which was “honest and fun”.

Catherine Robinson said the public is “deeply concerned” about abortion. “While such shows are aimed at normalising abortion, it is clear that the public remains deeply concerned about many aspects of abortion.

Polling shows that 70 per cent of women believe that the UK abortion time limit should be reduced, and 79 per cent of the public supports a five-day cooling-off period to ensure that a woman considering an abortion has had enough time to consider all of the options available to her,” she said. “These figures remind us of the fact that abortion is no laughing matter”.

Several other shows at the Edinburgh Fringe festival also focus on abortion. One, *Jane/Norma*, explores the life of Norma McCorvey, known as ‘Jane Roe’, the plaintiff in America’s *Roe v Wade* case that legalised abortion across all states in America.



A show poster

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**COMMENT****Police need to get priorities in the right order**

This week the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, welcomed the agreement of police chiefs to instruct their officers to investigate every crime.

It is perhaps a sign of the times that it is even necessary to ask them to take offences like burglary and theft seriously.

As the Home Secretary said, it erodes public trust in the police if victims feel they have been ignored and the violation of their home or person deemed trivial.

It boils down to a question of priorities. Critics say focusing on so-called low-level offences risks taking officers away from investigating rape or domestic assault. But no one is suggesting that. Rather, the police should be diverted from delving into matters that are not even crimes at all.

Why, for instance, was a local councillor in Northampton arrested for sending a tweet about the way police treated a Christian street preacher? Why, for that matter, were the police confronting the preacher at all over his opposition to LGBT pride campaigning? What business is it of theirs to investigate an opinion because someone is offended by it?

This cavalier approach to liberties and free speech needs to end. The police are there to enforce the law not proselytise on behalf of campaign organisations like Stonewall. Sir Mark Rowley's promise to stop Met officers waving rainbow flags or wearing Pride badges is at least a start. Police say they have too much to do looking into hate speech and acting as glorified social workers and lack time to investigate thefts. But if they stopped intruding into areas that the great majority would not consider criminal acts, they might restore public faith in a policing service once rightly regarded as the world's best.

The agreement with the police is that an investigation should be proportionate and that 'reasonable' evidence should exist to justify the deployment of officers.

Mrs Braverman should set out what it is unreasonable to investigate and for the police to concentrate on activity that most people regard as crimes.



*What business is it of theirs to investigate an opinion because someone is offended by it?*

# Half a world away but Mongolia is at the heart of our faith

**Looking forward to the Holy Father's upcoming visit to Mongolia, Missio reflects on the Catholic Church's youngest missionary territory and how a true spirit of encounter is bringing more people to Christ.**

Fewer than 20,000 people live in Arvajhèer, a small town 400km south of the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar. But in missionary terms, this tiny rural settlement holds huge significance.

This mission in Arvajhèer began just 20 years ago. Before then, there was no trace of the Catholic Church. In fact, the Catholic Church generally has only had presence in Mongolia for around 30 years. It was after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992 that the country opened back up, allowing Monsignor Wenceslao Padilla, of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to begin his mission in Mongolia.

Originally from the Philippines, 'Bishop Wens' as he became, was appointed Apostolic Prefect of Mongolia in 2002. He featured in our 2015 World Mission Sunday campaign, and supporters in England and Wales raised £540,967 to support mission projects in Mongolia and throughout the world. Our good friend, Bishop Wens, continued to live out his mission in Mongolia until his death in 2018.

In 2016 we celebrated the ordination to the Priesthood of the first Mongolian-born Priest, Fr Joseph Enkh. This was a specially wonderful occasion for us, as the Catholic community in England and Wales had supported Fr Joseph's formation and ordination, financially and spiritually, through Missio. At the time Bishop Wens told Fides News: "Having a young Mongolian ordained to priesthood for the local Church is like giving birth: she is a young mother who gives birth to her first child. Let us pray and trust that Fr Joseph Enkh is faithful to his vocation, takes up his cross daily, and follows Christ always, in every circumstance of his life."

Fr Joseph's ordination was a key moment in the life of Mongolia's Church and a product of Bishop Wens' missionary vision. And while Bishop Wens is dearly missed, his legacy of love and care continues on through the seeds of faith he planted in Mongolia.

Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, missionary of the Consolata and current Apostolic Prefect of



Fr Joseph with young Catholics

Ulaanbaatar, was there from the beginning of the mission in Arvajhèer with Bishop Wens.

"We sometimes start out with preconceived ideas, models that we carry within us," explains the cardinal. But when he first arrived as a missionary in Mongolia 20 years ago, he and his fellow missionaries soon realised that 'it is also important to be open to changes in plans; to be humble and to listen to the Spirit, who speaks through reality.'



"Arvajhèer was truly the frontline mission for me...the reality of the capital is one thing, the province, the countryside, is another. So, they were for us really very interesting years, we were leaving behind that little bit of certainty we had acquired in the first three years in Mongolia, to open ourselves up again to total newness."

Looking back, the Cardinal recognises "how the hand of the Lord guided us even through experiences that were not easy"; when "we did not know what could have happened".

Setting up a Church from scratch was a delicate mission. The missionaries worked with great care and respect to gain trust and mutual understanding with the local authorities and people. But gradually the team were able to get to work, obtain the permits they needed, and set about building a parish in Arvajhèer.

Today the parish is small, but thriving. And as the missionaries currently in Arvajhèer explain, authenticity and careful listening are still key. Fr James explains: "Here, evangelisation starts with social works. You have to connect with people by doing something; a project, something social; getting to know the people, the culture. We

have our small church and parish, but before we even get to the parish, there are so many other things we do. We have the kindergarten, women's project; we have people who come to use the shower facilities. We have so many little things that help us connect with people. For us that is key."

For the parishioners of Arvajhèer, encountering Christ has been life changing. Perlina and Rencin have been parishioners since 2008. Rencin shares: "It really inspires me to go to church. I feel so happy when I go. Every Sunday we go to church together, and all the things [the missionaries] do impress me a lot."

"I went to Church for the first time in 2008, because my wife told me about it. And now, all the members of my family believe in God."

Perlina adds: "In the 1990s, we didn't have food every day, because I didn't have a job at the time. We had four children, and life was very difficult. As a society we were depressed. Food was scarce, and people were discriminated against. But since we found belief in God our life has changed a lot. Even when we didn't always have enough to eat, we recognised that we were rich in Christ's love."

The couple are grateful for the difference the Sisters have made to their family and community. They say: "They always take care of our children and play with them by singing and dancing."

The Holy Father calls on us to build a "culture of encounter." But living within the realm of encounter is not just a question of teaching or preaching. When we encounter others in the spirit of mission, it takes time, patience and a certain vulnerability to build fruitful encounter.

Missionary Sister, Theodora, echoes this: "There's nothing big about what we do; only our relationship with them, our friendship. And the little things we can do with them. You know, culture is a huge thing. We can't wrap it up in a day, but by chatting with them like this, we get more into reality... It's not just what we study in books, but what we feel is something real - something that has life! Sharing heart with heart helps us so much."

The visit of Pope Francis in Mongolia from 1st-4th September is greatly significant and bears the motto 'Hoping Together'. The international network of Missio has been supporting the Church in Mongolia since it first began - providing prayerful and financial support to the youngest Catholic Church in the world.

**Photos: ©Missio**



# Stop UK Government funding China's genocidal regime

The Chinese Government is imposing forced abortion, sterilisation and infanticide on the Uyghur population.

As the cost of living rises, the UK Government is giving millions in aid to China's brutal regime.

- **Over £60 million** was sent to China between 2020-2021 (according to the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact).

China is the world's second largest economy and its treatment of women and babies is shocking.

**£60 million of UK taxpayers' money** should be put to better use.

**Send a message to the Prime Minister today – sign this petition** and help us build a world where abortion is unthinkable.

## End the UK Government's complicity with coerced abortion in China



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Society for the **Protection**  
of Unborn Children



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



## Safe routes?

**Sir John Battle**



The Government's 'stop the boats' mantra keeps repeating that refugees and asylum seekers should enter Britain by "safe routes".

The problem is there aren't any to speak of, except the agreement to take people leaving Hong Kong, those fleeing from Ukraine and the agreement to accept Afghans who worked with our forces.

Notably there has been little comment on the Hong Kong deal. Some 175,000 people have come since the 'safe route' British National Overseas Programme was introduced for them in 2021, and an estimated 300,000 are expected within five years. Local authorities are expected to welcome arrivals with grants for language classes (£850 per adult) and destitute people (£2,720). Notably they do not need to apply for asylum or refugee status as they get visas for work or as students, and most have been able to settle themselves into housing and work.

The other 'safe route' is for Ukrainians. Over 120,000 have arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with families offering temporary accommodation. Over 800 are with hosts in Leeds. The issue for them now is moving on to independent living as the financial support dries up.

The only other 'safe route' is for Afghans under two schemes; one for those who worked with the UK during the war and one for those fleeing Taliban persecution. So far only 20,000 Afghans have arrived (over 500 in Leeds), yet there are thousands in Afghanistan applying to come here. The slow processing of claims forces them to make their own way, many ending up on the small boats; between January and July 1,474 desperate Afghans came across, whose applications to settle are highly likely to be accepted. In the meantime they are in hotels but to be moved out at the end of this week without alternative provision. In other words, their official 'safe route' is not working, given the scale of vulnerable people still stuck in Afghanistan.

With only these three safe routes, as a Conservative MP on the Home Affairs Select Committee said, "how on earth do Ministers expect other refugees and genuine asylum seekers to get here?"

Many do, of course, and by the traditional transport routes of air, sea and road transport rather than risk crossing the Channel in small boats. The crucial issue is whether we are willing to accept them, as we must in principle under international conventions we in the past have helped put in place, and process their claims speedily, and make them welcome and 'safe' in our communities.

# Womb transplant story leaves me wondering if we're pushing the boundaries too far again

CATHOLIC COMMENT

**Caroline Farrow**



Despite its framing as a good news story, last week's announcement that the UK's first successful womb transplant has taken place made me, and I suspect, many of us, feel decidedly uneasy.

Doctors managed to implant the womb of a 40 year-old mother-of-two into her younger, 34-year-old sister who had been born without a uterus. Much of the commentary talked in gushing terms about the generosity of the donor and how she had helped her younger sister, and while her act was undoubtedly generous, I strongly disliked how this was phrased, because this is exactly the same type of language used when discussing other ethically problematic issues, such as egg donation and surrogacy.

It is all too easy to see how the language of helping someone can be used to place emotional pressure on a vulnerable potential donor, especially when accompanied with a financial inducement.

Womb transplantation stems from a similar mindset to surrogacy; namely the belief that every person who is desirous of a child has a right to one. Simply wanting a child so much that you are prepared to pay vast amounts of money for IVF or for a surrogate to carry one for you, or now, to endure gruelling surgery, means that you will automatically be a wonderful parent with bucket loads of love to give the child you have been fortunate enough to obtain.

As the truism goes, money can't buy you love and it also runs the risk of commodifying children into consumer products to fulfil adult desires. The womb donor in this case – the woman's sister – may well have been motivated by genuine altruism and compassion but we cannot be assured that this will always be the case. There are strict rules, processes and safeguards around live kidney donors which include interviews by various professionals to ensure that no coercion has taken place, and no money is allowed to change hands in order to discourage any kind of organ trafficking, but even these procedures are fallible; there have already been convictions in the UK for organ trafficking and the Metropolitan Police are currently investigating a glut of new reported cases.

It is easy to see how family



members could succumb to emotional pressure and be coerced into helping a relative and if this procedure becomes more common, one dreads to think of the atrocities that could take place in other countries where organ trafficking is already common.

This is not a procedure that is either guaranteed to be successful; although the recipient of the womb is already experiencing periods, there is no guarantee that she will be able to successfully gestate a child or be able to carry one to term. The recipient will need to undergo IVF, a procedure that despite its widespread social acceptance is morally unacceptable to Catholics and quite possibly not be able to use her own eggs, which begs the question of what on earth the point of such a transplant is? Seeing as it involves eight hours of surgery for the donor and another nine hours for the recipient, with both women being subject to a whole array of terrifying accompanying risks (urinary tract infections, faecal impaction, wound infection, bladder hypotonia,

respiratory failure from anaesthesia, early menopause, to name just a few), then is this really a price worth paying both medically and, indeed, financially, just so a woman can experience pregnancy?

A successful womb transplant does not automatically equate to a successful pregnancy. The 100 successful womb transplants have resulted in 50 live births and so far, a number of transplants have failed.

Women who receive donor wombs will have to undergo at least three major surgeries – the implantation, a c-section if she becomes pregnant (she can have a maximum of two children), and the removal of the womb five years later, in order to reduce the health effects of the immune suppressing medication that she will need to take for the entire time that she has the organ. The effects of the drugs on the unborn children are thought to be 'relatively safe', whatever that means.

Organ transplants can only be justified when they are the only option to keep a patient alive and when the donor is living, current medical ethics correctly state that in all cases the safety and welfare of the donor must take precedence over the needs of the recipient. It also should be noted that womb transplants are currently listed as 'novel', meaning that wombs would not be removed from women who have passed away without the express permission of their families. Many women would baulk at the idea of their womb being given to help with someone's fertility, which is an entirely different proposition to a life-

**Above, Isabel Quigora and Richard Smith (right) perform a womb transplant on a 34-year-old woman at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford. The procedure took over nine hours, with the donor – the recipient's older sister – in surgery for eight**

saving donation, especially if boundaries are pushed even further and medics begin to see if they are able to transplant wombs into transgender-identified males.

Even if this procedure came entirely without risks or other ethical concerns, womb transplants are still not an ethical use of resources when there are so many people both in this country and across the world, who are not able to access vital healthcare which would significantly improve their quality of life; whether that's cataract surgery or joint replacements.

I also cannot fail to be struck by the irony of the UK medical profession who are bound to do no harm, happily jeopardising the lives of women and putting them to enormous risk, for the sake of medical progress and to achieve their heart's desire, while at the same time ignoring the almost quarter of million abortions that take place here every year.

As Jeff Goldblum famously said in *Jurassic Park*: we're too busy thinking about whether they could, to think about whether or not they should.

Sometimes we should go with our instincts. If something sounds and feels wrong, then it most likely is.

“

*Even if this procedure came without risks or ethical concerns, womb transplants are still not an ethical use of resources when so many go without basic healthcare ...*



# CAFOD tribute as Catholic schools keep up donations

**Andy Drozdziak**

CAFOD has praised Catholic schools in England and Wales for their “wonderful” generosity during a period of financial difficulty.

In the last academic year (2022-2023), 44 per cent of Catholic schools in England and Wales raised over £610,000 for CAFOD.

Catholic primary and secondary schools also raised over £170,000 in emergency funds for urgent crisis appeals such as the floods in Pakistan and the earthquake in Syria.

Monica Conmee, head of education at CAFOD, paid tribute to the efforts of schools in “going above and beyond” to support people in need.

“It’s been wonderful to see Catholic schools rise to the challenge of standing in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world. Times haven’t been easy here at home, but this hasn’t stopped schools going above and beyond to help those in need around the world,” she said.

CAFOD pointed out that Catholic schools “also showed remarkable



commitment to Catholic social teaching and tackling the climate crisis” by achieving the LiveSimply award. 37 schools won this award, which sees schools committing to live simply, sustainably and in soli-

**Catholic schools also showed their commitment to Catholic social teaching and tackling the climate crisis by achieving the LiveSimply award – such as the children of Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Primary School, Brierfield**

darity with the world’s poorest communities.

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Chorley is one such school. Deputy headteacher Charlotte Chenery said: “We really do feel that working towards the award has given us the chance to find further ways of bringing our faith into action and helped us to focus on making better choices for the benefit of our world and those within it.

“Our children have certainly embraced the need to take action for the greater good; it has been very rewarding to see them using their voice to create change.

“The whole journey has been well supported by yourselves at CAFOD and continues to be the place to which we will turn for future inspiration.”

There are also now 444 CAFOD clubs in Catholic primary schools, which help pupils to take the lead in putting Catholic social teaching into action. The clubs undertake a range of activities including writing prayers, art and crafts.

Monica Conmee underlined CAFOD’s commitment to education and in enabling young people put ‘faith into action.’

“I am constantly amazed at the creativity and sheer determination of young people to build a more just and peaceful world. We will continue to support schools in helping children and young people put faith into action,” she said.

**• CAFOD provides a range of free resources and activities for primary and secondary schools, including lesson plans and assembly ideas, as well as ways for children and young people to get involved in campaigning.**

**These can be found at their website: <https://cafod.org.uk/schools>.**

## Doctor calls for ban on puberty blockers

A leading Scottish doctor has called for puberty-blocking drugs to be banned after highlighting the dangers of taking them.

Scotland’s social care watchdog, the Care Inspectorate, has been criticised for steering gender-confused children towards medical and surgical transition.

But Dr Azeem Ibrahim OBE has demanded an end to their use. “Gender-affirming care is code for the belief that hormones and surgery is the best and primary treatment for gender dysphoria,” he said.

But this approach risked “permanent sterility, regret, and lifelong dependence on repeat surgeries and medication.” It also failed to show any mental health benefits.

“This is something that every parent across Scotland, deep in their hearts, knew already to be true,” he said.

Describing puberty blockers as “dangerous and irreversible”, he said that they locked children in “to even more devastating outcomes”.

Claim that the drugs were “fully reversible” was “scandalously misleading”. For activists, he said, “ideology comes first and children come second”.

Dr Ibrahim said that “the best approach” to gender confusion “is to love your children and take no medical intervention”.

## CARE warns crackdown on ‘bogus’ slavery cases ‘harms genuine victims’

CARE has expressed serious concerns at the number of modern slavery cases being rejected after a Home Office crackdown on bogus claims.

The number of cases involving potential victims has increased sharply since January, after tougher rules were introduced.

More than 3,000 people have been denied help in the first half of the year, prompting concern from the Christian social justice charity CARE that genuine victims are being missed.

Rebecca Stevenson, policy expert on modern slavery at CARE, outlined these concerns.

“We have serious concerns about the rapid decline in potential victims of modern slavery receiving positive reasonable grounds decisions while trying to access the National Referral Mechanism,” she said.

“Nearly five times as many applications were rejected in the first six months of this year as were rejected during the same period last year. We warned that radical changes to the objective evidence threshold made by the UK Government would result in genuine victims not being able to access help.”

Rebecca Stevenson was also critical of the controversial Illegal Migration Bill which, she said, is creating an ‘increasingly hostile environment for genuine victims of modern slavery.’

The bill states that, if victims have arrived in the UK illegally, they are liable to detention and deportation unless they are co-operating with a criminal investigation or prosecution and are required to remain in the UK.

This provision puts the lives of victims at risk, since deportation could mean them returning to criminals from whom they have escaped.

“New requirements for evidence such as travel documents will be unattainable for genuine trafficking victims,” she said.

“We also know from sources working within the sector that new evidence requirements are being applied retrospectively to claims made before the changes were introduced.

“Controversial moves by the government, and the recently passed Illegal Migration Bill, are making the UK an increasingly hostile environment for victims of modern slavery and making it more unlikely that genuine victims will seek help.”

JIM CAVIEZEL

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## IN BRIEF

**Met chief takes hard line**

The Metropolitan Police commissioner has said his officers will not be allowed to express support for political causes while on duty because it is essential that they are impartial. Mark Rowley told *The Telegraph* “there are very few causes policing should be attached to” and said he will not tolerate officers taking the knee, flying rainbow flags or adorning their uniforms with badges that support environmental causes.

However, he added that, “wearing a poppy in the autumn is perfectly proper”.

**Gove ‘to cancel pollution rules’**

Michael Gove is ripping up water pollution rules that environmental groups say are essential for protecting the country’s rivers. Builders claim the regulations exacerbate England’s housing crisis but environmentalists say scrapping them will further add to water pollution, as water companies are already dumping raw sewage into rivers and seas.

Gove will offer extra funding to mitigate any potential impact on England’s waterways.

**Pharmacy closures hit poor most**

Community pharmacies are closing at a “rapid rate” with deprived areas worst affected, said Sky News. As ministers ask pharmacies to do more to ease pressure on GPs, between July 2017 and July 2023 the number of operating pharmacies in England fell by 914, from 11,723 to 10,809. More than one in 10 pharmacies have been lost in the poorest 20 per cent of areas in the last six years.

Dr Leyla Hannbeck CEO of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies said the situation is “awful”.

**King to tackle royal food waste**

King Charles is launching an initiative that aims to bridge the gap between food waste and food need.

His first major personal project as monarch, due in the autumn, will build on the Coronation Food Project, a national scheme created to tackle food insecurity and waste.

The monarch is “passionate” about the topic, and his personal efforts to save resources include “feeding kitchen food scraps to his chickens” and “converting his Aston Martin sports car to run on surplus wine and whey from the cheese process”.

# UK’s help for exiled Ukrainians hasn’t guaranteed a place to live

WORLD AFFAIRS

**Richard Machin**

## Why thousands of Ukrainian refugees in the UK are now homeless

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, thousands of people were forced to leave their homes in search of safety. A year-and-a-half later, many of those Ukrainian refugees who reached the UK are again finding themselves homeless.

Government statistics published on August 15 show that 7,300 Ukrainian households have been classified as homeless, including 4,740 households with children. These figures apply to England only and are based on information submitted by 67 per cent of local authorities – the true extent of the problem is probably greater.

Since February 2022, over 180,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK via two housing schemes. The Ukraine Family Scheme allows Ukrainians to join family members who are already based in the UK, while Homes for Ukraine allows UK citizens to host Ukrainian nationals with no links to the UK.

Each homelessness case has its own individual and complex set of causes, but overall, there are three factors influencing the trend: a breakdown in hosting arrangements, problems accessing long-term housing (particularly in the private rented sector), and inconsistent and insufficient support for refugees.

My analysis shows that the UK government moved quickly to introduce housing policy for displaced Ukrainians. The schemes were broader in scope than what is provided to many other groups arriving in the UK (and certainly compared to the general UK asylum system).

However, the schemes rely on the goodwill and capacity of the public to accommodate Ukrainian nationals who have multiple needs. In many instances, these arrangements will, inevitably, be short term. Hosts in the Homes for Ukraine scheme were asked to provide accommodation for six months, receiving a “thank you payment” from the government of £350 per month, which increases to £500 if the arrangement extends beyond 12 months.

But reports indicate that for both hosts and their Ukrainian guests, accommodation arrangements



Ukrainian refugees pictured waiting at a railway station to leave their country in the immediate aftermath of the Russian invasion. Many who arrived in the UK now face an uncertain future

“can’t go on forever”. Many end at the minimum six-month point. Some hosts feel that they want the space back in their home and they can’t continue to accommodate a guest. For some hosts, the arrangements have proved more challenging than expected.

