

The Catholic universe



FREE inside - Catholic TIMES



UK leaves poorest to balance the budget

Faith leaders united in attacking plans to slash foreign aid at time world is still reeling from Covid-19 pandemic

Nick Benson

Cardinal Vincent Nichols and the Archbishop of Canterbury have joined forces to condemn cuts to the UK's Aid budget, saying that the move will do "real damage" to Yemen, Syria, South Sudan and other countries in crisis.

The decision has also been attacked by Catholic aid agencies, who pointed out that in the USA, President Biden has asked Congress to increase aid spending, saying it was crucial the world's wealthiest nations acted to help the poorest as they struggled to come to terms with the impact of Covid-19.

The UK government has said it would not meet the 0.7 per cent target in the coming financial year and spending will be cut to 0.5 per cent of national income - a move that would save the UK about £4bn a year.

But Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Justin Welby hit out at the decision in a joint article carried by *The Evening Standard*, saying that "balancing the books during a pandemic on the backs of the world's poorest is not acceptable".

They stress that "we must not walk by on the other side".

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has described the cut as a 'temporary' measure to cope with the deficit caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the 0.7 per cent target would return when finances allowed.

However, some MPs fear that the reduction could be permanent.

"Saying the Government will only do this 'when the fiscal situation allows' is deeply worrying, suggesting that it will act in contravention of its legally binding target," the Church leaders said.

"This promise, repeatedly made even during the pandemic, has been broken and must be put right."

The 0.7 per cent baseline for Britain's aid budget is enshrined in law by the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act of 2015.

Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop Welby pointed out that one of the most important lessons Covid-19 has taught society is that "we depend on each other around the world".

Continued on page 3



Pope adds condolences as he salutes Duke's public service

Nick Benson

Pope Francis has offered the Queen his "heartfelt condolences" for the loss of her husband last Friday, as he praised the Duke of Edinburgh for his devotion to his marriage, family and public service.

In a telegram sent by the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy Father paid tribute to Prince Philip's "distinguished record" of public service and his

"commitment to the education and advancement of future generations."

The pope's message was one of thousands sent paying tribute to the Duke from politicians, faith leaders and other civic dignitaries. Cardinal Vincent Nichols said the nation would "miss Prince Philip's presence and character, so full of life and vigour. He has been an example of steadfast loyalty and duty cheerfully given. May he rest in peace."

In a Requiem Mass, celebrated last weekend in Westminster Cathedral for the repose of the soul of Prince Philip, the cardinal described the duke as the "faithful rock" of the Royal Family. "Every family in grief needs comfort and support, and none more so than a grieving wife, our Queen. May our prayers contribute to her comfort and support," he said.

Full tribute: See page 2

This week's Companion

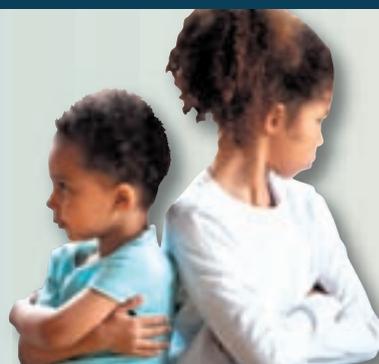
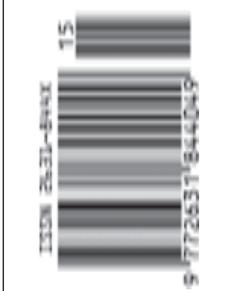
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Duke's deep faith underpinned his life and its values, says Sentamu

Michael Winterbottom

The sad news of the death of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh last Friday prompted a flurry of tributes from at home and further afield.

Many expressed respect for the way in which the Prince dedicated his life to the service of the nation, his support for the Queen and especially the sacrifice of the naval career that he loved.

There was also respect and admiration for the way he rose above a childhood scarred by turbulence and family tragedies and spent largely in exile; and for his overcoming the hostility and suspicion of an establishment that regarded him as an untrustworthy "foreign prince."

But there was also another far deeper side to the Prince, and that was his deep and lasting Christian faith.

Born into the Greek Royal family as a Prince of both Greece and Denmark. Prince Philip was baptised into the Greek Orthodox faith and was received into the Church of England before his wedding on 20th November 1947, in a private service conducted by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher, at Lambeth Palace.

He maintained close links with his Christian roots throughout his life. In the 1960s, he helped set up St George's House, a religious study centre at Windsor, where he would join clergy, academics, businesspeople and politicians to discuss the state of the world.