The Office for National Statistics’ research suggests that the cost of living crisis prevented many hosts from being able to continue providing accommodation. The number of people offering to host has dropped since the early months of the war, making it harder for Ukrainians to initially find a host or to be re-matched when an arrangement ends.

Despite local government checks on properties before a guest moves in, there have also been reports of overcrowding, safeguarding concerns and issues with landlords. Problems like this are also leading to housing arrangements ending prematurely.

**Securing accommodation**

When accommodation provided through one of the Ukrainian schemes is no longer available, most people will turn to the private sector to find housing. Generally,

there are significant supply and affordability issues in the private sector, but Ukrainians often face additional barriers.

Some private landlords have refused to rent to Ukrainians who are receiving Universal Credit or cannot provide long-term proof of earnings. A survey from March 2023 showed that 49 per cent of Ukrainian refugees were unable to provide a guarantor and 43 per cent have insufficient funds for a deposit.

Over 80 per cent of hosts have reported problems helping Ukrainian guests secure private accommodation. Alternative accommodation cannot always be secured in the same location, meaning families may have to leave school places and other support networks.

Local authorities received funding of £10,500 to support families accommodated during the first year of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has now stopped, and funding for new arrivals has halved. Local authorities have never received funding or placement information for arrivals under the Ukraine Family Scheme.

As the conflict persists, some

charities and organisations that help to source housing placements have had to scale back their support. A survey of 1,200 Homes for Ukraine hosts found that only 12 per cent had been provided with local authority support to help guests to find private rented accommodation.

**Long-term change**

I have called for changes to be made to both schemes, including increased payment for hosts and allowing Ukrainians to switch between Homes for Ukraine and the family scheme. Central government homelessness guidance needs to be updated to provide clearer information about appropriate responses for homeless Ukrainians.

The current schemes are set to last for three years. But halfway through, they are already proving unsuccessful. The government should commit to reviewing these arrangements before the second anniversary of the conflict, in February 2024.

Some local authorities have moved to provide rent deposits and incentives to local landlords to rent to Ukrainians. These actions need to be mainstream, not piecemeal. The statistics show a depressing increase in homelessness each month. These vulnerable people, initially welcomed warmly by the UK, deserve better.

**Richard Machin is a Senior Lecturer, Social Work and Health, Nottingham Trent University**

“

*The schemes rely on the goodwill and capacity of the public to accommodate Ukrainians... in many cases, these arrangements will be, inevitably, short-term... they can’t go on forever*



# Bishop leads prayers for crash victims

**Andy Drozdziak**  
An Irish bishop has led tributes to four young people who died in a car crash while on their way to celebrate exam results.

Luke McSweeney, 24, his sister Grace McSweeney, 18, Zoey Coffey, 18, and Nicole Murphy, 18, died after the car they were travelling in struck a wall and overturned in Clonmel on 25th August.

They had been on their way to celebrate after the three teenagers received their Leaving Certificate exam results earlier that day.

Following the incident, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, said: “We are all shocked by this tragic news of four young lives lost in the car accident yesterday evening near Clonmel, Co Tipperary. I offer my sincere sympathy to all the families, friends, classmates and teachers of those who have died.

“May God help all to have strength and may He take those who have died so young into his loving arms.”

President Michael D Higgins and Irish premier Leo Varadkar also expressed their sympathies to the families and local community.

“For young lives, so full of possibility, to be cut short in this way is



Above, Fr Michael speaking to the media ahead of a vigil in Kickham Plaza, Co Tipperary. Main photo, people light candles at the end of the vigil  
Photos: Brian Lawless/PA



truly devastating and heartbreaking. The whole nation mourns them,” Mr Varadkar said.

The principals of the two schools the teenagers had attended said they had received “excellent” results and were looking forward to the next phase of their lives.

Bishop Cullinan promised that “with the whole community of the

people of Clonmel, the diocese and throughout the country, we will be there to stand beside and support the heart-broken and all those affected by this tragedy.”

Hundreds gathered for a vigil to mourn the deaths of the four young people on 27th August, including classmates of Ms McSweeney and Ms Coffey from Presentation sec-

ondary school, who wore lilac jumpers to commemorate their graduate class of 2023.

Grieving family members were also present at the Kickham Plaza gathering on Sunday evening.

During the vigil, Fr Michael Toomey, chaplain at CBS High School which Mr McSweeney attended, said that people in the Clon-

mel area and around the country had been left speechless by the tragedy.

He said that some people will be struggling to make sense of it, and wondered “why them?”

“The question we will certainly never get the answer to, not in this life anyway,” he added. “As I said to the girls in Loreto the other day, and the lads in the High School, none of us would ever get over their deaths. But we will learn to live with it.

“It will become part of us and, as I also said, it will make us stronger once we grieve properly.”

Many embraced and cried as the vigil came to a close with the song *Rise Up* by Andra Day.

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# Come along to a Pact Roadshow and understand the work we do



## Theresa Alessandro

Come to a Pact Roadshow and meet us! I have written those words many times in the last year or two. I am working my way around the dioceses where Pact has a good 'footprint' of work - and that's most of them!

Pact, Prison Advice and Care Trust, is the national Catholic charity supporting prisoners and their families. We work in more than 60 prisons and in communities across England and Wales. In this, our 125th year, it is sobering to find that Catholic people often have little awareness of Pact. Many are understandably wary of the criminal justice system and those involved with it. This is why a Pact Diocesan Roadshow is so valuable.

For those who accept the invitation and come along, what they find out about is 'the breadth of services which are offered, always with love and care', 'Better



awareness of issues faced by prisoners' families,' and 'Carrying prisoners' dignity for them until they can pick it up again.'

Working in partnership with diocesan Caritas teams, we connect Pact's amazing staff from the nearby prisons with parishioners, Pact volunteers, Catholic prison chaplains, and other organisations working locally.

The diocesan bishop usually participates in the roadshow too. On meeting many of our bishops, I find they are well-used to visiting prisons in their diocese to say Mass and meet with men and women

inside. They are concerned about what happens to people in prison and their children and families in our communities.

At a Pact Roadshow, we first give space to the voices of people with lived experience. We hear from people trying to turn their lives around and family members who tell us they feel they are serving a 'hidden sentence' of isolation and stigma. Hearing these experiences sets us up to speak from the heart for the rest of the time we spend together.

We give space to The Welcome Directory, a multi-faith charity that

helps faith communities become places where people leaving prison find welcome and acceptance.

Of the several hundred faith communities listed in the Welcome Directory, you might wonder how many are Catholic parishes. There are only ten across the whole of England and Wales. I hope this number will grow.

Andy Keen-Downs, our CEO, draws on his experience to talk about how Pact operates in the criminal justice system and how we call for change. At our most recent Roadshow in Birmingham, he told the story of meeting Pope Francis and bringing prisoners and their families to the Holy Father's attention. Local staff bring to life the work they do in prisons and communities in the diocese. You might meet a parish rep or a Pact volunteer who can explain more about what they do - and why.

I hope you will hear something about prisoners and their families and the work of Pact in church on Prisoners' Sunday, which is on 8th October this year.

• **Meanwhile, the next Pact Roadshow is in Northampton Diocese on 18th November. Come and meet us!**

## UK risks 'tidal wave' of heart disease

Britain faces a "tidal wave" of heart disease due to a dependence on ultra-processed food that is causing harm similar to smoking, new studies say. Experts warned that more than half of the British diet is linked to heart attacks and strokes. Campaigners said the findings, presented at the European Society of Cardiology congress in Amsterdam, must act as a "wake-up call" for the Government.

## Home Office looks to tag migrants

Migrants arriving illegally in Britain may be tagged to prevent them escaping. The immigration detention estate can hold only 2,500 people, so officials have been asked to find alternative ways of ensuring that thousands of migrants who arrive illegally but cannot be detained do not abscond.

Home Office officials have been asked to look for alternatives to detention with electronic GPS tags a leading option.

## Five ministers 'may lose their seats'

At least five cabinet ministers are set to lose their seats at the next election, said the inews site. With Labour 15 points ahead of the Tories, cabinet members Grant Shapps, Penny Mordaunt and Mark Harper would be "ejected from the House of Commons", said the outlet.

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



## US star lands role of God in comedy

Hollywood actor Jamie Foxx will play God, with Mickey Rourke playing the Devil, in a new film entitled *Not Another Church Movie*.

Johnny Mack's forthcoming comedy will also star Kevin Daniels, Vivica A. Fox, Tisha Campbell, Jasmine Guy, Kyla Pratt and Lamorne Morris.

The film follows Taylor Pherry, played by Daniels, who is given a mission from God: to tell his family's stories and inspire his community. What he doesn't know is that the Devil has plans of his own. The official tagline states: 'His only concern? His family and community. What he doesn't know is that the Devil has plans of his own.'

"We are thrilled to have Mr. Foxx be a part of this hilarious comedy and bring his incredible talent to the role of God, working with Foxx and Johnny Mack was a true blessing," producer James Michael Cummings said. "This film is a unique blend of new and established talent, and we can't wait to hear the laughs and for audiences to see the magic that happens on the big screen."

Executive Producer Valerie



McCaffrey said: "The talent that has come together for this comedy is unprecedented. All the actors will have fun, especially Foxx as God."

Foxx, 55, said earlier this year that he had "been to hell and back" after being hospitalised in April 2023. Foxx said he had experienced "something that I thought I would never ever go through," adding: "I know a lot of people were...wanting to hear updates, but to be honest with you, I just didn't want you to see me ... with tubes running out of me and trying to figure out if I was going to make it through."

*Not Another Church Movie* will be released later this year.



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# Our Lady showed us how to evangelise at Guadalupe, in a language accessible to all

Our Lady of Guadalupe and other recognised Marian apparitions show clearly how evangelisation does not require complicated plans and elaborate theological explanations but sharing the faith in “a language suitable for all, a language that is comprehensible, like that of Jesus,” Pope Francis said.

At Guadalupe, in fact, “Our Lady proclaims God in the most suitable language – the mother tongue” of St. Juan Diego and the Indigenous people of Mexico, the pope said at his weekly general audience.

Speaking to several thousand people gathered in the Vatican audience hall, the pope returned to his series of audience talks about “apostolic zeal” and “passion for evangelization.”

In each talk in the series, the pope has highlighted a “witness” or witnesses that demonstrate important aspects of sharing the Gospel with others. His focus this time was on “inculturation,” and the “witnesses” he chose were St Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe, who appeared to the indigenous saint in 1531.

Christianity was being preached in the Americas at that time, the pope said, “but unfortunately it had also been accompanied by worldly interests.

“Instead of the path of inculturation, too often the hasty approach of transplanting and imposing pre-constituted models – European, for example – had been taken, lacking respect for the Indigenous peoples.”

Mary, though, appearing to Juan Diego, comes “dressed in the clothing of the native peoples, she speaks

**The pope receives a sombrero – the traditional headwear of Mexico – during his general audience, at which he spoke of St Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe**



their language, she welcomes and loves the local culture,” the pope said. “Mary is mother, and under her mantle every child finds a place. In Mary, God became flesh, and through Mary, he continues to incarnate himself in the lives of peoples.”

Hearing the Gospel in one’s “mother tongue” is effective, the pope said. “Mary speaks to us, too, in our mother tongue, that which we understand well.”

The pope used the audience as an

opportunity to thank “the many mothers and grandmothers who pass the faith on to their children and grandchildren,” and he asked the people in the audience hall to give a round of applause to mothers and grandmothers.

“As Mary shows, the Gospel is communicated in simplicity,” the pope said. “Our Lady always chooses those who are simple,” whether appearing to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico or to St. Berna-

dette Soubirous at Lourdes, France, or the three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal.

All three apparitions also show that having zeal and passion for sharing the Gospel does not mean everything will go off without a hitch, the pope said. Our Lady of Guadalupe sent Juan Diego to the local bishop to ask him to build a church on Tepeyac Hill. The bishop dismissed him twice.

“Despite zeal, the unexpected ar-

rives, sometimes from the church itself,” the pope said.

“Don’t forget this; it’s very important: To proclaim the Gospel, it is not enough to witness to the good, but it is necessary to be able to endure evil,” the pope said. “Even today, in so many places, inculturating the Gospel and evangelising cultures requires perseverance and patience, it requires not fearing conflict, not losing heart.”

Pope Francis told the crowd he was thinking particularly of a specific country, which he did not name, “where Christians are persecuted because they are Christians and cannot practise their religion well and in peace.”

But Mary encourages and reassures Juan Diego, telling him, “Am I not here, I who am your mother?”

“This is beautiful,” the pope said. “So many times, when we are in desolation, in sadness, in difficulty, she also says it to us, to our hearts: ‘Am I not here, I who am your mother?’”

After Our Lady of Guadalupe gave Juan Diego a sign – her image on his cloak – and the bishop approved the building of a church, he dedicated his life to welcoming pilgrims and evangelising them.

Today at the Mexican shrine and at Marian shrines around the world, people continue to be evangelized in a “simple and genuine” way, the pope said.

“We need to go to these oases of consolation and mercy, where faith is expressed in our mother tongue, where we lay down the labours of life in Our Lady’s arms and return to life with peace in our hearts.”

## Vatican moves to calm Ukraine after pope’s comments criticised as endorsement of strong Russian leaders

The Vatican has been forced to head off a potential row with Ukraine, after the head of its Catholic Church said he was shocked when Pope Francis told Russian Catholic youths to be proud of their heritage and cited two historic Russian leaders that, the archbishop said, are “the worst example of imperialism and extreme Russian nationalism.”

“In the context of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, such statements inspire the neocolonial ambitions of the aggressor,” Archbishop Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, said.

“The examples cited by the Holy Father actually contradict his teaching on peace,” the archbishop said, calling for a clarification because “there is a danger that these words may be perceived as support for the nationalism and imperialism that has caused the war in Ukraine.”

The pope made the comments in a video call with young Russians participating in a Catholic youth festival. He told them: “Do not forget your heritage. You are heirs of the great Russia – the great Russia of saints, of kings, the great Russia of Peter the Great, Catherine II, the great, educated Russian Empire of so much culture, of so much humanity. Never give up this heritage.”

Matteo Bruni, of the Vatican press office, said: “As is clear from the context, the pope intended to encourage young people to preserve and promote what is positive in Russia’s great cultural and spiritual heritage, and certainly not to glorify an imperialistic logic and governing personalities,” which were “cited to point to historical periods of reference.”

The comments were also criticised by Ukrainian politicians who still believe the Holy Father has not



been strong enough in his condemnation of Russia’s invasion of their homeland.

The Vatican nunciature in Ukraine also said that nothing should be read into the comments: Pope Francis “has never endorsed imperialistic notions,” it said.

A spokesman added: “According

to some, Pope Francis might have encouraged young Russian Catholics to draw inspiration from historical Russian figures known for imperialistic and expansionist ideas and actions that negatively impacted neighbours, including Ukraine.

“However, we firmly reject the aforementioned interpretations, as

Pope Francis has never endorsed imperialistic notions.

“On the contrary, he is a staunch opponent of any form of imperialism or colonialism across all peoples and situations. His words are to be understood in this same context.”

The pope’s comments were mainly centred on creating dialogue between Ukraine and Russia in a hope that a future peace could flourish.

Fides, the news agency of the Dicastery for Evangelization, reported that a young woman asked Pope Francis how diplomacy could end the war in Ukraine.

He told her that diplomacy does not ignore conflict, but it strives to foster dialogue and unity, Pope Francis told her. “Diplomacy is not easy but does so much good for humanity. Diplomacy always builds, it does not destroy. It following a path where unity is superior to conflict.”



# Cardinal Burke sees 'grave harm' in synod, claiming confusion and division

**Cindy Wooden**

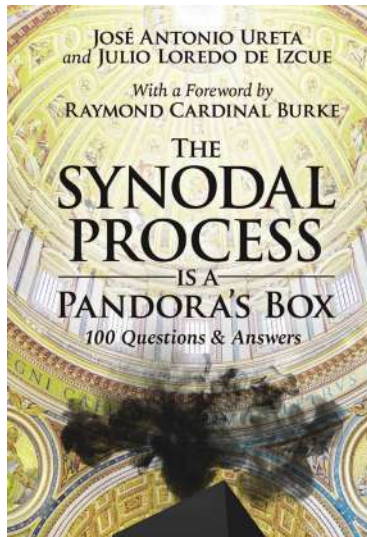
The synod process underway around the world and at the Vatican is inflicting "evident and grave harm" on the Catholic Church, retired US Cardinal Raymond L. Burke wrote in a letter published as the foreword to a new book.

Writing in *The Synodal Process Is a Pandora's Box*, the often controversial cleric said: "Synodality and its adjective, synodal, have become slogans behind which a revolution is at work to change radically the Church's self-understanding, in accord with a contemporary ideology which denies much of what the church has always taught and practised."

The book, which is authored by Jose Antonio Ureta and Julio Lored de Izcue, is a compilation of 100 questions and answers purporting to show how Pope Francis' reforms of the Synod of Bishops and his vision of a 'synodal' Church threaten "to demolish Holy Mother Church."

The general secretariat of the synod at the Vatican had not commented on the book or the cardinal's letter.

Pope Francis launched the current process for the Synod of Bishops in 2021 with listening sessions



on the local, national and regional levels around the world. The synod assembly will meet at the Vatican in October and again in 2024 to discuss ways to work 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.'

Remarking on how the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches have maintained a synod structure, Pope Francis has said the universal Catholic Church must rediscover synodality and recover it in a way that promotes real participation, effective communion and responsibility

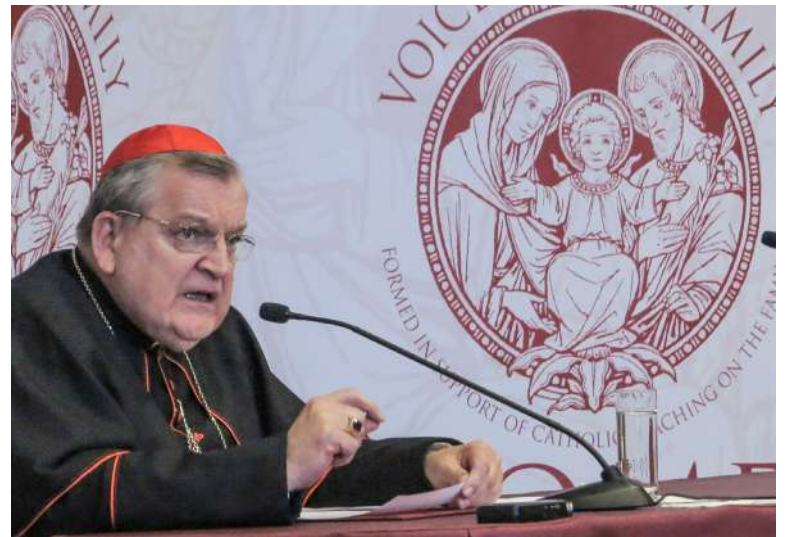
for mission by all the baptised.

Cardinal Burke's letter, which stems from 16th June, congratulates Ureta and Lored de Izcue for the Italian edition of the book. The authors are members of the Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, and the English translation of the book with Cardinal Burke's foreword was released in late August by its American branch.

Catholics have always professed the Church to be "one, holy and apostolic," the cardinal said. Now it is "to be defined by synodality, a term which has no history in the doctrine of the Church and for which there is no reasonable definition."

He spotlighted the continuing disagreements with how the process was being ran in Germany as an example of how the synod was damaging the Church. In Germany, "the Synodal path was a process that sowed confusion, error and division," the cardinal said; its upcoming synod assembly "is rightly to be feared" at the Vatican, with many thinking that the "same confusion and error and division will be visited upon the Universal Church."

In fact, the cardinal claimed, "it has already begun to happen through the preparation of the syn-



od at the local level."

"Only the truth of Christ, as it is handed down to us in the unchanging and unchangeable doctrine and discipline of the Church, can address effectively the situation by uncovering the ideology at work, by correcting the deadly confusion and error and division it is propagating, and by inspiring the members of the Church to undertake the true reform which is daily conversion to Christ alive for us in the Church's teaching, her prayer and worship, and her practice of the virtues and

discipline," the cardinal wrote.

Cardinal Burke has long been seen as a standard bearer for conservative views in the Church. He served as bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin, from 1995 to 2004, as archbishop of St Louis from 2004 to 2008, and as prefect of the Apostolic Signature at the Vatican from 2008 to 2014.

Cardinal Burke is not one of the more than 450 cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and laypeople whose participation at the synod assembly was announced in July.

## 'Reactionary' US criticised for stifling pope's hopes for a reformed Church

The Catholic Church in the United States has "a very strong reactionary" element that is well-organised and refuses to see how Catholic doctrine can and must grow and mature, Pope Francis told Jesuits in Portugal.

"I would like to remind those people that 'indietrismo' (being backward-looking) is useless, and we need to understand that there is an appropriate evolution in the understanding of matters of faith and morals," the pope said in response to a question about US Catholics raised during his visit to Lisbon for World Youth Day.

On each overseas trip he makes, where there is a Jesuit community in the host nation, the pope spends some time with them - though details of their conversation often take a few weeks to emerge.

A Jesuit brother had told the pope he spent his sabbatical year in the United States and something that made "a great impression" on him was how many Catholics, including bishops, were "criticising your leadership of the Church."

"In the United States the situation is not easy: There is a very strong reactionary attitude. It is or-



**A smiling pope pictured at last Sunday's Angelus, at which he asked for the faithful's prayers for his trip to Mongolia (see story right)**

ganised and shapes the way people belong, even emotionally," the pope responded.

"Those American groups you talk about, so closed, are isolating themselves," Pope Francis said. "Instead of living by doctrine, by the true doctrine that always develops and bears fruit, they live by ideologies. When you abandon doctrine in life to replace it with an ideology, you have lost, you have lost as in war."

The pope insisted there is a difference between haphazardly changing church teaching and growing in understanding.

As examples, Pope Francis said, "Today it is a sin to possess atomic bombs. The death penalty is a sin; you cannot employ it, but it was not so before. As for slavery, some pontiffs before me tolerated it, but things are different today."

"So, you change, you change, but with the criteria" taught by St. Vincent that it be 'ut annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate' - consolidated by years, enlarged by time and refined by age, the pope said.

"In other words, doctrine also progresses, expands and consolidates with time and becomes firmer, but it is always progressing," he said. "Change develops from the roots upward, growing in accord with these three criteria."

"The view of Church doctrine as monolithic is erroneous," the pope said.

Another Jesuit, who works in campus ministry at a university, asked Pope Francis about his insistence at World Youth Day in Lisbon that there is room in the Church for

everyone and about how to respond to Catholics who identify as gay, who want to be full and active members of the Church, and yet do not feel in conscience that their sexual activity is sinful.

"Jesus is very clear about this," the pope said. "The door is open to everyone; everyone has their own space in the Church."

The question becomes how the Church can help each person "live so that they can occupy that place with maturity, and this applies to all kinds of people," he said.

"What I don't like at all," he said, is that "we look at the so-called 'sin of the flesh' with a magnifying glass" and tend to ignore other sins. "If you exploited workers, if you lied or cheated, it didn't matter, and instead (only) sins below the waist are relevant."

The first Church welcomes everyone, Pope Francis insisted, and then "the most appropriate pastoral attitude" is taken for each person.

He added: "It takes a lot of sensitivity and creativity to accompany people spiritually and pastorally. But everyone, everyone, everyone is called to live in the Church. Never forget that."

## Pope asks for prayers as he visits Mongolia

Pope Francis asked people to accompany him to "the heart of Asia," Mongolia, with their prayers as he arrived in the capital, Ulaanbaatar today (Friday, 1st Sept. 1).

Pope Francis told pilgrims in St Peter's Square that it was "a much-desired visit, which will be an opportunity to embrace a Church that is small in number, but vibrant in faith."

The visit will be a chance to meet "a noble, wise people, with a strong religious tradition that I will have the honour of getting to know in the context of an interreligious event."

Pope Francis said he would travel to the country as "a brother to all."

Mongolia has a population of about 3.3 million and almost half of them are Buddhist.

He made his comments on 27th August - the feast of St Monica, mother of St Augustine, who "with her prayers and her tears," asked the Lord for the conversion of her son. "Let us pray for the many mothers who suffer when their children are a little lost or who find themselves on difficult paths in life."



## IN BRIEF

**Jesuits lose status as Nicaragua continues attack on Church**

The Nicaraguan regime has extinguished the Jesuits' legal status and ordered the expropriation of its assets, effectively making it illegal for the Society of Jesus to operate in the Central American country.

The cancellation of the Jesuits' status follows the confiscation of the Jesuit-run Central American University in August, after the authorities accused the school of hosting a "centre of terrorism."

The Jesuit province in Central America condemned the cancellation, saying that it was part of a Government policy of systematic repression that violates human rights and appears "to be aimed at consolidating a totalitarian state."

"The decision was made without the administrative procedures established by law being carried out," it added. "We hold the president (Daniel Noriega) responsible."

The status of non-citizen Jesuits still in the country remains uncertain as they relied on the order to sponsor their visas, and are now vulnerable to deportation.

**Pakistani Christians take protest to UN**

Catholic and Christian Pakistani-Americans have held a protest against recent anti-Christian violence in Pakistan at the United Nations in New York.

Protesters carrying crosses, Pakistani flags, American flags and placards shouted, 'Stop burning churches in Pakistan' and 'Justice for Christians in Pakistan'.

Representatives from the Pakistan Mission to the UN did not appear at the protest.

As reported in last week's *Universe*, the latest round of anti-Christian violence was sparked on 16th August when a Christian man and a friend were accused of desecrating a Koran, the holy book of Islam. In the rampage that followed in Jaranwala, about 210 miles north of Islamabad, 26 churches of various Christian denominations were burned. The government has pledged to give local Christians affected by the violence two million rupees (\$6,800) in compensation.

"We are here to condemn the inhuman acts, the cruelty, the hypocrisy, and all the inhumanity that is happening in Pakistan," said Aaron Bashir, a former candidate for US Congress from Philadelphia. "People had to flee for their lives."

He called on the US government to pressure Pakistan to protect the lives and rights of Christians, and to welcome Christian immigrants from Pakistan fleeing religious persecution.

# Laudato Si' 2.0: Pope confirms details of updated encyclical

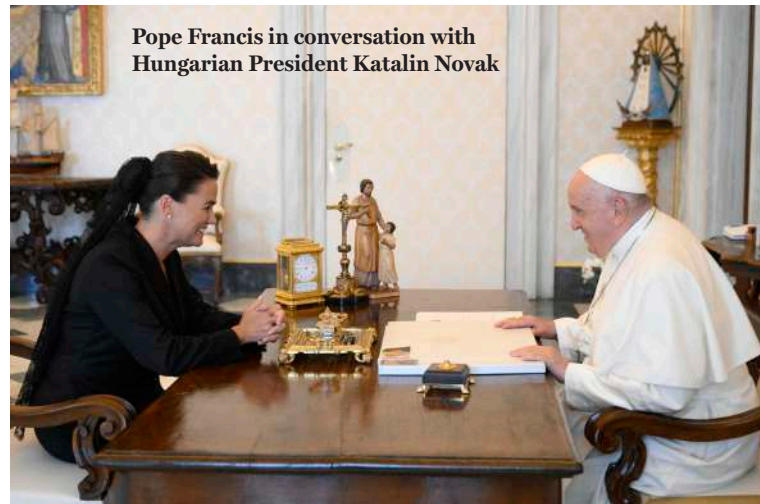
**Cindy Wooden**

Rumours that the pope is to publish an update to his landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, have been given more substance after the Hungarian President revealed details of a meeting he had with the pope, at which Laudatory 2.0 was discussed.

Katalin Novak told an Italian newspaper that the document will be published on 4th October, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi and the day that will mark the end of the Vatican's month-long Season of Creation celebration.

"He is working on writing a new encyclical, a new edition of *Laudato Si'*," Novak told *Il Messaggero*. "The first encyclical was promulgated in 2015 and since so many things have changed since then, he told me there was a need to update it. Alongside the issues already covered there will be others, new ones. It will focus on the effects of climate change."

Speaking to young people in Lisbon at the International Congress on the Care of Creation, Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, drew attention to how "overwhelming global evidence shows that humans have significantly altered all the earth's



Pope Francis in conversation with Hungarian President Katalin Novak

systems, the atmosphere, the oceans, the continents and ecosystems, the whole community of life on earth."

He pointed to "disturbing concurrent trends" of ice rapidly disappearing from glaciers and the Arctic and Antarctic seas, ocean temperatures rising and extreme weather events like floods and wildfires becoming more frequent and more intense.

Muriel Fleury, who leads the communication section of the dicastery, said that the pope's announcement was welcome news be-

cause people around the globe are worried. "They listen to Pope Francis and every group of bishops that visits the dicastery raises questions and concerns about the environment and Catholic teaching on ecology."

Pope Francis also mentioned the new document in talks with young people from Melbourne, Australia, Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli said, but the group "decided to keep mum about it, to let Pope Francis share the news when he wanted."

The archbishop said the papal announcement came in response to a

question from one of the young people and his answer showed them "his deep concern that the care of our common home needs even greater attention. You could sense the urgency in his reply."

Cardinal Czerny said the pope's message is theological and spiritual. "The required change is much more than simply political or technological solutions," he said. "The climate, along with the atmosphere, earth and waters of our planet, constitute a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. We must become more aware of our common origin, our mutual belonging, and our shared future."

"This basic knowledge would permit development of new convictions, new connections and attachments, new styles of life."

In the pope's message for the Season of Creation, released in May, Pope Francis called for "an end to the senseless war against creation."

Christians, he said, must begin with "that 'ecological conversion' which St. John Paul II encouraged us to embrace: the renewal of our relationship with creation so that we no longer see it as an object to be exploited but cherish it instead as a sacred gift from our Creator."

## Prayer for Creation demands end to 'war on environment'

**People must end the "senseless war against creation" and help victims of environmental and climate injustice, Pope Francis said.**

"We must do this by resolving to transform our hearts, our lifestyles and the public policies ruling our societies," the pope said in his message for the 2023 World Day of Prayer for Creation.

**Some injustices needing immediate**

**responses are "economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, the continued exploitation of fossil fuels and predatory industries depleting and polluting freshwater, he said.**

The World Day of Prayer for Creation, 1st September, marks the start of the ecumenical Season of Creation. It concludes

on 4th October, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology.

The pope added: "God wants everyone to strive to be just in every situation, to live according to his laws and thus to enable life to flourish." When the faithful keep "a right relationship with God, humanity and nature, then justice and peace can flow like a never-failing stream of pure water."

## Australia to hold vote on indigenous rights

Australians will vote on 14th October on a proposed law to create a so-called Indigenous Voice to parliament in the nation's first referendum in a generation.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the referendum date on Wednesday, triggering just over six weeks of intensifying campaigning by both sides of the argument.

The referendum would enshrine in the Australian constitution an Indigenous Voice to parliament, a collection of advocates aimed at giving the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority more say on government policy.

Mr Albanese urged people to vote 'yes' as polls showed more than 80 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – intended to do so.

"Let's be very clear about the alternative: because voting 'no' leads nowhere. It means nothing changes," Mr Albanese told 400 Voice supporters in the city of Adelaide.

"Voting 'no' closes the door on this opportunity to move forward. I say today, don't close the door on constitutional recognition, don't close the door on listening to communities to get better results."

"Don't close the door on an idea that came from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves, and don't close the door on the next generation of Indigenous Australians. Vote 'yes'."

Australia has not held a referendum since 1999 and a referendum has not passed since 1977.

No referendum has ever passed without bipartisan support and the major parties remain divided over the Voice.

Proponents argue that giving Indigenous people a say in policies that affect their lives would lead to less disadvantage.

Indigenous Australians account for 3.8 per cent of population and they die around eight years younger than Australia's wider population.

Megan Davis, an Indigenous lawyer who helped craft the Voice proposal, said Outback Indigenous residents should not have move to the national capital Canberra to "have a say in the laws and policies made about their lives."

"Best practice globally tells us that human beings are more likely to flourish if they have control over their lives," Ms Davis told the same audience addressed by Mr Albanese.

"To dream, to have vision, to plan: this is what the Voice is about. It permits our people to have a seat at the table."

Proponents say there would be no Indigenous right of veto over government policy and legislators would be free to disregard the Voice's representations.

But opponents argue the courts might interpret the Voice's constitutional powers in unpredictable ways, creating legal uncertainty. They also say the Voice could divide the nation along racial lines.

One Indigenous senator, Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, told reporters she was against the referendum: "It is evident to me that this elite proposal is about division in our country."

"And it is that old rule of divide and conquer that I can't stand for."

"I'm not going to allow a line to run straight through the middle of my family within our constitution," Ms Price added, referring to her mixed-race heritage.



# Pope asks world to renew prayers for Ukraine

The Pope has called on Catholics around the world to pray again for Ukraine as the country marked its independence day.

Noting that its special day fell on the feast of St. Bartholomew, the apostle, the pope entrusted to him “dear Ukraine, so harshly tried by the war.”

He said: “Brothers and sisters, let’s pray for our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who are suffering so much. The war is cruel. So many children disappeared, so many people dead.”

According to the Ukrainian government’s ‘Children of War’ website, 503 children had been killed as of Aug. 23 and more than 19,500 children have been forcibly taken to Russia.

“Please,” the pope said, “pray. Do not forget tormented Ukraine.”

In his weekly video message, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, said that while Ukrainians “give thanks to the Lord God for the precious gift of freedom,” in the context of war “we are gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of freedom, of what it entails to be free individuals, and recognising that in order to guarantee the right of existence for the Ukrainian people, it is essential to have our own state.”

“The main pillars for building this state include respect for human dignity and the preservation of freedom,” the archbishop said.

“Freedom is a spiritual category. Being free is not limited only to escaping oppression or foreign domination,” he said. “True freedom involves being free for something. We recognize that the highest form of freedom is manifested in love, in the act of sacrificing oneself for God and neighbour.”



A young woman mourns on Independence Day in Lviv, Ukraine, as she visits the tomb of her relative, a Ukrainian serviceman who was killed in a fight against Russian troops amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Photo: Roman Baluk, Reuters

## New migrant tragedy in the Med

Greek authorities have confirmed the deaths of four more migrants after their boat sank off the island of Lesbos. 18 were rescued.

Over the weekend, the Greek coastguard picked up dozens of people from boats in the eastern Aegean, part of an increase in new arrivals over the past two months.

More than 14,000 people have reached Greece by land and sea so far this year. That is about one in 10 of Mediterranean crossings, most of which – about 104,000 – were to Italy. Arrivals in Greece for the whole of 2022 totalled 19,000.

The government has attributed the rise in migrant crossings to bet-

ter summer weather and smugglers taking advantage of an increase in tourists’ boats in the Aegean.

Human rights groups and migrants denounced the government for carrying out illegal summary deportations of people arriving in the country without allowing them to apply for asylum, an accusation the government strongly denied.

The latest tragedy comes only a handful of weeks since what is believed to be the largest loss of migrant life in a single incident, when a battered fishing trawler heading from Libya to Italy sank with an estimated 500-750 people on board. Only 104 survivors were found.



Why do we take Holy Communion?

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

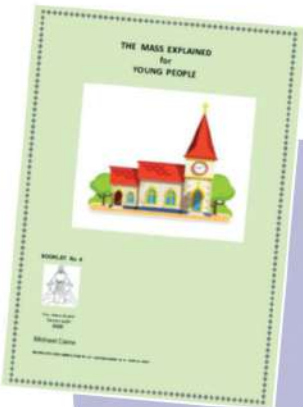
- If they asked, could you answer questions such as:
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  - Why do we say Amen?
  - What's God's Grace?
  - Why do we go to Confession – and Mass?
  - What's Communion about?

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# Faith leaders call on West to grant more debt relief to put Africa back on its feet

**Fredrick Nzwili**

Ahead of a series of major meetings of world leaders in September, including the Africa Climate Summit, the G20 New Delhi Summit and the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Catholic bishops and faith leaders in Africa are calling for debt relief for the continent to give Africa a “life line” to escape the multiple crises plaguing its population.

Amid discontent linked to the rising cost of food and living and growing inflation in Africa, economic burdens have been frustrating development, swelling poverty, and triggering conflicts and protests in some of the countries, according to the leaders.

The keyword for them to fix many pressing needs of African people is debt, or rather its reduction.

External debt in Africa stands at a total of \$1.1 trillion, with 25 of the countries hard hit by serious debt crises. ‘External debt’ is the portion of a country’s debt borrowed from foreign lenders, including commercial banks, governments or international financial institutions.

African countries have been borrowing to finance their national budgets (debt financing) but have been incurring an exorbitant interest rate in the process of repayment, frustrating their efforts to achieve the global sustainable development goals and climate goals, according to faith leaders.

The leaders are confident that debt reduction would come as a relief and benefit millions of ordinary people.

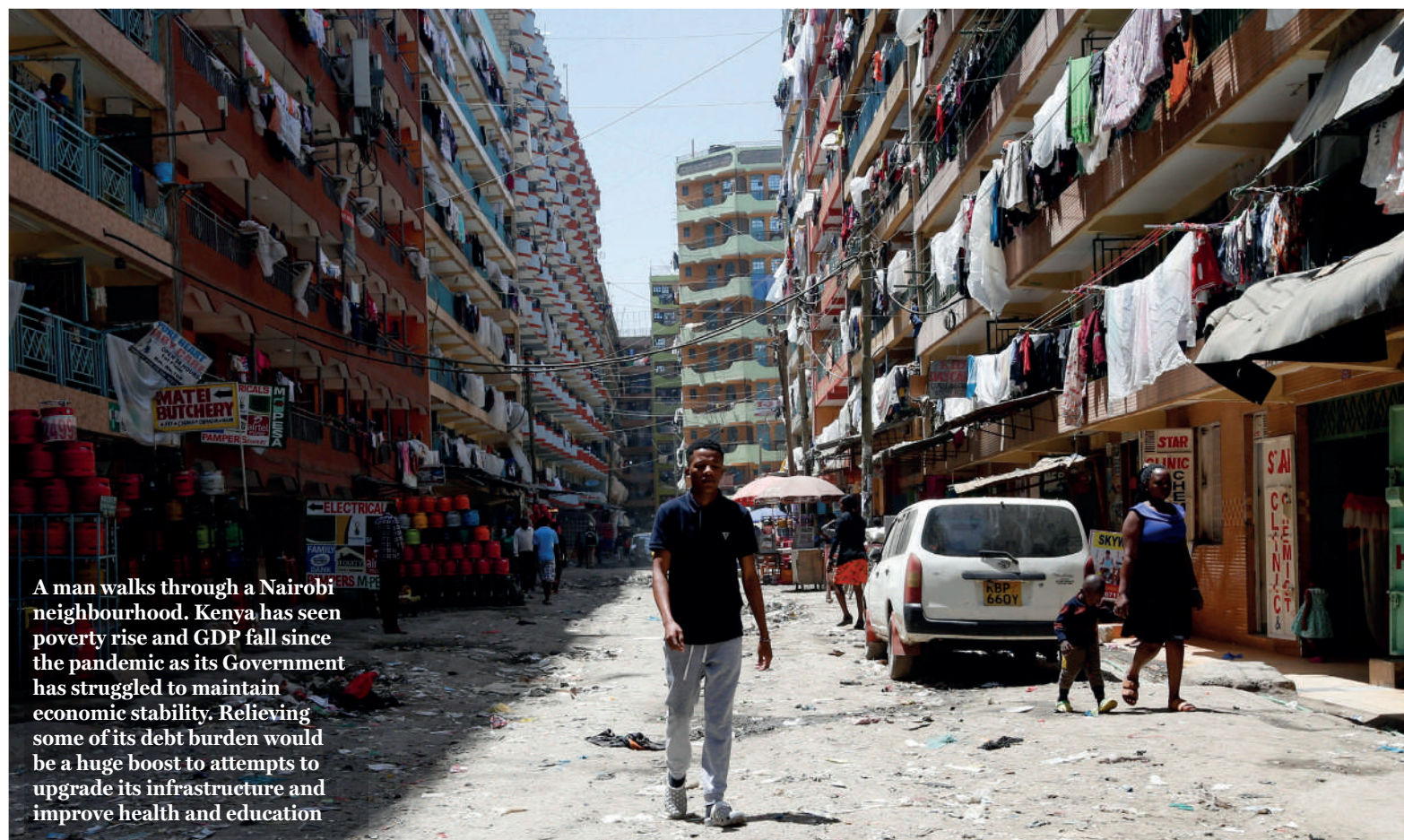
“We reassert that ... the unified voice of African faith leaders emerges with unwavering clarity and determination,” said Bishop John Obala Owaa of Ngong, a pointing out “how Africa can emerge better from today’s multiple crises.”

“Our respective Holy Scriptures emphasise the pursuit of justice, guiding us in our actions and decisions,” the bishop said on behalf of Christians, Muslims and members of African traditional religions participating in a faith meeting in Nairobi.

“We urge the establishment of a debt reduction process that allows borrowers to quickly reduce debt payments to protect crucial development and climate investments,” the leaders stated.

Hosted by Caritas Africa, Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network and the Jubilee USA Network, interfaith leaders gathered at the Elysian Resort in Nairobi to discuss achieving sustainable development and support Africa’s recovery.

The leaders stressed that right now most African countries are



**A man walks through a Nairobi neighbourhood. Kenya has seen poverty rise and GDP fall since the pandemic as its Government has struggled to maintain economic stability. Relieving some of its debt burden would be a huge boost to attempts to upgrade its infrastructure and improve health and education**

emerging from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their food systems have been disrupted by droughts linked to climate change, armed conflicts and more recently the war in Ukraine, which has destabilised food imports supply chains.

“Given that over 45 per cent of Africa’s debt is held by private creditors, financial centres governing these contracts must pass laws ensuring these creditors participate in debt relief,” said Bishop Owaa.

In the 1990s, faith leaders were among those who lined up in the Jubilee Movement to push for ‘breaking the chains of debt’ in developing countries, the leaders recalled, but they also are worried that after more than 30 years, the debt crisis had only intensified.

In 2005, a push by the Jubilee 2000, a movement in over 40 countries that called for debt cancellation in poor countries, resulted in a debt cancellation agreement made in London by the finance ministers from the Group of 7 to cancel \$130 billion of debt for 36 countries, most recently Chad in May 2015. The G7 countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, with the EU tagged on as “non-enumerated member.”

The cancellation was met with celebrations and resulted in poverty reduction in the African countries, but the faith leaders argue that the

“crippling burden of unsustainable debts persists” in the countries, since the challenges of international and domestic finance systems have not been addressed.

“As we approach a new Jubilee year in 2025, that promise remains unfulfilled,” said Bishop Owaa, adding that “the stakes of this debt crisis are much higher than before the last Jubilee year. ... We need large investments to save the planet that sustains life in Africa and elsewhere, during a window that is

rapidly closing.”

According to analysts, in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, it reduced economic activities while increasing government spending. This also slowed down the governments’ investments in key areas such as education, health and infrastructure, as it also worsened the debt burden.

“One way to support African countries is to provide debt relief, grants, and concessional loans. This would help to ease the debt

burden and enable African countries to invest in critical areas such as health care, education, and infrastructure development,” Fr Charles Chilufya, a priest working with the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar as the director of the Justice and Ecology Office, told the annual spring meetings of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group and the IMF in April.

“Additionally, addressing the root causes of the debt crisis, such as the unfair global financial architecture, corruption and weak governance, will be crucial in preventing a recurrence of the crisis,” he added.

But at the same time, the faith leaders admitted that corruption within the African countries’ governments, leading to misuse of funds, has been exacerbating the debt crisis.

“To avert recurring debt cycles, we, the faith leaders, urge countries to adopt laws and practices that advocate responsible lending and borrowing,” Bishop Owaa said.

The leaders are preparing to ask the heads of states and finance ministers attending key international meetings in September and the World Bank and IMF annual meetings in Marrakesh, Morocco, in October to take actions that can help Africa tackle its crises.

But they also want the African governments to take action on corruption and theft of public funds so that finances can be used to address the needs of citizens.



**Sudanese women prepare a meal in their makeshift home, in a refugee camp for internally displaced people**



# Church told it's time to speak out as Belarus tightens its grip on religion

**Three years after a disputed election, the Belarus Church is being urged to speak up for the persecuted. Jonathan Luxmoore reports**

A Christian campaigner has urged Catholic Church leaders and the Vatican to condemn worsening human rights abuses in Belarus, after another Catholic priest was arrested in front of his parishioners for spreading “extremist material.”

“Far from hiding their violence, the police are now highlighting it – to show no one is protected and to instill a climate of fear,” said Natallia Vasilevich, who is director of Belarus’ ecumenical Christian Vision organisation, operating in exile from Germany, and an Orthodox theologian and a human rights lawyer.

“Some people think speaking out will escalate the conflict – and we shouldn’t judge those effectively held hostage inside the country. But the Church and Vatican have significant influence and should be promoting freedom from persecution. For Christians, it’s devastating when they say nothing,” Vasilevich said.

The Orthodox theologian spoke as a priest from Pervomaisk’s Exaltation of the Holy Cross Parish, Fr Antoni Adamovich, was freed pending incitement charges after being arrested on 13th August while leaving church after Sunday Mass.

A spokesman for Belarus’ Grodno Diocese, Fr Yuri Martynovich, said that the priest had faced “standard accusations” but was now back at home, adding that fellow clergy were “praying daily to conduct their mission in peace.”

However, Vasilevich said the Church’s “total lack of public support” for Catholics facing “threats and violence” had caused many to leave the country.

She added that Christian Vision had been asked by the Church not to publish news of anti-Catholic measures, but had only been notified of Fr Adamovich’s arrest by eyewitnesses.

“When even small-scale resistance means a lot, it’s significant that parishioners prevented his detention during Mass – although they may not have realised the repression this could bring down on them,” Vasilevich said.

“Although public statements may not change much, some people are choosing to react anyway, knowing that failing to do so means betraying those facing persecution,” she said.

The Catholic Church, whose members make up a 10th of Belarus’s population of 9.4 million, has not reacted publicly to mistreatment of citizens opposing

the 29-year rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, since one of its former leaders, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz of Minsk-Mohilev, was made to retire in January 2021 after being temporarily barred from re-entering the country. The Church has silently sided with protesters in the outbreak of political unrest after the August 2020 re-election of Lukashenko, accepting protesters in churches.

Christian Vision named 22 Catholic priests who have been targeted for persecution since Lukashenko’s disputed re-election in August 2020, as well as 19 Orthodox clergy, 14 Protestants and five pastors from Belarus’s small Greek Catholic Church.

Among recent cases, a priest from Novogrudok’s St Michael the Archangel Church, Fr Yuri Zhegarin, was fined and had his telephone confiscated after reposting a radio report on social media.

Two other young priests, Fr Yuri Reshetko and Fr Valery Dovgil, both fled Belarus after being detained and beaten when police raided Minsk’s Blessed Virgin Mary Cathedral during Mass on 13th July.

The cathedral’s 23-year rector, Fr Antoni Klimatovich, was transferred to another parish at Zaslavl a week earlier, after being interrogated by police and attacked by state media.

Vasilevich said Archbishop Iosif Staneusky of Minsk-Mohilev had “continued as if nothing was happening,” according to members of the congregation, when Fr Reshetko and Fr Dovgil were seized during Mass.

She added that the submissive stance of Belarus’ Catholic bishops contrasted with that of the Protestant Church, whose leaders publicly protested when a pastor, Vyacheslav Goncharenko, was jailed 14th August for complaining about anti-religious actions, including the bulldozing of a chapel in June.

“We’re aware of the responsibility placed on us in reporting such cases, since what we write and show could make someone’s

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*Church leaders appeared set on continuing their silence for fear of even harsher repression ... but if the new legislation is rigorously applied, the Church will face many new problems ...*



**Flags fly during a protest against the election 'victory' of Belarusian leader President Alexander Lukashenko**

position worse,” the Christian Vision director said

“We also know many people think this isn’t the time for conflict with the government. But it would be good if Church leaders could act as witnesses and be more radical in their Christian faith.”

Besides regular clergy arrests, a new law titled ‘On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations’, due for enactment in September, is expected to tighten control over Church communities by requiring them to re-register, and giving state officials stronger powers to ban groups deemed to violate legal conditions.

In a June statement, the Catholic bishops’ conference warned the proposed law would “fundamentally change” legal regulations on “the right to freedom of conscience” and “complicate the dynamics of state-confessional relations.”

They added that the Catholic Church would “face difficulties” implementing the law’s proposed ban on minority languages and curbs on monastic communities, pilgrimages and religious literature, as well as its tightened controls over religious education.

The Vatican’s apostolic nunciature in Minsk did not respond to inquiries about the law’s

implications, while the bishops’ spokesman, Fr Yuri Sanko, was unavailable for comment.

A Catholic priest now exiled in neighbouring Poland, Fr Vyacheslav Barok, revealed that he had been told not to make public statements by Bishop Oleg Butkevich of Vitebsk.

However, a prominent lay Catholic said there were doubts the bishops’ reservations would be taken into account when the Belarus National Assembly met to approve the religion law.

He added that a priest who drafted the bishops’ statement had been arrested in July after “negative, pejorative reports” in the state media, and said Church leaders appeared set on “continuing their silence” for fear of “even harsher repression.”

“If the new legislation is rigorously applied, the Church will face many new problems – particularly through having to re-register all its parishes and communities,” said Artiom Tkaczuk, a Catholic social worker living in Poland. “The documentation may not be accepted by the authorities because of some minor flaw, and this will certainly be used as an instrument of influence and control.”

The new religion law and clergy arrests were not mentioned in a Church report on the visit at the end of June to Minsk by Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, which said talks with state and government officials had been

“

*The Vatican has instruments and measures available. We’re told they are making full use of these. But while we see no results at all, it’s difficult to trust this*

“meaningful and constructive” despite “certain differences in views and approaches.”

Vasilevich said outside attention on Belarus had waned during the Ukraine war, adding that there was “no evidence” Vatican diplomacy and the bishops’ policy of silence had provided “greater protection or improved conditions” for Catholics.

“Given the growing police violence and near impossibility of gaining legal representation, many people have understandably adopted a minimalist attitude in their efforts to survive,” the Christian Vision director said.

“But the Vatican is outside Belarus and has instruments and measures available. We’re told they are making full use of these. But while we see no results at all, it’s difficult to trust these claims,” Vasilevich added.

Belarus’ estimated 1,500 political prisoners include numerous lay Catholics, as well as human rights campaigner Ales Bialiatski, winner of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize.



# What's that old religious item lying in the shadows? Best call the relic sleuth!

Recently, a visitor to a monastery in Wisconsin, USA entered a dimly lit chapel to pray. He noticed near the altar a mysterious, folded parchment in a brass reliquary with a faded wax seal.

The monks seemed unsure of the reliquary's contents or origin. The visitor's curiosity was piqued, and the abbot gave him permission to temporarily remove and investigate the packet.

Back at his office, the visitor carefully opened the packet and discovered a minute relic. He spent hours researching this puzzling treasure and was able to decipher the wax seal as that of a patriarch of Venice. He also found the relic likely dated back to the Catholic Church's earliest days.

In the end, he came to an astounding conclusion: The relic was a tiny fragment of the body of St. John of Damascus (676-749 AD), the last-named Father of the Church, who was known for his strong defence of relics.

The visitor cleaned and sealed the relic, set it in a new gold reliquary, and documented its millennium's worth of history. It now sits, more visible and adorned, in the Wisconsin monastery chapel.

The monastery visitor was Sean Pilcher, 28, a member of All Saints Parish in Minneapolis who, despite his comparatively young age, is an internationally known specialist in the identification, restoration and authentication of Catholic relics.

Working out of his home in South Minneapolis, he responds to requests from parishes, religious orders and individuals from around the world to authenticate relics, return them to places of honour and ensure they receive the reverential treatment they deserve.

Pilcher's work is crucial and in high demand. Traditionally, the Church required that every altar have a relic. Many relics have not been adequately preserved, in Pilcher's view, and most eventually require repair. He estimated that last year alone, he worked on over 500 relics. While he occasionally offers informal advice on relics free of charge, he is compensated for most of his projects.

The veneration of relics reflects both human nature and core principles of the Catholic faith, Pilcher explained.

"At the core of the practice is a yearning for the good that has gone before us – especially for things that call to mind departed loved ones," he observed, pointing to a cherished clock that belonged to his

**Sean Pilcher at work at his home in Wisconsin. To be an effective relics sleuth, you need "finely tuned understanding of relic knowledge, Latin, paleography (deciphering ancient manuscripts), artifact restoration, church history and heraldry".**



grandmother, which hangs in his living room. "It could be our child's first shoes, a lock of hair, a piece of the Berlin Wall, a flag that flew over a pivotal battlefield. The things we hold onto tell us who we are."

"The church recognises this deep longing and elevates it," he continued, noting that St. Thomas Aquinas, who always wore a relic of St. Agnes around his neck, reminds us that the soul in Heaven is incomplete until united with the body at the final judgment.

"A person present in Heaven is still truly connected to his body on Earth," said Pilcher, adding that "the work of the saints done in Heaven, then, is also wrought here on earth."

Pilcher believes the veneration of relics should never be mistaken for mere sentimentalism.

"Veneration is, at its centre, a biblical practice. In the New Testament, the faithful brought cloth to touch St. Paul to take to the ailing, and St. Peter's mere shadow cured the sick," he said. "Since the earliest days of persecution, Christians have risked their own safety to recover the bones of the martyrs."

Pilcher's work varies widely. One day, he might research an obscure inscription or pore over historical

documents to authenticate a relic found in a church sacristy cabinet. Other days, he might restore a relic for a parish or use his extensive network to find a relic for a new altar.

Recently, he put a church searching for a suitable relic in contact with some Franciscans, who agreed to make available a piece of fabric from clothing worn by St. Maximilian Kolbe. He is currently restoring the relic and preparing it for placement in an appropriate reliquary.

Pilcher encounters relics of both relatively unknown saints and giants of the church. He is currently providing a "second set of eyes" for the authentication of relics of St. Thomas Aquinas, at the request of a monk in Rome, as well as restoring relics of St. Lawrence at the request of the vicar general of Rome. He recently investigated and authenticated a piece of the true cross of our Lord, at the request of a priest at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

Fr Austin Barnes, parochial vicar of St. Mary in Stillwater, Minnesota, recently asked Pilcher to identify and restore the church's altar relics.

"I marvel at Sean's combination of knowledge and skill with relics and his personal Catholic

faithfulness," the priest said. "He has a sense of the great piety that should accompany such work," adding, "most Catholics think you have to go to Rome to find this type of expertise, but we have it right in our own backyard."

There are not many relics experts in the world today. The USA has four others in addition to Pilcher, while there are, as you may presume, a few in Rome – though as that city is awash with relics, many not preserved and whose background is obscure, that city's number of experts may not be enough. To be accepted in the profession the candidate needs a finely tuned understanding of relic knowledge, Latin, paleography (deciphering ancient manuscripts), artifact restoration, church history and heraldry. There is no 'school' for relic work, and most of its traditions and conventions are passed down orally.

Pilcher's background highlights the way in. He developed his expertise while attending St. Louis University, where he majored in Catholic studies and studied Latin, Greek, Italian, German and Russian. He gained "hands-on" experience there by assisting an elderly priest who was rapidly losing his eyesight.

Eventually, Pilcher began work on his own, and he still uses reference materials his mentor and other elderly priests at St. Louis University gave him. He also formed the apostolate 'Sacra', through which he and two other American experts collaborate on various relics projects.

The appropriate presentation of relics has varied greatly through the centuries. "Standard practice now is to place a relic inside a small, round (usually metal) reliquary case called a 'theca', affixing it with red threads and the wax seal of the authority who prepared it," Pilcher explained. A label – normally in Latin and written in a "learned shorthand" – identifies it. (For example, 'Ex Oss. S. Bernardi, E.D.' means 'from the bones of St. Bernard, Doctor of the Church.')

The seal holds the relic in place and ensures it has not been altered or removed. Age and travel can break the threads or make the seal difficult to read.

"This kind of authentication is a large part of our work," noted Pilcher. "Documentation becomes lost, relics are borrowed (and sometimes never returned), and anything with glue eventually needs repair."

Unfortunately, the internet age has produced a flood of relic frauds and forgeries. The Church teaches that it's wrong to sell a relic for profit, but today on bidding sites, like Ebay, "you often find a host of people driving up the price of what appears to be a valid relic, only to discover later it's a chicken bone," observed Pilcher.

Recently, he noted, an alleged relic of St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) – complete with paperwork and a seal – sold for thousands of dollars on Ebay, yet "it was undoubtedly a phony."

Meanwhile, he said, a dealer on another auction site sold an unassuming yet doubtless authentic relic of an obscure Roman martyr for just the price of shipping after learning from Pilcher that profit-making is forbidden.

For Pilcher, his work is about much more than the personal satisfaction of solving relic puzzles. He noted St. Jerome's testimony: "We honor the relics of the martyrs, so that we may adore Him whose martyrs they are. We honor the servants, so that the honor of the servants might redound to their Lord."

Relics, Pilcher believes, root us firmly on the earth, while fixing our eyes on Heaven.



**CATHOLIC ICONS**

PAULINA GUZIK

The Kodon sanctuary. Right, the sacred crown



Of dozens of images and statues of Mary across the globe coronated with papal crowns, one in Poland clearly has the most bracing story. The image was most probably stolen from the pope by one of Poland's noblemen many centuries ago. Now, it's a symbol of unity in a region troubled by risks of war.

"It was Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, future Pope John Paul II, who called Our Lady of Kodon 'Mother of Unity.' He was visiting our sanctuary many times," Fr Pawel Gomulak, spokesman for the Missionary Oblates of Mary, the religious order that looks after the Kodon sanctuary in eastern Poland, said.

"But apart from big unifying miracles of Our Lady, especially in ecumenical terms, many married couples come here and their bonds are strengthened, which counts for endless little miracles," he said.

The story of Our Lady of Kodon starts as early as the times of the apostles. St. Luke himself allegedly carved the statue of the Blessed Mother in wood after Jesus' death. In the first centuries of the Church the figure found her way to Constantinople, the capital of the Christian Orient. It was there that the Benedictine monk Gregory, the pope's representative at the Caesarian court, prayed before St. Luke's Our Lady. When he became the successor of Peter as Gregory I, known today as St. Gregory the Great, he brought the statue to Rome.

Sometime toward the end of sixth century, a Spanish archbishop, St. Leander of Seville, was staying in Rome. A great piety of Bishop Leander and his care for the orthodoxy of the Spanish people have made him ask the Holy Father to give to Spain the miraculous statue of the Gregorian Madonna. It is not difficult to imagine Gregory's sorrow because of the separation from his beloved statue,' Kodon sanctuary writes on its website.

The statue is today known as Our Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura (Guadalupe is a river located in that Spanish region).

The pope agreed to the bishop's

request but only after he had a copy of it made. Up to the 17th century, the image was stored in Rome in the papal household.

In 1629, Polish prince Mikolaj (Nicolas) Pius Sapieha, the owner of Kodon estate, started the construction of a brick church in the town's market square, close to the wooden St. Anna's parish church. When the new place of worship was being built, he fell severely ill. The consequences of his disease probably included a paralysis of the body, and "total indifference towards all," which today would be diagnosed as depression.

His wife advised the prince to go to Rome and ask God to be healed. The paralysed Sapieha took on the challenge of a long, difficult and dangerous pilgrimage.

"There he prayed in the papal chapel in front of an image of what was then called Our Lady of Guadalupe, that Guadalupe in Spain, also called the Gregorian Blessed Mother. And he was healed. As a consequence of his miraculous healing, he wanted to take the image with him," Fr Gomulak said, but the pope, Urban VII, refused the request.

But Sapieha was completely in love with the image. "It was a love story," said Fr Marcin Szwarc, a Missionary Oblate of Mary. "And you don't want to be far away from the person you love," he added.

"The legend says Sapieha bribed the papal sacristan with 500 golden coins and fled to Poland with the image," Fr Gomulak said.

The papal pursuit could not reach Sapieha, a seasoned soldier, and he made it safely to Poland on 15th September, 1631. He was, however, excommunicated. But in 1636, Sapieha made a second trip to Rome and the pope was convinced to lift the excommunication.

Jan Fryderyk (John Frederick) Sapieha, the ninth inheritor of Kodon, requested the Vatican carry out the papal coronation of the image of Our Lady of Kodon. In 1723, the image was crowned with papal crowns. It was the third coronation of an image on the



# Podlasie looks to the Kodon crown to bring peace to the region

territory of Poland at the time, after the coronation of Our Lady of Czestochowa in 1717 and Our Lady of Troki in 1718 (Troki is today in Lithuania).

"Since Our Lady has already shown throughout history that she is the Mother of Unity, today we pray in a special way that this unity and peace will exist not only here, but also in our homeland, Ukraine, Belarus, Europe and throughout the world," said Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, who was a personal representative of the pope, or papal legate, for the anniversary celebration. Last month he helped Kodon host a three-day celebration of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the miraculous image.

"This event is unprecedented for the Church in Poland and very important worldwide. That's why the Holy Father Francis has sent a papal legate to be present on the day," Fr Gomulak said.

Cardinal Dziwisz, who was a longtime personal secretary to Cardinal Wojtyla and St. John Paul II, said: "To Her, above all, I pay deep homage and give thanks that she patronises here, in this part of Poland, and unites all nations around this Sanctuary. This is why the Archbishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyla called her the Mother of Unity."

The Kodon sanctuary is located

just 980 feet from the Polish border with Belarus – an ally to Russia and a country where Christian persecution is well-documented – and only 50 miles to the nearest town in Ukraine. The 300th anniversary drew thousands of pilgrims to Kodon sanctuary, which for years was the most important regional destination of pilgrims for the people of the Podlaskie region, called Podlasie by Poles. An estimated 18,000 people attended Mass on 15th August, while as many as 35,000 were at the anniversary Mass.

With war in Ukraine so close, it was appropriate that Cardinal Dziwisz should use the occasion to call again for peace. "Slavic brothers cannot fight with each other, cannot kill each other. The hand of Cain has to be stopped," Cardinal Dziwisz said. "Enough bloodshed! May Our Lady of Kodon be our guide in the road to stop the war, to reconciliation and peace."

"Kodon is to Podlasie what Jasna Gora is to all of Poland," Fr Krzysztof Borodzien, custodian of the Kodon sanctuary, told Polish Catholic news agency KAI, in a reference to the Marian shrine of the 'Black Madonna', Our Lady of Czestochowa

Before the pandemic, up to

300,000 pilgrims visited the Kodon sanctuary yearly. With the pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine not that far away, fewer people have come, but the number has returned to a firm 200,000.

Next to miraculous healings, Our Lady of Kodon also is said to heal spiritually. "Many people who visit the miraculous image in the Kodon shrine say they have regained their faith," Fr Borodzien said.

People of the Podlaskie region, having experienced grace from Our Lady of Kodon, wanted the image to be crowned with new jewels, and paid for them.

Anna Wieliczko, mother of a child called Michal, explained why the crown meant so much to her: Michal needed a heart operation but surgeons thought it too risky.

However Anna "entrusted everything to Our Lady of Kodon", praying with the boy's grandmother.

"My mother was (doing a) kneeling (pilgrimage) around the altar and she heard a clear voice of Mary: 'He was already cured,'" Wieliczko said. Bacteria that was too close to Michal's heart to operate, had disappeared. The doctors "were shocked," the mother said.

Before we prayed, "there was no chance after all," Wieliczko recalled.



# St John Ogilvie: A martyr for the faith, and a man beloved in Glasgow

Many Scots, and not just Catholics, have an affinity for John Ogilvie, the first Scot to be canonised (in 1976) since the Reformation.

He did, after all, stand up for freedom of religion in an era when many of his contemporaries were doing the opposite, and as a result paid the ultimate price.

Glaswegians, especially, have adopted John as one of their own, even though he only spent a short time in the city. The National Shrine in his honour is situated in Glasgow – in the breathtakingly beautiful St Aloysius's Church in Garnethill.

John was born in 1579, of noble birth, the son of Sir Walter Ogilvie, a respected Calvinist with estates in Banffshire. His mother, however, was a Catholic, although she died when John was only three years old. She had two brothers in the Society of Jesus, which may have influenced John's choices later in life. Whether Walter Ogilvie had genuine Catholic sympathies, which he chose to keep to himself in order to avoid persecution, is not known.

What is known is that Walter sent John to be educated on the Continent, which meant that he benefited from a relatively liberal education. As well as attending the illustrious Lutheran school at Helmstedt he spent time at a number of Catholic institutions.

So it was not a complete surprise when, at the age of 18, John decided to become a Catholic.

Not long afterwards he joined the Jesuits and, after a long and careful preparation, he was ordained, in Paris, in 1610.

He was desperate to return to Scotland as soon as possible to do missionary work, but his superiors deemed it too dangerous for a Catholic priest to be in Scotland at that time. (The Catholic religion had been banned in Scotland since

the Scottish Reformation in 1560.) Instead he became confessor to the students at the Jesuit college in Rouen, Normandy.

In November 1613, however, John finally received word to begin his mission in Scotland. He landed at the port of Leith disguised as John Watson, a soldier. With him were two other priests similarly disguised. He expected to get help from Scottish noble families but for whatever reason this help never materialised.

His main role was to bring believers back into the Catholic Church. Initially he worked in the Edinburgh area, administering the sacraments – in secret of course – as best he could. Mass would be said in private houses.

In October 1614 John made his way to Glasgow to receive five



individuals back into the Church. One of those, Adam Boyd, betrayed him to John Spottiswoode, the Protestant Archbishop of Glasgow. John was arrested and imprisoned, and while he was in prison was badly tortured. It is recorded that

needles were thrust under his nails, and that he was prevented from sleeping for nine days and eight nights. However, his friends at the time believed that he never divulged the names of other Catholics he knew.

The last thing Archbishop Spottiswoode needed, though, was a Catholic martyr around whom Catholic sympathisers in Scotland could rally. The king, James VI, was of the same opinion. However, with the answers John gave during his fourth, and final, interrogation, he effectively signed his own death warrant. During questioning, although he recognised the King's jurisdiction in temporal matters, he answered unambiguously that the Pope was supreme in spiritual matters. He said the King had no more right to pronounce that on spiritual matters than an "old hat."

When the King read John's answers, it became clear to the King that unless John retracted parts of his statement, there was only going to be one outcome – his execution.

The retraction never came, and in due course John was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death by hanging and drawing. He was 36 years old and had only been back in Scotland for a little over a year.

On March 10th 1615 the sentence was carried out at Glasgow Cross, the historic centre of Old Glasgow. As John mounted the scaffold an

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As John mounted the scaffold an old hag spat on him and shouted “a curse on your Popish face Ogilvie”, to which he replied “and a blessing on your bonny face madam!” His last gesture was to throw his rosary into the crowd. The man who caught it became a devout Catholic

old hag spat on him and shouted “a curse on your Popish face Ogilvie”, to which he replied “and a blessing on your bonny face madam!” His last gesture was to throw his rosary into the crowd. Legend has it that the man who caught it, who had been the enemy of John, became a devout and lifelong Catholic.

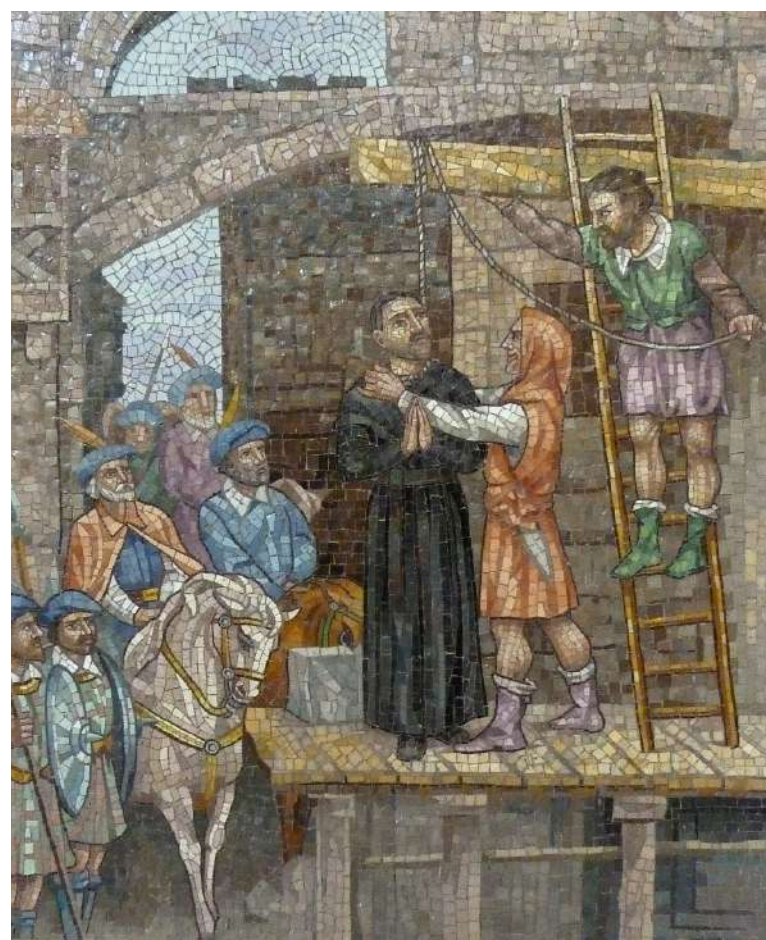
John was buried in a pauper's grave, the exact whereabouts of which are unknown. It is probably somewhere near his place of execution.

In order for anyone to be canonised in the Catholic Church, a miracle needs to take place that can be attributed to the intercession of the person to be canonised. This doesn't happen very often – the Vatican has never recognised miracles lightly.

It so happened that the required miracle in the case of John Ogilvie involved a person who lived in what was at the time (the 1960s) the only parish in the world named after him, which was Easterhouse in Glasgow. The Vatican concluded, following a nine-year investigation, that the parishioner concerned was miraculously cured of terminal stomach cancer.

Pope Paul VI duly canonised John during a ceremony that took place at the Vatican on October 17th 1976. Twenty plane loads of pilgrims, 4,000 people in all, made the journey from Scotland to Rome for the ceremony.

Headly days indeed!



A mosaic shows St John Ogilvie about to meet his fate



## A VIEW FROM THE PEWS

MICHAEL CAINE  
ST WINEFRIDE'S PARISH, LYMM, CHESHIRE

# Faith and the suffering paradox

**Does suffering through death, pain, famine and neglect mean that there is no God?**

That's a great question posed by atheists.

When I've been in conversations with atheists, one of the reasons why they claim there cannot be a God is the suffering through death, pain, famine and neglect of millions of people throughout the world due to human conflicts of all kinds.

They say that a God would never allow people to suffer so much.

I used to find this hard to answer, until I realised that it is impossible for the God of Christians to do what they said.

When God created the Universe and life, he gave it all a purpose by challenging people to obey his commandments.

If they did obey them, he would reward them with eternal life with him in Heaven for their spiritual souls when their mortal bodies died. If they did not obey them,

then their souls would perish for all eternity in Hell.

For people to be able to do what God wanted, he had to give them free-will so that they could choose to obey his commandments or not. Free-will also meant that not even God could interfere with their decision. He could do things to persuade them to do his bidding, but never directly do it for them, otherwise his creation of life had no purpose. When people make decisions relating to God's commandments, they have two great problems affecting any result: Desire; and Satan.

Desire has a great effect on any decision people make. This is not a bad thing, unless it is used at the expense of others, for such things as the desire for more money, for sexual passion, wealth and power, and then it can cause great misery.

Satan is the other great problem people are faced with when making any decisions relating to God's commandments. This fallen angel has a great desire to stop the

spiritual souls of people entering Heaven to live with God when their human bodies die. He uses very effective ways of getting people to make the wrong decisions, especially temptations.

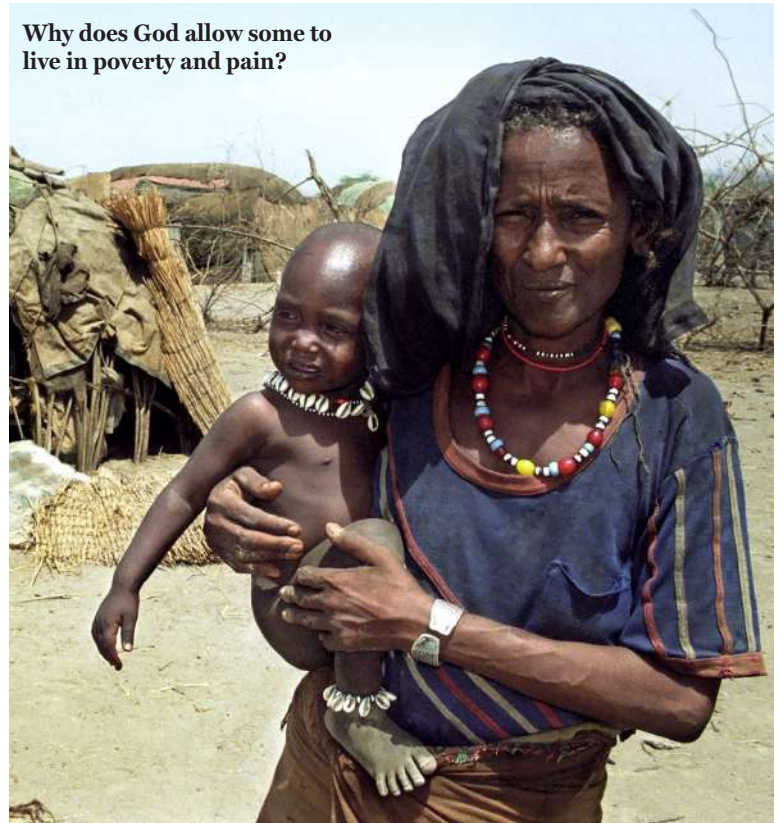
Throughout the history of life, some people have chosen not to obey God's challenges, and the results have been wars, genocides, death and pain to others. They have sinned greatly in God's eyes.

The problem here is that God can not interfere in the decisions these people have made. This is why these disasters happen, because by his own law, he cannot interfere, otherwise people would have no Free-Will and their creation no purpose.



*God cannot interfere in the decisions people make ... otherwise they would have no free will*

**Why does God allow some to live in poverty and pain?**



## JOURNEY IN FAITH

CHRIS MCDONNELL



# Three fine voices, and a time to remember

We have reached the start of the Autumn months, and with it we also mark three anniversaries, political, religious and literary.

On August 28th 1963 the concourse of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC was packed with civil rights protesters who had come to hear Martin Luther King call for civil and economic rights and an end to racism in the United States. What they got was one of the great speeches of the 20th century.

It was a day heavy with city heat with a large, restless crowd in attendance. Nearing the end of the speech Mahalia Jackson called out "Tell them about the dream, Martin".

What followed was pure Southern Gospel preaching. Some one else was heard comment "Now we go to church". It was a powerful narrative. It has become known to us as the 'I have a dream' speech and ranks alongside the Gettysburg address in the US as one of the formative texts of the nation.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication in English of Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation*. Alongside Leonardo Boff, Gutierrez argues for a Church of the poor and destitute.

*A Theology of Liberation* is a significant book for it readjusts our theological perspective and calls us back to the Gospel narrative of the Nazarene. When we are gathered round the Table of the Lord, each brings their own skills and judgements. This powerful, compassionate and radical book

presents us with a Christian message that challenges our easy come, easy go Christian Story, asking some serious questions. It is as relevant today as it was on publication in 1973.

The final link in the chain brings us back home, back to the laughing, smiling features of a fine Irish poet, Seamus Heaney; we marked the tenth anniversary of his death on August 30th. A voice of outstanding clarity and depth, his career spanned the tumultuous 30 years of the Troubles, as does his poem 'Whatever you say, say nothing'

His voice and his language will surely echo down the years, recounting the story of his Ireland.

*I'm writing just after an encounter  
With an English journalist in search of  
'views  
On the Irish thing'. I'm back in winter  
Quarters where bad news is no longer news,  
Where media-men and stringers sniff and  
point,  
Where zoom lenses, recorders and coiled  
leads  
Litter the hotels. The times are out of joint  
But I incline as much to rosary beads  
As to the jottings and analyses  
Of politicians and newspapermen  
Who've scribbled down the long campaign  
from gas  
And protest to gelignite and Sten,  
Who proved upon their pulses 'escalate',*

*'Backlash' and 'crack down', 'the provisional  
wing',  
'Polarization' and 'long-standing hate'.  
Yet I live here, I live here too, I sing,  
Expertly civil-tongued with civil neighbours  
On the high wires of first wireless reports,  
Sucking the fake taste, the stony flavours  
Of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts:  
'Oh, it's disgraceful, surely, I agree.'  
'Where's it going to end?' 'It's getting worse.'  
'They're murderers.' 'Internment,  
understandably ...'  
The 'voice of sanity' is getting hoarse.*

*"Religion's never mentioned here", of course.  
"You know them by their eyes," and hold  
your tongue.  
"One side's as bad as the other," never worse.  
Christ, it's near time that some small leak  
was sprung  
In the great dykes the Dutchman made  
To dam the dangerous tide that followed  
Seamus.  
Yet for all this art and sedentary trade  
I am incapable. The famous  
Northern reticence, the tight gag of place  
And times: yes, yes. Of the "wee six" I sing  
Where to be saved you only must save face  
And whatever you say, you say nothing.  
Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed compared  
with us:  
Manoeuvrings to find out name and school,  
Subtle discrimination by addresses*

*With hardly an exception to the rule  
That Norman, Ken and Sidney signalled  
Prod  
And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire  
Pape.  
O land of password, handgrip, wink and  
nod,  
Of open minds as open as a trap,  
Where tongues lie coiled, as under flames lie  
wicks,  
Where half of us, as in a wooden horse  
Were cabin'd and confined like wily Greeks,  
Besieged within the siege, whispering morse.*

*This morning from a dewy motorway  
I saw the new camp for the internees:  
A bomb had left a crater of fresh clay  
In the roadside, and over in the trees  
Machine-gun posts defined a real stockade.  
There was that white mist you get on a low  
ground  
And it was déjà-vu, some film made  
Of Stalag 17, a bad dream with no sound.  
Is there a life before death? That's chalked  
up  
In Ballymurphy. Competence with pain,  
Coherent miseries, a bite and sup,  
We hug our little destiny again.*

It was first published in the collection  
**NORTH 1975**

Three very different voices, each with its  
own ring, each telling a story.



# You cannot force Christ into a bad person: they must first fully repent of their sins

## Gospel of Mark, chapter 2:22

In today's gospel passage, the Lord is talking about the need for a change of attitude; a change of heart, in order to respond to His good news.

The good news is compared to new wine which must be poured into fresh wineskins. The fresh wineskins refer to our attitudes

which must be renewed or reformed in order to receive the good news.

The longer one lives, the more obvious it seems that attitude is more important than facts. An attitude touches the core of a human being; it is all-embracing, impacting on every aspect of person's life for good or for bad. A

bad attitude can ruin everything; a good attitude is like a ray of sunshine: it can uplift, inspire and transform the world around us. That is why Jesus gave us eight blessed attitudes or beatitudes, so that we can be renewed in spirit. But, in order to possess these new attitudes you need to repent of the old ones.

Attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people say or do. It is more important than appearances, than talent, than a job. It will make or break a family, a church, a business. The wonderful thing is that we have a choice concerning the

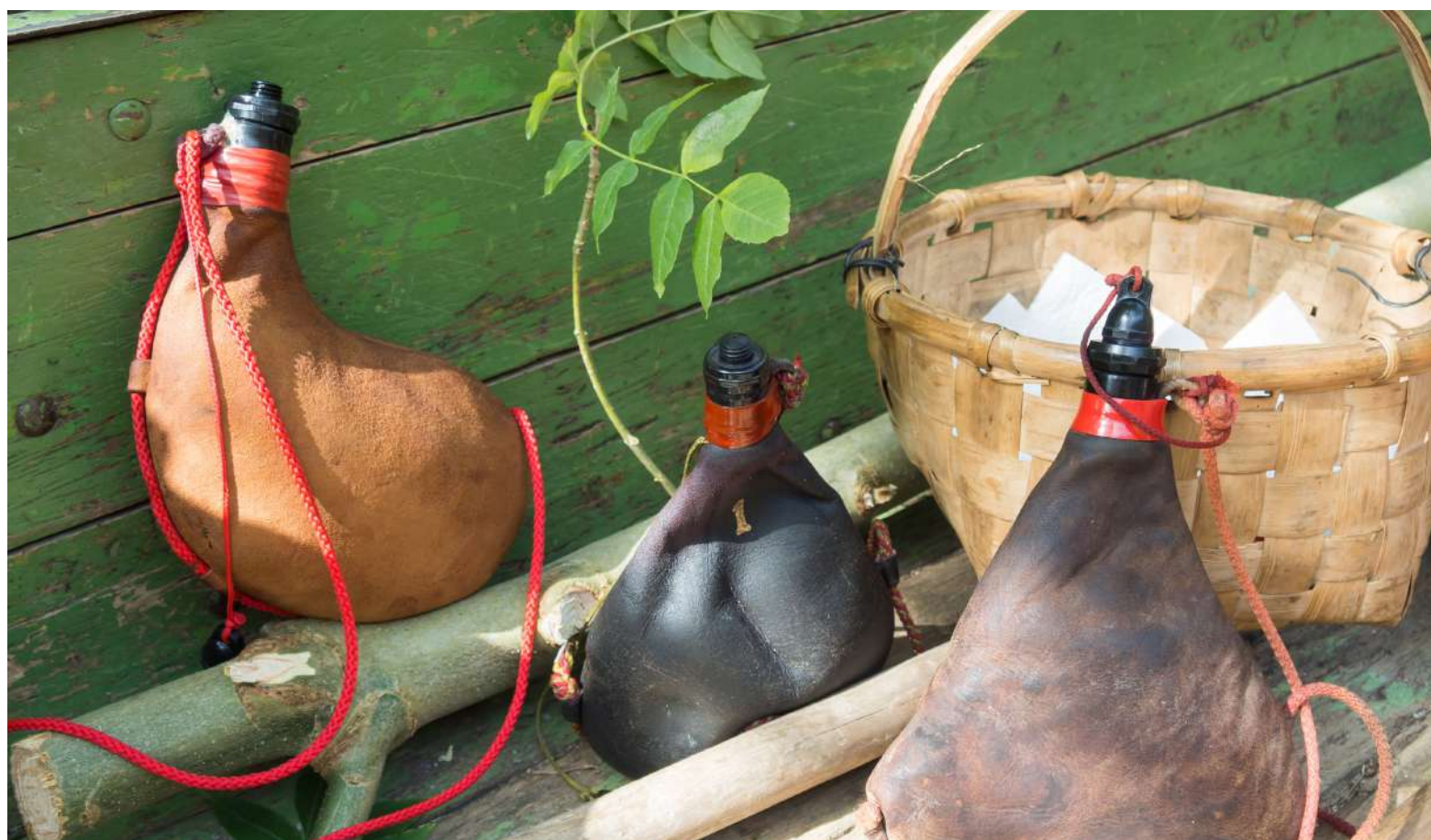
attitudes we will embrace each day. We cannot change the past, we cannot alter the facts of life, we can only change the way we handle things. What happens to you is not nearly as important as how you handle it.

If you are jealous of someone, your bad attitude will cause you to harm that person who is the object of your jealousy. Jesus reminds of this when he also states that "all evil acts come from the deep recesses of the human soul;" from attitudes of hatred, pride, greed, and so forth. To live a Christian life; to follow Christ; is to be prepared to repent of those bad attitudes from within and to replace them with the blessed attitudes of the gospel. This is true conversion.

You cannot put new wine into old wine-skins, Jesus tells us, for the new wine will burst the old wine-skins. In the same way, you cannot follow Jesus if you cling to, rather than repent of bad attitudes. You must rid yourself of bad attitudes first in order to accept the good news of the Gospel.

A healthy Christian attitude is the best thing you have going for you. So, make it your special project to give up those bad attitudes that prevent you from possessing the kingdom of God from within.

**"You cannot put new wine into old wineskins because the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins will be ruined. Instead, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins."**



## Jesus showed us the path to a perfect love

There are two ways of meeting our obligations to love one another. One is by following the details of the law, the other is by love.

The woman caught in adultery in John's Gospel, chapter eight, broke the details of the law and according to the law, she was to be stoned to death. But Jesus offered another law and that was the law of love. He forgave the woman, and simply said: "Go and sin no more."

According to the Mosaic law, the best way to secure justice was by the law. Jesus gave a different answer. The best way to secure justice is by love. The only debt we owe one another is to love one another for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8).

The golden rule which Jesus gave us is

to do unto others what you wish them to do unto you. This is a restatement of something else he said, that the meaning of life is to love God and your neighbour as yourself. Love of God and love of neighbour are two sides of the same coin: you cannot love God without loving your neighbour, and you cannot love your neighbour without loving God.

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

Of course, we are free to love anyone we choose as far as intimate relationships are concerned. This, however, is a different kind of love. It is the love that exists between the sexes, between

members of the same family, and between friends. The love of the Christian is a higher calling. It is something we owe to God and to one another, and Jesus is the perfect example of this kind of love.

How often people make excuses for their actions when they feel they don't owe somebody anything. We hear this, for example, when a needy person is dismissed with the angry retort: "Stop bugging me."

Of course, we do not owe them in the legal sense, but we do indeed owe them in the way Jesus shows us.

Many people today suffer from a serious lack of awareness and sensitivity for their fellow human beings. When they hear that a country is devastated by drought and famine, do they feel they owe

them? When they hear that war is destroying the infrastructure of certain countries and wiping out generations of people, do they feel they owe them? The legally minded will say, "No, we don't." Jesus says, "yes, we do," and wants us to show our love towards all our brothers and sisters the way he has loved us.

Jesus entered our world to show us this kind of perfect love which is called, agape, in the new Testament.

It is God's unconditional love for all human kind, and our unconditional love for others, even for our enemies.

May you possess this love that fills your heart with the joy of giving, and with the joy of seeing Christ in the least of your brothers and sisters.



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS



# Jesus asks us to push ourselves to achieve maximum faith fitness

3rd September 2023 – 22nd Sunday, (A)

Paul's call to "present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God," is meant to realise our full potential. Jeremiah and Jesus cling to God's will before all else. This is a hopeful message to all whose life is a struggle, and for whom the cross is a daily burden

**Jeremiah 20:7-9**

**Jeremiah complains to God at having to preach such an unwelcome message**

O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

**Responsorial: Psalm 62:2-6, 8-9**

*R./: My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God*

*O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. (R./)*

*So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.  
For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. (R./)*

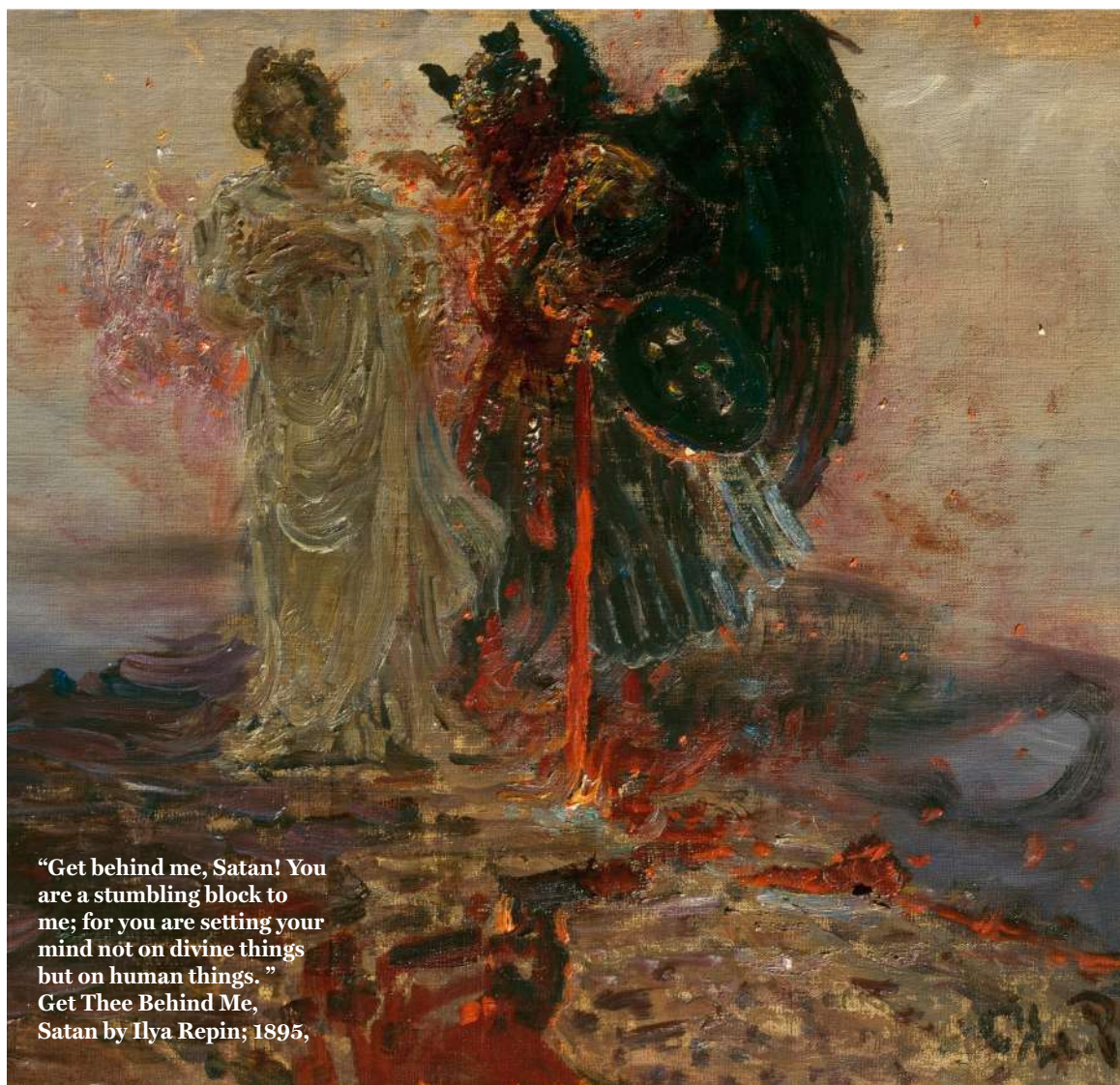
*So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R./)*

*For you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.  
My soul clings to you;  
your right hand holds me fast (R./)*

**Romans 12:1-2**

**Do not follow the social conventions of this world, but try to discern what is the will of God**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies



**"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." Get Thee Behind Me, Satan by Ilya Repin; 1895,**

of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27**

**The disciple of Jesus must also follow the way of suffering and self-renunciation**

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed

“

*In a way, isn't following Christ like accepting a friend whom we must accept in full or not at all?*

and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.

**The cost of discipleship**

If we were invited to pick and choose from within the Gospels, and form our religion only with what appeals to us, what a cosy,

comfortable Church we would have! We might keep the stories about Christ's birth and infancy, his temptation in the desert and his healing miracles. We would include our favourite parables, like the Prodigal son, the Pharisee and the Publican, and of course, the Good Samaritan.

But would we leave out that Gospel for today, that hard teaching about renouncing self, taking up the cross, losing our lives for the sake of Jesus? And even if we have not removed those words from our Gospels, do we remain deaf to them in practise, in our lives?

In a way, isn't following Christ like accepting a friend whom we must accept in full or not at all; welcoming the demands as well as the benefits of friendship? Just as we need to take people as they are, without trying to change them to suit ourselves, so with the Gospel: we accept the whole of Christ's recorded words, because we trust him and know that his ways are truth.

So what does the Lord want from us? What does he mean by

"renounce yourself," "lose your life for my sake," "carry your cross," or (in the epistle) "present your bodies as a holy sacrifice?" Surely these words don't refer to anything suicidal, to devaluing of this present life, its joys and its achievements? And yet, are these not something more than a pious way of saying: Put up with what cannot be changed?

These are questions to revolve in the mind, without expecting any quick or simple solution. If we will allow, God's Word challenges us out of any complacency with a comfortable, conforming religion. It unmasks our many evasions, our double standards, our desire for "cheap grace" – wanting salvation at cut price, unwilling to involve ourselves in sacrifice.

Perhaps a clue to this demand is in the first reading, in Jeremiah's extraordinary accusation that he was seduced by God. Letting his prophetic vocation overpower him, Jeremiah was involved in many a thankless task. He had fallen in love with God, so that nothing held him back from doing God's will, no matter where this might lead. Have we fallen in love with Christ? Are we seduced by him, so as to give to his service all that is ours to give? Wouldn't that be becoming a living sacrifice?

We might overly focus on the "renunciation" in today's Gospel so as to miss its positive aspect. All growth, all lasting achievement demands effort and sacrifice. Yet the sacrifice can be a satisfying part of experience, when orientated towards a high and valued goal. (Examples: athletic training; mountain-climbing; studying a language; practising any skill.)

So, the self discipline involved in Christian life, and accepting the circumstances in which God places us, contribute to our personal destiny.

And we look forward in hope to the great reward of loyal service – when the Son of man, coming in glory, will reward all according to their behaviour.

**Published by kind permission of the Association of Catholic Priests, an association for priests who wish to have a forum and a voice to reflect, discuss and comment on issues affecting the Church and society today. See [www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie](http://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie)**



■ QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

FR DOYLE

# Is Communion for all, or should it be reserved solely for practising Catholics?

**Q.** While visiting my elderly mother in a nursing home, a priest gave the sacrament (anointing) of the sick both to my mother as well as my sister and I, who were visiting my mother at the time. Then he gave Holy Communion to all of us, without inquiring whether we were all practicing Catholics. Though she was raised Catholic, my sister never goes to Mass anymore, so it felt awkward to watch her take Communion. What are your thoughts on this?

A. Often when I make Communion calls to the homebound, there is a caregiver or family member with the one who is sick or elderly. Unless I know that person not to be a Catholic, after I have given Communion to the one I'm visiting, I turn and ask whether those present would also like to receive.

My expectation is that a non-Catholic or a nonpractising Catholic will decline, and that is what they should do. I do not feel it is my place to grill the person by saying: "Are you a practising Catholic in the state of grace?"

In the case you raise, I would hope that the priest asked whether you and your sister wanted to receive Communion and did not simply hand you the host; if he did ask, your sister should have said simply, "No, thank you."

As for the anointing of the sick, the Catechism of the Catholic Church in No. 1514 and 1515 provides that it be administered to those "in danger of death from sickness or old age," "just prior to a serious operation" or to "the elderly whose frailty becomes more pronounced."

I'm not sure, then, why the priest included you and your sister in that sacrament.

**Q.** I firmly believe that at Mass the Eucharist becomes Christ's body and blood. But here's what I don't understand: Why do the properties of the bread and wine still affect people—for example, those with wheat allergies or alcoholics?

A. Not surprisingly, this is a bit difficult to explain: it is, after all, a mystery of our faith – a miracle of Christ's doing – and there is nothing else to which it can be compared.

But it is nevertheless a core belief of the Catholic faith that the bread and wine are changed at Mass into the body and blood of Christ, something celebrated and proclaimed by hundreds of millions



Left, the Book of the Gospels in Latin is pictured in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John can more properly be seen as statements of faith, narratives of some of the actions and sayings of Jesus to convey their conviction that Jesus Christ was, indeed, the Messiah.'

throughout the world since the evening of the Last Supper when Jesus said: "This is my body. ... This is my blood."

A bit of Thomistic philosophy might help: What the Church believes is that the "substance" (deepest reality) of the bread and wine is changed but the "accidents" (physical attributes) are not. In other words, with the priest's words of consecration, what continues to look, taste and feel like bread and wine have actually become instead the glorified presence of Christ.

So committed was Jesus to this central truth that, in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, even when some of his followers abandoned Christ because of this teaching, Jesus let them walk away and did not say: "Wait, we're only talking about symbols."

For those with wheat allergies or for alcoholics, the Church does make provision for the use of low-gluten hosts and for 'mustum' (grape juice in which fermentation has begun but has been suspended). Still there are those for whom even trace amounts of gluten or alcohol can be harmful. They may opt to receive under only one species, and the Church teaches that Jesus is wholly present under either one.

**Q.** Luke's Gospel begins: "Several biographies of Christ have already been written." Why, then, are there only four Gospels in the New Testament, and how were they chosen?

A. First, just a comment on your quote from the opening verse of

Luke. The text you offer comes from an edition called the Living Bible. I prefer instead the one used by the Catholic Church at liturgies, which translates that same line as follows: "Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us."

The difficulty I have with version you are quoting is that the four canonical Gospels are not really 'biographies' in the contemporary sense of that word. They mention very little, for example, about the early life of Jesus and have varying views on the exact sequence of events during Christ's public life.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John can more properly be seen as statements of faith, narratives of some of the actions and sayings of Jesus to convey the writers' conviction that Jesus Christ was, indeed, the Messiah.

While it is true that many accounts regarding Jesus were circulated in the early Church, and became the subject of discussion and debate, by about the year 180, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in Gaul, noted that there were four and only four authoritative Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This reflected a growing consensus among Christian scholars, and only those four versions were commonly considered as proper for liturgical use. Following the Protestant Reformation, that same Catholic canon of the Gospels was reaffirmed at the Council of Trent in 1546.

Some of the common characteristics of the four Gospels

declared to be canonical were a central focus on Jesus as saviour and divine Son of God (not just an enlightened teacher, as some of the apocryphal versions had it) and the inclusion of the Passion narrative.

**Q.** Concerning the commandment "Thou shalt not bear false witness." I understand it would be a serious sin to testify falsely under oath, but are all untruths sinful? How about 'white lies'? If an elderly relative asked, 'Do you like my new hat?', a negative response would probably cause hard feelings and accomplish little. A positive response, while technically a lie, would create happiness and cause no harm. Where does one draw the line? Must a statement be harmful to someone to qualify as a breach of the commandment, however venial? Do we need to confess such a white lie or exaggeration if it is harmless?

A. Your question is a very good one and the answer is far more complicated than one might think. In fact, for the past 1,500 years, Christian moralists have debated what the right answer should be.

In the theological history of the church, two diverse opinions have been given. One comes from St. Augustine, who held that, "A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving." For Augustine, lying was always morally wrong, regardless of the circumstances.

But for other theologians, such as Origen and John Chrysostom, the

definition of lying was more nuanced, and it involved factoring in the questioner's right to know the truth.

Where the difference shows most clearly can be seen in the case of whether Christians who were hiding Jews in their homes in Nazi Germany could morally lie to those seeking to find and execute them. For Augustine, the only legitimate response to the question of the Gestapo would have been either silence or the response: "I cannot tell you." But for a fair number of other moralists, because the guards had no moral right to know, the answer could simply have been: "No. There is no one here."

Even for those who take the absolutist position, of course, the gravity of a lie varies greatly with the circumstances. Lying under oath or when the untruth would cause serious harm to someone's rights or reputation would be a grave sin. Lying to shield someone from embarrassment – as in the case of your elderly relative with the new hat – would be at most a venial sin, and you would be free to confess it or not.

Interestingly, the Catechism of the Catholic Church gives evidence of the age-old struggle of moralists to sort this out. In the catechism published in 1994, section No. 2483 says that "to lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead into error someone who has the right to know the truth." But since 1997, when the catechism was revised and the official Latin text published, "the right to know" was dropped and that sentence now says simply, "To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error."

Getting back to your elderly relative and her new hat, I would look for some equivocal language in an attempt to serve truth and charity. I might say something like, "I think the hat looks cute."

In my mind, the word "cute" admits of a range of meanings – from "attractive" to "quirky!" Unfortunately, this column cannot accept questions from readers



## SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

DAVID TORKINGTON



# Our Lady's sublime but simple teaching

Mr Podsnap was one of the more colourful characters who loved to stand centre stage holding forth in *Our Mutual Friend*, Charles Dickens's last full length masterpiece.

His famous catch phrase was "I don't believe it", followed by "It didn't happen".

If presented with unassailable evidence at the dinner table, he would silence all opposition with the words, "Not in front of the ladies", and retire unabashed into the safe and cosy world of his own bigotry.

## Pride and Prejudice

You do not need to search exclusively among the uneducated or the unlettered to find Podsnap doppelgangers. The teaching profession is full of them, and so are universities where narrow-minded pride and prejudice is hidden behind a smoke screen of erudition and scholarship. No amount of culture, academic attainment, or preferment can spirit away the endemic perversity of original sin, and the pride and prejudice that is harboured within; something else is required.

## Our Lady appears to young children in recent years

The events that happened at Garabandal between 1961 and 1965 are ready made for the Mr Podsnaps of this world, or to be fair, for the Father, Professor, Bishop or Cardinal Podsnaps of this world. They feel that they have far better things to do than take seriously the 'hallucinations' of a few underaged impressionable girls from the back of beyond.

Thankfully, Our Lady would not agree with them. She has made it something of a habit in recent history of choosing young children to deliver important messages to the world.

Between 1961 and 1965, four, and then three young girls, said that they had almost 3,000 visions of Our Lady at a remote mountainous hamlet in the north of Spain called San Sebastián de Garabandal. All these visions were in public, witnessed by at first, hundreds, and then thousands of witnesses, both clerical and lay, with doctors and psychiatrists in attendance, all of whom testified to the total normality of the girls.

The poor girls were never aware that during the ecstasies into which they were drawn for hours on end, 'investigators' were pinching and pricking them, vainly trying to move them, burn them, and even pass ropes or wooden sticks beneath their feet to verify that



The children of Garabandal

they were in fact levitating while the ecstasies lasted. If four years of these investigations, before ever increasing crowds, were not enough to convince the Podsnaps of this world.

## The Church and Garabandal

However, the most important question that all Catholics want answered is this. Does the Church believe what happened at Garabandal is true? Let me answer the question in three parts. Does the Church believe that between 1961 and 1965, a group of girls believed that Our Lady appeared to them almost 3,000 times and often for hours on end?

The answer is the Church cannot but believe something for which there is so much evidence. Remember, these events were testified to thousands of people, a vast array of qualified doctors and many miracles. The cannot deny at least the outward manifestation that apparitions were taking place. Whether or not the Church believes that it was Our Lady who appeared and gave messages to the children, however, is quite another matter.

## The messages of Our Lady at Garabandal

What are the messages, and were they given by Our Lady, as they were given at Fatima, of which the Church does approve? The messages are twofold. Those concerning what should be done today to please God, and those concerning what will be done tomorrow if we do not. The message is, to pray more frequently, to make more sacrifices and go

more frequently to Mass and the sacraments, and then to tell others to repent.

## The same message given at Fatima

The second part of her message states that because Catholics in particular, and the world in general have so neglected God's teaching there will be terrible consequences in this world if the call to repent is not heeded forthwith. This message must also be approved by the Church, at least in general, because it is exactly the same as the message given to the children at Fatima, that has been approved by the Church.

## What does the Church say?

Finally, what does the Church say? Was it Our Lady, or some other unidentified person who spoke to the children at Garabandal? It does not say yes and it does not say no. The matter is left open, but it is not denied.

In fact two Popes have blessed and looked favourably on the children. It has been explicitly stated that there is nothing in the messages that are against the

Catholic teaching on faith or morals.

## The end of Present Times?

If you search in the usual places on the internet for details about Garabandal you will find them in abundance. However, the true believers seem to spend little, if any time, on the spiritual messages. All time is given to speculation about the horrors that might come and to detailing a precise chronological timetable of events predicted.

Believing in, and practising the simple restatement, of the Gospel teaching is what really matters. If the spiritual message is immediately and universally put into practice, then all will be well. But time seems to have run out.

Even if you do not believe in Garabandal, the punishment predicted by Our Lady of Fatima that Our Lady asked to be announced to the world by the Pope should be enough to concern spiritual malingerers. I can understand why people do not want to believe in Garabandal, because of the punishments that were promised at Fatima are, according to the message of Garabandal, imminent.

## Miracles, wonders and prophecies

In the last 150 years or more there have been many appearances of Our Lady, some approved by the Church, others awaiting approval. It is unquestionable that many thousands or even millions of Catholics have been deeply influenced by these events. However, the understandable enthusiasm as they have had their

faith renewed, has also for many put an overemphasis on miracles, wonders and prophecies.

Sadly, this has been at the expense of the deeply spiritual but deceptively profound message received from Our Lady.

The faithful need to unite in their understanding of Our Lady's sublime teaching on prayer. It can only be fully understood and appreciated by studying the meaning of, and the effects of her Immaculate Conception on her own spirituality and of the early Church.

I cannot but admit these messages are usually so simple and yet so profound at the same time. They are too simple and far too profound for theologians like me to put into such short, pure and uncomplicated language.

Take Our Lady's messages to the girls at Garabandal as a case in point. The children are simply told to keep repenting, keep praying, keep making sacrifices and then to continue offering these sacrifices at Mass. No wonder the Church said that in this message there is nothing against her teaching, as it has been taught from the beginning down to the present day. And lest they do not know how to pray, Our Lady simply said, "Say the Rosary".

## The heart and soul of Our Lady's personal prayer

This message is deceptively simple because it leads on, for all who take it seriously and persevere, into the sublime spirituality of the Immaculate Conception. It is a spirituality lost to sight for all too long, because of the overlong and drawn out arguments about this profound dogma. These arguments raged for so long that the faithful were denied the awe-inspiring spirituality that takes us into the very heart and soul of Our Lady's own personal prayer life. I want the reader to be enthralled as I was enthralled when I first studied the profound spiritual dimensions of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

She both influenced St John's Gospel more than any scripture scholar has so far understood, and the spiritual growth and understanding of the early Church more than any historian has yet realised. I can only hope and pray that Our Lady's sublime but simple teaching on prayer can do for you, and through you for the Church, what it has done from me at this critical moment in human history.

David Torkington's blogs, books, lectures and podcasts can be found 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>





# GCSE RESULTS ROUND-UP

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



## Cardinal Pole Catholic School, Hackney

Cardinal Pole Catholic School, Hackney, was thrilled to see its pupils record another set of excellent results in this year's GCSE examinations.

Headteacher Adam Hall said: 'I am extraordinarily proud of our students. They have worked exceptionally hard throughout the year, and they've risen to the challenge with great resilience and a focused desire to succeed.'

Students at Cardinal Pole achieved outstanding grades across various subjects.

Mollie Hoyle stands among the highest-achieving students with 7 grade 9s. She said: "I couldn't have done it without the incredible teachers at Cardinal Pole. Their constant support and additional help made all the difference."

Leo Muhibzada, another accomplished student with mainly 9 and 8 grades said: "I am extremely happy with my GCSE results! It hasn't been the easiest year, but Cardinal Pole provided me with the tools and resources I



Mollie Hoyle

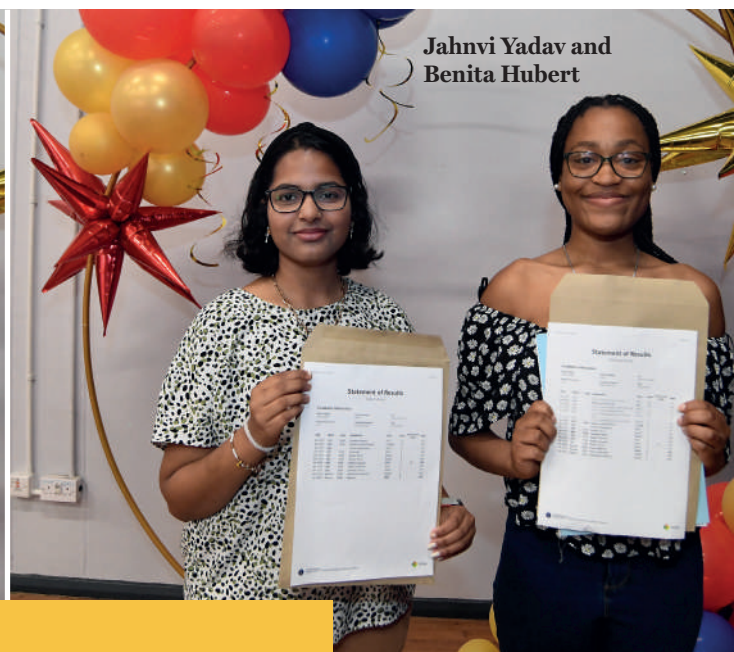
needed to excel."

Lola Alabi, Head of Year 11, who was delighted with the student results, said:

"I am elated by the results of our students. The standard in which students perform truly reflects their work ethic and dedication to their academic success."



Tom Stephens



Jahnvi Yadav and  
Benita Hubert

## Cardinal Wiseman

Pupils at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School in Coventry celebrated 'remarkable' GCSE results after returning to pre-pandemic exam conditions.

The school reported widespread improvement on its 2019 results, with the percentage of top grades (9-7) rising across maths, English literature and English language.

Tom Stephens, who scored four 9s, six 8s and a 7, will study maths, physics, philosophy and further maths at Cardinal Wiseman Sixth Form next year. He said: "I'm over the moon. In some subjects I've done way better than I did in my mocks, so I'm really happy with that."

Jahnvi Yadav, who achieved two 9s, eight 8s and a 7,

will study maths, further maths, computer science and physics WMG. She said: "I was very nervous and scared and it felt like a long wait, so I'm feeling very relieved today." Benita Hubert, who achieved four 9s, three 8s, two 7s and two 6s, said: "I have to give credit to my teachers because they helped me when I was feeling nervous. Now seeing the results, it feels like my hard work has paid off."

Cardinal Wiseman principal Matthew Everett said: "This cohort of students have demonstrated not only their academic prowess but also their resilience and ambition, which will undoubtedly propel them towards future success."

## Loreto Grammar School, Altrincham



Year 11 pupils at Loreto Grammar School, Altrincham, achieved fantastic results at GCSE this year. In the national picture, results have returned to pre-Covid levels and yet the school results have improved on those outcomes. Head teacher Jane Beever said: "72% of all grades are at 7-9. These achievements reflect two years of hard work and commitment on the part of girls, their teachers and parents. We are delighted with them and look forward to celebrating at our annual Speech Night at the Bridgewater Hall on 13th September."



Juanita and Alessia. Both  
achieved five grades 9s

## Our Lady's Catholic High School, Hackney

Students at Our Lady's Catholic High School, in Hackney surpassed the GCSE results of 2019 and 2022, setting new high standards for academic excellence.

70% of all grades were at grade 5 or above with nearly a quarter of all grades reaching grade 7 or higher. Other notable results include 36% of students secured at least one grade 7 or higher.

There were also fantastic outcomes across the range of subjects: RE 75% grade 4 and above, history 76% grade 5 and above and French 83% securing grade 4 or above

Reflecting on these outstanding results, Virginia Lopes, Head of Year 11, said: "Their hard work, dedication, and relentless pursuit of excellence have paid off in the most exceptional way imaginable."

As the Head of Year, I am immensely proud to congratulate each and every student on their results."

Student Amy, who stands among the highest-achieving students with 6 grade 9 passes and 2 grade 8 passes, said: "I am really happy with my results."

"I hope I can do well in the future."



**St Mary's Catholic School, Newcastle**

There were celebrations all-round at St Mary's Catholic School in Newcastle when students received some of the best exam results in the region.

The Year 11 Class of 2023 enjoyed success across all subjects in their GCSE and vocational qualifications, with 80 per cent of students achieving at least a grade 4 in both English and maths, 61 per cent achieving at least a grade 5 in both, and 27 per cent achieving the top grades of 7 or above in those subjects.

"We are delighted with their amazing results, which are testament to the high quality of the teaching at St Mary's and to the dedication, commitment, and sheer hard work of our students," said headteacher Emma Patterson.

Among the high achievers was Rosalind, who will continue her studies at the school.

"I am so happy with my results," she said. "All my hard work has paid off. My teachers have been really supportive, and I am looking forward to starting my A Levels."



Main photo: Jerusalem celebrates with Margarita. Inset, Rosalind

Others celebrating their success included Jerusalem. "I am really ecstatic with my grades," Jerusalem said. "I got what I needed for sixth

form, and I could not believe it when I opened the envelope. I could not have done it without everyone's support."

**St Ambrose College, Hale Barns**

St Ambrose College, Hale Barns, really bucked the national trend of grades falling on previous years by achieving the highest results in the school's history.

The Attainment 8 score (72.69) at St Ambrose College is almost identical to last year: pupils, without exception, secured passes in English, maths and science.

While the national picture reveals an overall drop in the number of top grades awarded, over 65% of all grades at St Ambrose were 9-7, in line with 2022 and a significant increase on 2019 (54.4%). The percentage of pupils achieving grades 9-7 in English and maths, another key performance measure, was the highest ever: 56.7% compared with 48.6% in 2019.

There were some fantastic individual performances too, with many 'high-flying' pupils achieving the maximum of 90 Attainment 8 points, including Oluwatomiwa Aransiola; John Demaine; Thomas Eatough; Joseph Hall; and Jeswin Joseph.

In total, 25 pupils were awarded grades 8/9 in ten or more subjects, including Joseph Baldwin; Jack Everett; Noel George; Samuel Ginger; Rory Gregory; and Matthew Oldham, all of whom achieved grades 8/9 across all GCSE subjects.

Principal Dermot Rainey said: "The students and staff should feel really proud of these exceptional results with many of the key performance measures being the highest in the school's history. Behind the data and figures are incredible, resilient young men who never cease to amaze us with what they are capable of both inside and outside the classroom."



**Princethorpe College**

Princethorpe College is celebrating a strong set of GCSE results. From a cohort of 159 pupils, 42% of all entries gained 9, 8 or 7 grades, with 16 pupils achieving all 9, 8 or 7 grades. Headmaster, Grove du Toit said, "I would like to congratulate all of our Year 11 pupils. I am delighted with the excellent results they have achieved in spite of the unprecedented challenges and disruption to their learning of the last few years.

"All credit goes to our pupils and staff for their commitment and hard work." Pictured right are GCSE pupils with Headmaster Grove du Toit at Princethorpe College. Left to right: Jemima Teeton, Giorgio Kleinmann, Lampros Papadogiannakis, Grove du Toit Megan Shipton, Mia Samra and Alexander MacRae



**Sacred Heart College, Newcastle**

Students at Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Fenham, Newcastle, were celebrating after bucking the national trend and achieving higher than average GCSE results.

The school saw its national benchmark attainment score rise to 8, while the proportion of students achieving the highest grades of 7, 8 and 9 increased to an impressive one in three.

Threshold passes in both English and maths have also risen by 10 per cent at the strong pass level and 5 per cent at standard pass.

"We are so proud of our GCSE students, who have achieved an amazing set of results this summer," said Headteacher Suzanne Howell. "All their hard work has paid off and we couldn't be happier for them. Congratulations to all, and we look forward to welcoming many of our girls back to Sacred Heart Sixth Form in September."



Let's see your school news in the Universe Catholic Weekly

Submit your stories to Andy Drozdziak, at

[andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk](mailto:andy.drozdziak@universecatholicweekly.co.uk)





# GCSE RESULTS ROUND-UP

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



## St Bonaventure's, Forest Gate

St. Bonaventure's Catholic boys' secondary school in Forest Gate announced a 'brilliant' performance in GCSEs, surpassing last year's results, especially in English, maths, science and RE.

Headteacher Chris McCormack said: "Well done to our students on achieving a great set of results. Their time in school has been unique as we all faced challenging times in education with the pandemic."

The results show continued improvement – not just from 2019 but year on year for the last six years. 84% of students received a good pass in English and Maths (4+). 69% of students received a strong pass in English and maths

(5+). 32.5% of students received 9-7 grades and 71.9% received 9-5 grades; this has increased by 9.5% and 13.9% respectively, since 2019. The overall attainment 8 was the highest ever.

Ify, who received two 9s, one 8 and five 7s, said: "I think that the education at St Bon's is top-notch; all the teachers really care what you get and push you to get the high grades."

Khyle, who received six 9s, one 7 and one 6, said: "I feel relieved and proud of my GCSE results. Big shoutout to my parents for being my biggest cheerleaders and my teachers for believing in me even when I doubted myself."

Head of Year 11 Mr Hayes said: "It has been a pleasure working with this group of students."



Ify received two 9s, one 8 and five 7s



Khyle received six 9s

## St Bede's, Manchester



It was a morning of immense pride and delight at St Bede's Manchester as Upper Fifth pupils celebrated their GCSE results. Despite the Department for Education warning that results would fall from last year to 2019 levels, the number of top grades increased from last year,

with almost 15% of all grades being at the coveted grade 9 standard and nearly half of all grades at grade 7 or above. Over 80% of all pupils achieved at least one grade 7.

Special commendation goes to Dara and Frankie who secured a grade 9 in all ten of their subjects.

In addition, Alexander, Sophia, Tara, Maciej, Maria G, Lamie and Isobel H achieved all grade 9 and 8s.

Headteacher Mrs Kemp said: "The results are proof of the strong partnership between families and the College working together to help our pupils thrive."



## Stonyhurst College

Stonyhurst College is proud of this year's Year 11 cohort, with some spectacular results reflected in its collective 100% pass rate. Pupils beat predictions by significant margins, with GCSE results rising back to 2019 levels.

Claudia was this year's top achiever, receiving eleven 9s. 15% of grades were the very highest grade, grade 9, and 30% of grades were 9-8. Outstanding results have been achieved across all subjects, but there was particular success in modern and classical languages, the sciences, art and geography. Standout performances were in English language and literature, where the average grade was 7.5.

Stonyhurst headmaster Mr Browne said: "Congratulations on these wonderful results. Remember all the lessons you have learnt about the value of hard work and determination, and this will serve you well in your Higher Line courses."



## St James's, Barnet

Anthony Ellul, headteacher, was delighted to report that results at St James' Catholic High School in Colindale, Barnet, improved from those achieved in 2022.

Pupils' average grade was up on 2022 and is now over 5, while pupils achieving a 5+ in English and maths was also up on 2022 and is now above 50%. Across all measures pupils' results were above the national average.

Head of Year 11, Mr John Knibb, said: "It's been an absolute pleasure and honour to see our Year 11 students develop not only academically, but also into respectable young adults."

"We are delighted that all of the

hard work our Year 11 pupils put into their studies has paid off," Sara Magee, senior assistant headteacher, added.





St Joseph's, Hebburn

St John's School, Bishop Auckland



High fliers **Leanne Begum** and **Sadiya Begum**

A proud headteacher has spoken of his pride as his determined pupils overcame the problems of the past few years to achieve excellent GCSE results.

Peter Mitchell of St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn, said staff and governors were "extremely proud" of their Year 11 students' performance.

He acknowledged this year group had faced national lockdowns in both years 8 and 9, as well as "numerous localised isolation events due to in-school outbreaks" and praised the fact they had "not let this get in their way of success."

"Despite the national grade reduction, the results at St Joseph's

show an improvement when compared to pre-pandemic outcomes," said Mr Mitchell.

At St Joseph's, the overall pass rate has improved, with 74% of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at 9 – 4 and well over half of all grades at grade 5 or better.

"We must give special recognition to Aimie Faye who achieved 7 grade 9s; Ethan Holmes who achieved 5 grade 9s; Albert Papuc who achieved 5 grade 9s; and Sadiya Begum who achieved 4 grade 9s," said Mr Mitchell. "I would also like to thank the staff and the families of our students for their support throughout the GCSE journey."

Students at St John's Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Bishop Auckland, have been rewarded for their commitment and determination with impressive results in their GCSEs.

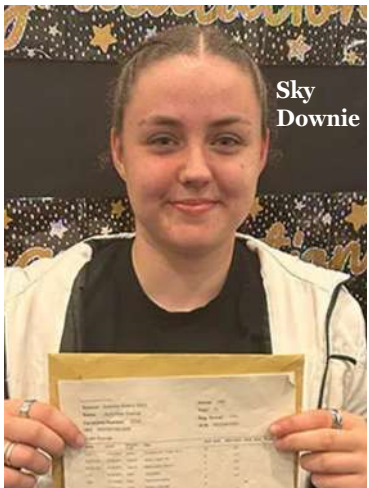
Netballer Katie Brooks-Shea was bouncing after securing top GCSE results. The 16-year-old student from St John's Catholic School, Bishop Auckland, secured nine GCSEs and will stay on next year to study A Levels in business, PE, biology and geography.

Katie's long-term goal is to work for the English Netball Association. She said: "I have enjoyed my five years here and am excited to do two more. I like all the teachers and the place is very familiar to me. I am very proud of my volunteering and managing to juggle it with my studies."

Rugby player Sky Downie, 16, of Spennymoor, proved school work is worth a try when she secured nine GCSEs. She plans to go to Gateshead Sports Academy to study public services and join the rugby academy, and hopes one day to be a firefighter.

She said: "I will miss the people I have met at St John's. The teachers have made a big difference and really helped me turn things round."

Headteacher Lisa Byron said: "We are incredibly proud of our



students and their impressive results reflect individuals' excellent commitment and determination to do well."



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## GARDENING

# Four dangers lurking in your garden – and how to protect yourself

GARDENING

**Stephen Hughes**

Many people see gardening as a relaxing pastime – an easy-going way to spend hours outdoors when the weather's nice. But as a consultant in emergency medicine, I deal with all manner of medical emergencies and injuries arising from what may appear to be a harmless hobby.

Over the years, I have seen hand wounds from cutting implements and foot wounds from lawn mowers and garden forks. In recent weeks, I have seen falls from ladders, head wounds from falls on concrete – and, sadly, confirmed the death of a person in their later years whose enthusiastic shovelling proved too much.

Even in times past, the garden could be quite the health hazard. One of the first patients to be treated with penicillin was a police officer who had contracted sepsis after a scratch from a rose thorn. In those days, the most minor of wounds could have the deadliest of consequences – and can still happen, with a UK woman recently dying from sepsis after scratching her hand while gardening.

But these aren't the only dangers lurking in your garden. Here are just a few things to look out for before you next head out to tend your plants:

### 1. Tetanus

Tetanus is a particularly nasty disease. The muscles go into spasm due to the effects of the toxin from the bacteria, *Clostridium tetani*. The suffering is almost indescribable, causing painful muscle spasms and a locked jaw.

Many associate tetanus with objects such as rusty nails. But this surprisingly common organism is also found in the soil, particularly if manured, because *clostridia* are found in the gut. Roses like soil with manure, so this could turn these beloved flowers deadly if you get cut by contaminated thorns or if the soil gets into a cut.

Luckily, I have yet to see any cases in the emergency room because the UK immunises against tetanus. And I never want to see a case, because of how nasty it is. The case fatality rate can exceed 50 per cent in people who aren't immunised. This is why it's important to check that your tetanus jab is up to date.

### 2. Bacteria and fungi

Lurking in a humble bag of compost is an ingredient many of us wouldn't



The soil you use for your roses may contain something sinister.

expect: *Legionella*. This bacteria can cause an infection called Legionnaires' disease which is particularly harmful for the elderly and people with a compromised immune system. It can lead to a nasty and often fatal pneumonia when inhaled. Warm, stagnant water involved in the composting process may account for its presence.

It isn't only pre-packaged compost that's hazardous. Your own compost heap is also filled with various bacteria and fungi which, if properly maintained, should cause you no trouble. But often the mould *Aspergillus* can grow when it's hot outside. This can give rise to some nasty lung lesions and may even become more widespread in the body – especially in the elderly and immunosuppressed and can be fatal.

Mould spores can also trigger allergies in some people, a condition known as *extrinsic allergic alveolitis* or "farmer's lung". This condition was classically due to exposure to mouldy hay, but compost heaps can also do the same because of the presence of organisms such as *Aspergillus* and the bacteria *Actinomycetes*.

### 3. Leptospirosis

*Leptospira* is a bacterium that may be

found in water contaminated with rat urine. With rats often building habitats near humans, it might be best to take care near the pond or rainwater barrels when gardening.

*Leptospira* can cause leptospirosis, a rather unpleasant infection that causes headaches, fevers, chills, vomiting, jaundice and then later, liver failure, kidney failure and meningitis.

### 4. Power tools

While power tools can make our work easier in the garden, they can also make it much easier to injure ourselves, too. Hedge trimmers may be a great way to tame trees and bushes, but they can also amputate digits and inflict wounds. Be sure to wait until the hedge trimmer is fully turned off before clearing any branches you've removed.

Hedge trimmers and lawn mowers can also easily cut through electric cables, which can lead to electrocution. Power tools can also be disastrous if you fall while up a ladder and if you have power lines crossing your garden, then please avoid them.

### Stay safe

While these hidden dangers are certainly a risk, luckily there are many

simple things you can do to avoid harm from them, including:

- Cleaning and covering wounds while gardening.
- Make sure your immunisations are up to date (especially for tetanus).
- Keeping compost bags away from your face when you open them.
- Deter rats by not putting cooked food on compost heaps, covering water butts and setting up traps.
- Set up ladders firmly on even ground away from power lines.
- Enjoy having wildlife but leave it alone.

And one last piece of advice from me. Every year the burns unit at my hospital sees a number of people who have tried to speed up the process of lighting their barbecue or bonfire by using petrol. Not all survive.

So if you are planning to cook the fruits of your labours on a barbecue in your garden, don't use inflammable liquids to get the flame started.

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that has many health benefits. Just be sure to take sensible precautions.

**Stephen Hughes is a Senior Lecturer in Medicine, Anglia Ruskin University**



HEALTH

# Water link to weight loss looks over-stated, says academic

HEALTH

**Duane Mellor**

It's often claimed that if you're trying to lose weight, one of the things you should do each day is drink plenty of water – with some internet advice even suggesting this should be as much as a gallon (about 4.5 litres).  
The claim is that water helps burn calories and reduce appetite, which in turn leads to weight loss.  
But while we all might wish it was this easy to lose weight, unfortunately there's little evidence to back up these claims.

**Myth 1: water helps burn calories**

One small study, of 14 young adults, found drinking 500ml of water increased resting energy expenditure (the amount of calories our body burns before exercise) by about 24 per cent.  
While this may sound great, this effect only lasted an hour. And this wouldn't translate to a big difference at all. For an average 70kg adult, they would only use an additional 20 calories – a quarter of a biscuit – for every 500ml of water they drank.

Another study of eight young adults only saw an increase in energy expenditure when the water was 'fridge cold' – with a very modest 4 per cent increase in calories burned. This may be because the body needs to use more energy in order to bring the water up to body temperature, or because it requires more energy for the body to filter the increased volume of fluid through the kidneys.

And again, this effect was only seen for about an hour.  
So although scientifically it might be possible, the actual net increase in calories burned is tiny. For example, even if you drank an extra 1.5l of water per day, it would save fewer calories than you'd get in a slice of bread.  
It's also worth noting that all this research was in young healthy adults. More research is needed to see whether this effect is also seen in other groups (such as middle-aged and older adults).



**Myth 2: water with meals reduces appetite**

This claim again seems sensible, in that if your stomach is at least partly full of water there's less room for food – so you end up eating less.  
A number of studies actually support this, particularly those conducted in middle-aged and older adults. It's also a reason people who are unwell or have a poor appetite are advised not to drink before eating as it may lead to under-eating.  
But for people looking to lose weight, the science is a little less straightforward. One study showed middle-aged and older adults lost 2kg over a 12-week period when they drank water before meals compared with people who didn't drink any water with their meal. Younger participants (aged 21-35) on the other hand did not lose any weight, regardless of whether they drank water before their meal or not.  
But since the study didn't use blinding (where information which may

influence participants is withheld until after the experiment is finished), it means that participants may have become aware of why they were drinking water before their meal. This may have led some participants to purposefully change how much they ate in the hopes it might increase their changes of losing weight.  
However, this doesn't explain why the effect wasn't seen in young adults, so it will be important for future studies to investigate why this is.  
The other challenge with a lot of this kind of research is that it only focuses on whether participants eat less during just one of their day's meals after drinking water. Although this might suggest the potential to lose weight, there's very little good-quality evidence showing that reducing appetite in general leads to weight loss over time.  
Perhaps this is due to our body's biological drive to maintain its size. It's for this reason that no claims can be legally made in Europe about foods

which help make you feel fuller for longer with reference to weight loss.  
So, although there might be some appetite-dulling effects of water, it seems that it might not result in long-term weight change – and may possibly be due to making conscious changes to your diet.

**Just water isn't enough**

There's a pretty good reason why water on its own is not terribly effective at regulating appetite. If it did, prehistoric humans might have starved.  
But while appetite and satiation – feeling full and not wanting to eat again – aren't perfectly aligned with being able to lose weight, it might be a helpful starting point.  
Part of what helps us to feel full is our stomach. When food enters the stomach, it triggers stretch receptors that in turn lead to the release of hormones which tell us we're full.  
But since water is a liquid, it's rapidly emptied from our stomach – meaning it doesn't actually fill us up. Even more interestingly, due to the stomach's shape, fluids can bypass any semi-solid food content that's being digested in the lower part of the stomach. This means that water can still be quickly emptied from the stomach. So even if it's consumed at the end of a meal it might not necessarily extend your feelings of fullness.  
If you're trying to eat less and lose weight, drinking excessive amounts of water may not be a great solution. But there is evidence showing when water is mixed with other substances (such as fibre, soups or vegetable sauces) this can delay how fast the stomach empties its contents – meaning you feel fuller longer.

But while water may not help you lose weight directly, it may still aid in weight loss given it's the healthiest drink we can choose. Swapping high-calorie drinks such as soda and alcohol for water may be an easy way of reducing the calories you consume daily, which may help with weight loss.

**Duane Mellor is the Lead for Evidence-Based Medicine and Nutrition, Aston Medical School, Aston University**



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## LIFESTYLE

# Milkshakes are the sweet sensation we just can't get enough of

From frosty classics to extravagant creations, milkshakes have become a beloved indulgence for people of all ages. With its creamy texture and infinite flavour possibilities, it's no wonder that milkshakes have become a staple treat in our lives. Today, let's delve into the delicious world of milkshakes and explore what makes them so iconic and irresistible.

## A timeless classic

The history of milkshakes dates back to the late 19th century when they were first created as a health tonic using milk, eggs, and malted grains. Over the years, milkshakes have evolved, and the addition of ice cream catapulted them into mainstream popularity during the early 20th century.

Classic milkshakes are a blend of milk, ice cream, and flavourings. Chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry are the timeless favourites enjoyed by generations. These simple yet satisfying combinations are perfect for those seeking nostalgic comfort in a glass.

## Where flavour knows no bounds

Milkshakes are not limited to the traditional flavours; they have become a canvas for culinary creativity. With an array of ingredients to choose from, milkshakes can now be customised to suit any taste. From cookies and candy bars to fruits and spices, the possibilities are endless.

For those with an insatiable sweet tooth, milkshakes loaded with toppings and mix-ins are the way to go. Imagine a milkshake topped with whipped cream, sprinkles, and a whole slice of cake. Yes, that's a thing! The combination of flavours and textures takes milkshakes to a whole new level of decadence.

## A social and cultural phenomenon

Milkshakes have not only become a culinary delight but also a social and cultural phenomenon. They are synonymous with diners and drive-ins, where families and friends gather to enjoy a meal and share a sweet treat. The image of a straw plunged into a tall glass filled with a thick and creamy milkshake is instantly recognisable and evokes feelings of nostalgia.

Additionally, milkshakes have made

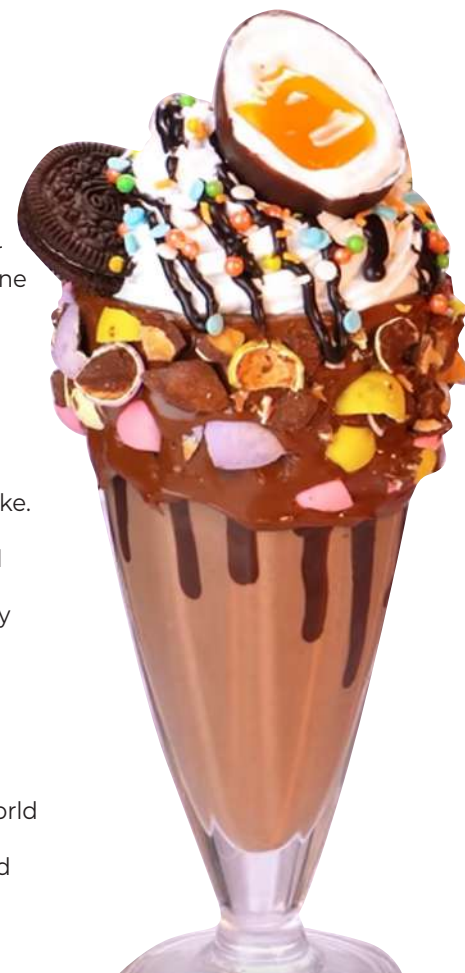
their mark in popular culture. They have been featured in movies, songs, and literature, further solidifying their status as an icon. From the iconic scene in *Pulp Fiction* to Kelis' hit song *Milkshake*, these creamy concoctions have permeated our collective imagination.

## The pleasure in every sip

There is something undeniably satisfying about sipping on a milkshake. Whether you're treating yourself to a classic flavour or embarking on a wild culinary adventure, every sip brings a moment of pure pleasure. The creamy texture, the burst of flavours, and the cooling sensation make milkshakes a delightful indulgence.

So, the next time you find yourself craving a sweet escape or looking to create lasting memories, don't forget about the milkshake. Step into the world of milkshakes and let your taste buds explore the wide range of flavours and experiences they have to offer.

Say 'Cheers' to the timeless joy of milkshakes.



## Entertaining in style – and with ease

### A crowd-pleasing recipe and four tips every host should know

If you're a home chef, you know how fun and fulfilling it is to host friends and family. However, entertaining a large group can also be challenging and a bit stressful. To help you elevate your entertaining prowess, Nick Ritchie, Signature Kitchen Suite's executive chef, has offered the following delicious recipe and four tips every home chef should know.

#### 1. Prepare multi-purpose batches of food

Chef Ritchie suggests having food like pesto, hummus ratatouille, caponata and baba ganoush ready, as they pair well with grilled chicken, fish and meat. You can prepare and store a sizable batch of recipes up to a week ahead.

Chef Ritchie's parmesan dip is a particular crowd-pleaser. You can serve it as a topping for fresh bread, crostini or bruschetta, toss it with pasta, spoon it over fresh sliced tomatoes, add to a salad, dollop it on steak or chicken breast, and use it as a pizza base.

#### Chef Nick's Parmesan Dip

Prep time: 10-15 minutes, for 2.5 cups

- Ingredients
- 8 ounces Parmesan cheese, broken into 1-inch chunks
  - 8 ounces Asiago cheese, broken into 1-inch chunks

- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced scallions
- 1 tablespoon pepper flakes
- 1-1/2 cups extra-virgin olive oil

#### Method

1. Place the cheese chunks in the bowl of a food processor. Blitz for about 10 seconds to break the cheese into small granules. Use a rubber spatula to scrape down and recombine between every couple of pulses.
2. Add the remaining ingredients except olive oil and pulse briefly.
3. Using a spatula, remove all to a mixing bowl. Fold the olive oil into the blended ingredients and mix well by hand.
4. Transfer the dip to a sealed container and refrigerate for up to two weeks. Bring to room temperature before serving.

#### 2. Sous vide to save time

Don't let the fancy name fool you. The sous vide cooking method, which has been used by world-renowned chefs for years, is just as easy for home cooks. 'Sous vide' (pronounced 'sue-veed') is French for 'under vacuum', and it's an innovative cooking technique known for achieving the perfect temperature every time. Food is vacuum sealed, then submerged in water, and slow-cooked at a constant precise temperature until it is perfectly cooked.



Sous vide has become the go-to method in the world's best restaurants for years and for good reason. It brings food to the precise temperature chefs look for and delivers perfect doneness, edge-to-edge, every time with little effort.

Even better, you can use sous vide to do a 'reverse sear'. Sous vide will ensure your steak is cooked to the desired temperature. Then, you can put it on the hot grill for that tasty, smoky char only outdoor cooking can give you.

Baby back ribs are another popular staple that can be prepared using the sous vide method. With the perfect fall-off-the-bone doneness from the sous vide, a nice smoky finish from the grill and a brush of barbecue sauce, you'll have all-day ribs without the all-day work.

You can even make batches of sous vide cocktails and mocktails for a large group, so you don't spend your whole event mixing drinks.

#### 3. Embrace technology

Technology is your friend here, so use it. Cooking and kitchen appliances can help you save time, elevate your cooking and simplify preparing and storing dishes for entertaining and everyday cooking.

To make recipes shine, Ritchie advises at-home chefs to upgrade the tools and equipment - especially appliances and other must-haves they use every day.

He recommends today's ultra-versatile appliances, like those from Signature Kitchen Suite, which feature multiple modalities, from steam and gas to induction and even industry-first sous vide built right into the cooktop, to make your cooking experience easier and more successful, day after day.

See [SignatureKitchenSuite.com](http://SignatureKitchenSuite.com) for more details.

#### 4. Take it easy on yourself

Keep it simple. Serve your dishes buffet or family style on platters for an easier setup and clean-up.

If you plan to dine outdoors, pick up rustic or picnic-style butcher paper as a disposable tablecloth. Opt for eco-friendly, compostable plates and utensils that are attractive so you can skip washing dishes after your guests have gone home.

Impress your guests and enjoy your dinner party or get-together that those in attendance won't soon forget. Using these four tips, you'll be ready to host any event this season and beyond.



FILMS

# Family fun comes first as Blue Beetle flies

The resilience of the indestructible loving family-in this case, a Mexican-American clan-forms the heart and soul of *Blue Beetle* (Warner Bros.). Even as the DC Comics-derived adventure occasionally lapses into clichés, this solid core endures-and helps to make the film built around it acceptable for a fairly broad audience.

The arrival on screen of the titular character (Xolo Maridueña) constitutes a landmark in cinematic history since he's the first Latino superhero. Although Blue Beetle, like Superman, has been around in print form since 1939, it wasn't until 2006 that he was given a specific ethnic identity by way of his current alter ego, Jaime Reyes.

Director Ángel Manuel Soto and screenwriter Gareth Dunnet-Alcocer frame their fantasy elements within the story of Jaime's all-too-realistic travails and those of his struggling relatives. Although they believe in the dignity of work and will accept any available employment to get ahead, the Reyes are about to get kicked out of the house they rent due to gentrification.

On the brink of homelessness, they can only gaze from afar at the gleaming skyscrapers of Palmera City, the wealth of whose upper class is not trickling down to them. As Jamie's sister, Milagro

(Belissa Escobedo), ruefully observes: "We used to have the other side of the tracks. Now they want that, too."

Yet, in the midst of it all, dad Alberto (Damián Alcázar) reminds Jaime, the first Reyes to graduate from college, of the fundamentals: "The familia, that's what lasts. Everyone has a purpose."

But enough social realism, at least for now. As an opening sequence has shown us, Victoria Kord (Susan Sarandon) – the scheming CEO of the Palmera City-based conglomerate founded by her late brother, Ted, and named after her family – has recently unearthed a powerful artifact for which she had long been searching, a blue scarab from outer space called the Khaji Da.

Victoria intends to use the magical amulet to build a world-conquering army. But her niece, Jenny (Bruna Marquezine), Ted's daughter, has other ideas. Jenny steals the curio and, as she makes her escape, hands it off to Jaime, who is trying to get a job at Kord Industries.

But it turns out that the scarab has a mind of its own, and attaches itself quickly to Jaime in the midst of one of his family's many crises. He's instantly clothed in an azure-highlighted outfit that, among other things, enables him

*Xolo Maridueña is the first Latino superhero in DC's Blue Beetle*



to fly and makes him impervious to bullets. The suit, however, melts away the moment danger has successfully been averted.

A comedy-lightened struggle against the forces of evil, fought in alliance with Jenny, ensues. Some of the humorous detours, however, seem disappointingly out of place in a work that aspires to be viewed as pioneering.

Thus Jaime's slogan-spouting Uncle Rudy (George Lopez) has a Tacoma pickup truck he calls the Taco, with a horn that plays La Cucaracha. In a similar vein, the lad's Nana (Adriana Barraza) unexpectedly proves to be a

dab hand at weaponry, based on her hidden past as a south-of-the-border revolutionary. Can you hear the drums, Fernando?

While the mayhem along Blue Beetle's path is too strong for little kids, teens will handle it easily. The smattering of vulgarity in the dialogue is doled out with equal restraint, though parents may regret that it's present at all.

Still, commendable basic values and a positive, if flawed, portrayal of Hispanic life make this debut for Jaime Reyes-whose true superpower, it turns out, is familial love-an attractive choice for moviegoers.

FOOD

## Deeply delicious: Black Forest trifle

And now for something completely delicious. A mixture of the traditional gateaux with cherries and chocolate, doubled up with all the favourite ingredients of a trifle, this is a popular dessert and treat for any occasion.

- INGREDIENTS**
- 60g self raising flour
  - 60g caster sugar
  - 60g soft margarine
  - 1 egg
  - 1 tbsp cocoa
  - 1 (400g) tin black cherries (reserve syrup)
  - 2 tbsp kirsch
  - 1 sachet blackcurrant jelly
  - 300ml double cream
  - A few drops vanilla extract
  - 3 egg yolks
  - 30g caster sugar
  - 1 tsp cornflour
  - 1 tbsp cocoa
  - 300ml double cream
  - Grated chocolate to decorate

**METHOD**

■ Soak cherries in kirsch overnight, reserve juice/syrup for use later.

- Mix flour, sugar, margarine, egg and cocoa into a batter and bake in pre greased bun tin at 160 C for about 15 mins.
- When cooked and cooled, place in a suitable dish and add the drained cherries on top.
- Make up the jelly -using any cherry juices -and pour into the dish before leaving to set in the fridge.
- Place cream in a saucepan and gently heat to just below boiling point.
- Beat together the egg yolks, sugar corn flour and cocoa.
- Pour in hot cream stirring all the time and return all mixture to pan and heat gently until thickened.
- Allow to cool before pouring over the jelly.
- Whip the remaining cream and pile on top of custard and decorate with the grated chocolate.



**Black Forest trifle: An instant classic dessert**

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# Sexism in the medieval period: How its female doctors were consigned to oblivion

HISTORY

**Isabella  
Gagliardi**

The figure of the witch has long cast a spell on artists and scientists, who have alternately associated her with women displaying an uncanny knowledge of nature. In fact, many of “witches” persecuted in Europe from the 15th century onward were midwives and healers, in line with a long tradition of lay medical practice that was more pragmatic than theoretical.

In seeking to tell the story of these experts (prior to their ostracisation from the practice), researchers have come up against a number of obstacles. The information available comes primarily from scarce, disparate fragments from biographical sources, as well as economic, legal and administrative ones. Sometimes all that remains is a given name or a surname, such as in the case of the women listed in the *Ars Medicina* of Florence (a medical treatise) or of the nun apothecary Giovanna Ginori, whose name can be found in the tax records in the 1560s.

Such painstaking research has nevertheless helped us better understand how a male-dominated, institutional and hierarchical system pushed women away from the practice and study of medicine.

## The Schola Salernitana

Our first port of call in this story is a once-renowned medical school that operated in Salerno in the 9th and 10th centuries. The Schola Salernitana was an institution attended by many women, including the pioneering gynaecologist and surgeon known as Trota (or Trotula) (13th century) and the surgeon and eye specialist, Costanza Calenda (15th century). Information about these women is scarce: it is complicated to separate real data from legend. Located to the South of Naples, Salerno was a city where Christian, Jewish and Muslim scholars came together, turning the school into an exceptional melting pot of scientific encounters and influences.

## Women accused of illegal medical practice

However, from 1220 onward, it became no longer possible to practise medicine without a diploma from the University of Paris or approval from its doctors and chancellor, pushing female doctors to the margins. Failure to comply with the new instructions resulted in expulsion from the field, which is exactly what happened to



a woman doctor named Jacqueline Felice de Almania. According to the 1322 document produced by the University of Paris, she had been treating patients without any ‘real’ knowledge of medicine (ie, without a university education). She was subjected to expulsion and had to pay a considerable fine. The records of the dispute describe the medical examinations performed by Jacqueline, noting how she had analysed urine by sight, taken her patients’ pulses, probed their limbs, and treated male patients. This is one of the rare pieces of evidence that mentions the fact that women doctors also treated men.

In 1325, Pope John XXII had received a prompt appeal from the professors of the University of Paris

following the Clarice affair. Upon this, he wrote to Bishop Stephen of Paris ordering him to forbid the practice of medicine by women without medical knowledge and by midwives in Paris and the surrounding areas, warning that these women were in fact practising witchcraft.

## The formalisation of medical studies

The gradual prohibition on women practising medicine coincided with the creation of a formalised academic canon in the field. This marked the beginning of a careful vetting process by the teaching authorities and guilds, which served to marginalise women doctors even further.

The medical school of Salerno, and below, inset, as it appears in a miniature of Avicenna’s Canon. The image represents the legend of Robert, Duke of Normandy. Wounded by an arrow, he was heroically saved by his wife who sucked out the poison as prescribed by the physicians of Salerno

extremely valuable to this research. Boccaccio, for instance, mentions a woman doctor in the *Decameron*. The narrator, Dioneo, recounts the tale of a certain Gillette of Narbonne, a gifted doctor who became betrothed to her beloved Bertrand de Roussillon as a reward for curing the King of France of a fistula in his chest. Boccaccio’s characterisation of Gillette is patently aware of the monarch’s lack of trust in her, both as a woman and as a “damsel”.

Addressing the King, she says: “Great King, let not my skill and experience be despised because I am young and a maiden, for my profession is not phisic, neither do I undertake the administering thereof, as depending on my own knowledge; but by the gracious assistance of Heaven, and some rules of skilful observation which I learned of reverend Gerard of Narbonne, who was my worthy father and a physician of no mean fame all the while he lived.”

There is also a great deal of information about Jewish women doctors operating mainly in southern Italy and Sicily, who learned the medical arts from their family.

As the study of medicine at the University of Paris became the only valid medical education in Europe and the Schola Salernitana saw its influence wane, women were gradually excluded from these professions.

The gradual disappearance of women doctors in the medieval period can be linked to bans imposed by the Church, as well as to the progressive professionalisation of the medical field, which saw the creation of more rigorous institutions such as universities, arts societies and guilds, all founded and controlled by men.

In Europe, it was not until the mid-19th century that the first university-qualified women doctors were able to practise their profession.

Even then, they still had to face more than their fair share of criticism.

**Isabella Gagliardi is a Professeur Associé d’Histoire du christianisme, Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (FMSH)**

However, this did not wipe them entirely from existence or from the practice, given that a reasonable number of names can be found in the Italian records alone. These include Monna Neccia, mentioned in the *Estimo* tax register in 1359, and Monna Iacopa, who treated plague victims in 1374. Both were from Florence, as were the ten women enrolled between 1320 and 1444 in the city’s guild of doctors, the *Arte dei Medici e degli Speziali*.

All the same, it had become very dangerous for women to practise medicine, particularly due to the ever-mounting suspicions of witchcraft.

There is an unfortunate lack of data about these women in the official sources, given that they practised at a time when society permitted only men to access more senior positions.

Despite all this, the historical background that we have pieced together points to an existence both of women experts who practised the art of medicine and of women doctors who had studied their craft, often on an unofficial basis, with their father, brother or spouse.

Non-institutional sources, such as literary texts, have proven



# The wonderful women in sport

FAITH IN SPORT

## Fr Vlad Felzmann

The recent Women's World Cup in football has brought women's sport closer to the centre of our sporting attention. However, over the past hundred years, many women have achieved great results in many sports. Here are a few role models. It is worth appreciating – and celebrating – their lives.

**Sprinter Wilma Rudolph** was the first American woman to win three gold medals in a single Olympics. She overcame the loss of strength in her left leg and foot, caused by polio when she was five, to become the fastest woman in the world at the 1960 Olympics. She held the records for the 100 metres at 11.2 seconds and 200 meters at 22.9 seconds. Because of worldwide television coverage throughout the 1960 Olympics, Rudolph gained international recognition and became an iconic figure for black and female athletes.

During the peak of the civil rights movement, Rudolph was a trailblazer for the rights of Black women. She broke the gender barrier of all-male events in track and field, and her legacy lives on today.

Former World No. 1 professional tennis player **Billie Jean King** is regarded as one of the greatest women's tennis players of all time. She won 39 Grand Slam titles: 12 in singles, 16 in women's doubles, and 11 in mixed doubles. King is an advocate for gender equality and social justice. She campaigned for equal pay when the Open Era began in 1968 and became the first female athlete to earn over \$100,000 in prize money in 1971.

Two years later, she beat tennis superstar Bobby Riggs in 'The Battle of the Sexes' and helped found the Women's Tennis Association, both of which contributed to her legacy of making tennis among the most equitable professional sports on the planet.

Her fight for equity in sports has continued ever since. Today, King remains a primary advocate for women as the founder of the Women's Sports Foundation.

**Lindsey Vonn** is one of only two female skiers to win four World Cup overall championships. She won three consecutive titles from 2008-10 and another in 2012. She was also the first American woman to win a gold medal in the downhill, which she did at the 2010 Winter Olympics. Vonn won her 20th World Cup crystal globe title in 2016 to surpass Ingemar Stenmark for the overall record for men or women. She is also one of six women to win a World Cup race in all five disciplines of alpine skiing. With three Olympic medals,



four World Cup titles, 82 World Cup victories, and two World Championship gold medals to her name, Vonn is widely considered one of the greatest skiers of all time. After missing parts of several seasons as a result of injuries, Lindsey Vonn retired from the sport in 2019.

**Aly Raisman** is a two-time Olympic gymnast. In 2012, she won the team gold medal, floor gold medal, and bronze medal on balance beam with Team USA. She took home the individual all-around silver medal and floor silver medal in 2016, as well as another team gold medal. As accomplished as she is in the gym, Raisman may be even better known for her work in the fight to end sexual abuse. She was among hundreds of gymnasts who came forward to speak out against former USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar.

Since Nassar's trial, during which she delivered a blistering speech, she has used her platform to focus on fixing USA Gymnastics and fighting for justice for all victims of sexual abuse.

**Alexandra Morgan** is a United States Women's Soccer Team legend who won her second

consecutive FIFA World Cup championship in 2019. After debuting in the World Cup in 2011, in 2012 Morgan recorded 28 goals and 21 assists to become the second American woman to score 20 goals and 20 assists in the same calendar year, alongside Mia Hamm.

Morgan has accumulated more than 200 caps and 119 goals. She was also one of the first women's soccer players to appear on the cover of a FIFA video game.

Off the field, Morgan was crucial to the US women's national team's successful fight for equal pay, which involved a cantankerous lawsuit against the US Soccer Federation. She was instrumental in the National Women's Soccer League's reckoning over pervasive emotional, mental, and sexual abuse.

**Nastia Liukin** was a pivotal member of the US gymnastics team during three World Championships and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. She won the 2008 Olympic all-around, as well as five Olympic medals, which tied the record for most medals won by an American gymnast in a single non-boycotted Olympic Games. Simone Biles later also tied the record. A four-time



all-around US national champion, Liukin's strongest events were the uneven bars and balance beam. She attempted a comeback in 2011 with hopes of making the 2012 Olympic team, but fell several times during the Olympic Trials and retired in 2012.

She is now a gymnastics analyst for NBC Sports and hosts an annual Nastia Liukin Cup to support the growth of gymnastics.

**Serena Williams** is highly regarded as the best female tennis players of the Open Era. Her victories have shaped her into an inspirational figure in the sport. She holds the most Grand Slam titles in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles combined among active players and tied for third on the all-time list. She is second in the Open Era. Her 23 Grand Slam singles titles is a record for the most tournament wins in the Open Era, just one shy of Margaret Court's all-time record.

Along with sister, fellow tennis legend Venus, she is considered a pioneer of a new era for women in tennis that focuses on power.

Throughout her career, she was often among the only women on the list of the world's highest-paid athletes, according to Forbes. She announced her decision to pivot away from tennis in 2022, and her improbable run through the US Open later that year was widely believed to be her final professional competition.

**Danica Patrick** is the most successful woman in the history of American open-wheel racing. She

accomplished multiple firsts for women in the sport, including being the first woman to win an IndyCar Series race at the 2008 Indy Japan 300. Patrick also had the highest finish by a woman in the Indianapolis 500 (third) and Daytona 500 (eighth). She did not endure as much success as many expected, but she had an undeniable impact on the sport.

In a predominantly male industry, Patrick is often credited for inspiring more women to take part in auto racing and motorsports.

**Maria Sharapova** is a professional tennis player and the only Russian to have a career Grand Slam. When she was 18 years old, Sharapova was ranked world No. 1 and was the first female from Russia to do so. Sharapova accumulated 36 singles titles and five Grand Slam titles. She is considered one of the best tennis players to play the game. She has also been involved in various humanitarian endeavours, including being a United Nations Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador focused on the Chernobyl Recovery and Development Programme. She also a programme in 2018 to mentor women entrepreneurs.

The 20th century saw women sports personalities achieve ever increasing popularity. Our current century seems to be doing even better – as the Lionesses have demonstrated – and inspiring an ever increasing number of girls to become involved in sport.



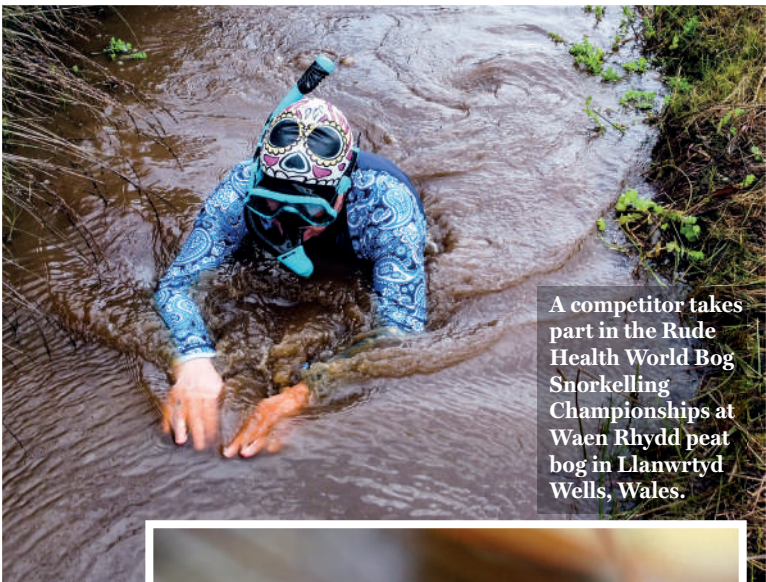
*The 20th century saw women sports personalities achieve ever increasing popularity. Our current century seems to be doing even better – as the Lionesses have demonstrated*



# A pictorial round-up of the past seven days



Participants taking part in the Children's Day Parade, part of the Notting Hill Carnival celebration in west London over the Bank Holiday



A competitor takes part in the Rude Health World Bog Snorkelling Championships at Waen Rhydd peat bog in Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales.



Newborn meerkat pups Busta, Missy and Emmie explore the enclosure at Blair Drummond Safari and Adventure Park, Stirling.



Above, footballers from Bourton Rovers fight for the ball during the annual traditional River Windrush match, which has been taking place for over 100 years, in Bourton-in-the-Water, Cotswolds

Left, Mod enthusiasts Lesley Smith and Marie Wallis pose with their scooters in Madeira Drive, Brighton, during the annual Brighton Mod Weekender.



Above, the delegation from the Nisga'a nation beside the 11-metre tall memorial pole during a visit to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, ahead of the return of 11-metre tall memorial pole to what is now British Columbia. The Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) and National Museums Scotland (NMS) announced last month that the House of Ni'isjoohl memorial pole will return home to the Nass Valley this September.



Balloons are illuminated during the Balloon Night Glow event, part of the Yorkshire Balloon Fiesta at Castle Howard in York.




LITURGICAL CALENDARS

Ordinary Form

Sunday Year A, Weekday Cycle I

Sunday, September 3:  
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Jer. 20:7-9; Ps. 63:2-6, 8-9, r. 2;  
Rom. 12:1-2; Mt. 16:21-27



Monday, September 4:  
St Cuthbert, Bishop (E)  
1 Thess.4:13-18; Ps. 96:1,3-5,11-13;  
Lk.4:16-30

Tuesday, September 5:  
1 Thess.5:1-6,9-11; Ps. 27:1,4,13-14;  
Lk.4:31-37

Wednesday, September 6:  
Col.1:1-8; Ps.52:10-11; Lk.4:38-44

Thursday, September 7:  
Weekday in Ordinary Time  
Col. 1:9-14; Ps.98:2-6; Lk.5:1-11

Friday, September 8:  
The Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary Micah 5:1-4; Ps. 13:6-7; Mt.1:1-16,18-23

Saturday, September 9:  
St Peter Claver, Priest, or memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary Col.1:21-23; Ps. 54:3-4,6,8; Lk.6:1-5

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**St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (c. 634 – 20th March 687) was an Anglo-Saxon saint of the early Northumbrian church in the Celtic tradition. He was a monk, bishop and hermit, associated with the monasteries of Melrose and Lindisfarne in the Kingdom of Northumbria, His feast days are 20th March and 4th September.**