He was also a regular visitor to Mount Athos, a monastic community and religious sanctuary in Greece, and was a long-time patron of the Templeton Prize, the award dubbed the 'Nobel Prize for life's spiritual dimension'; among its winners was Mother Teresa.

His longstanding environmentalism, which saw him serve as patron of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, was connected to his faith. He organised a 1986 summit in Assisi, where representatives of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism pledged to protect the environment. He said at the time that "a new and powerful alliance has been forged be-



Prince Philip holds up a bottle of whiskey as he and Queen Elizabeth II present gifts to Pope Francis during a meeting at the Vatican in 2014. Photo: Maria Grazia Picciarella

tween the forces of religion and the forces of conservation."

The former Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu, who was born in Uganda, spoke movingly of Prince Philip's faith in an interview with the BBC.

He said he and the Duke of Edinburgh had first discussed faith when His Royal Highness was deeply troubled about his children and their marriages.

He recalled how they prayed together at an official event – and joked that Prince Philip would have appreciated his shortened funeral service, because "the duke could not stand what he called 'long church'".

"I think it was the ambassador's dinner at Buckingham Palace and he really was feeling very, very sorry for some of the things that were happening in his family – particularly his sons," the retired Archbishop said.

"He said 'What would you say to me about the trouble that was happening with all my family?' I said 'Well, your royal highness, you are a

family like any other family, and every family goes through good times and bad times. The important thing is that you realise that if people are married they are not just a couple, there is a third and that's Jesus Christ, and they should begin to go to Jesus Christ'.

"His reply moved me: He said 'Of

course, the Queen and I are so strong in Jesus Christ'."

Dr Sentamu, long regarded as the Royal family's favourite clergyman because of his force of personality and practical wisdom, said Prince Philip asked him to pray for his children, and that they did so at the dinner.



The Queen with Prince Philip in 2011

"There was this unbelievable depth of his rootedness, because (Philip) was so rooted in Christ, he didn't have any problem in relating to people about their faith or people who didn't believe at all," he went on. "Her Majesty is exactly the same."

The aftermath of the Duke's death has proved, Dr Sentamu said, how the Royal family is no "different in grief to anybody else". "They are having a small funeral, they want to be part of the grieving for the nation, for the many people who died from Covid-19 and for those who have not been able to be present when their loved one is being buried."

Prince Philip's deep faith may have been partly a legacy of his mother, Princess Alice of Battenberg, who established an order of nuns, sheltered Jews in Nazi-occupied Greece during World War II and is buried below a Russian Orthodox Church in east Jerusalem.

"I suspect that it never occurred to her that her action was in any way special," the Duke said on a 1994 trip to Israel, where he visited his mother's grave. "She was a person with deep religious faith, and she would have considered it to be a totally human action to fellow people in distress."

His interests in religion and ecology have been passed on to the Prince of Wales who is a renowned environmentalist and has said he wants to be "the defender of faiths" when he takes the throne, rather than the monarch's official title as 'Defender of the Anglican faith'.

Universe Comment, page 6



World sends condolences to the Queen

Continued from page 1

Dr Gavin Ashenden, a former chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II and an Anglican bishop who converted to the Catholic faith in 2019, said Prince Philip "exemplified the kind of humility and self-giving that Christianity has at its heart".

The Archbishop of Liverpool, Malcolm McMahon, recalled the prince's "life of loyal public service to our country" and his family, while the Bishop of the Forces, Paul Mason, praised his duty and service over so many decades as "an example to us all".

"Seeing active service in the Royal Navy during WWII as well as his ongoing support of the Armed Forces has brought a great

sense of pride and inspiration to military personnel," he said.

The Primate of All-Ireland recalled the prince's regular visits to Northern Ireland for charitable work and the major impact the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has had on the lives of young people.

"His visit to Ireland along with Queen Elizabeth in 2011, stands out as a cherished moment of peace and reconciliation and as an historic demonstration of the importance of mutual understanding and respectful relationships between these islands," he said.

Archbishop Welby said the legacy Prince Philip leaves is "enormous", as he recalled

his "joy at life, his enquiring mind and his ability to communicate to people from every background and walk of life".

"He was a master at putting people at their ease and making them feel special," he added.

Rabbi Mirvis paid tribute to the duke's "interaction with, and affection for the Jewish community in the UK and his connection with Israel, where his mother is buried and which he visited in 1994".

Tributes also came from the United Reformed Church; the Muslim Council of Britain; the Hindu Council UK; and the Sikh Federation UK, as well as many other faith groups and organisations.



The Duke leaves the stage, and a life well led

Williams 'gave politics a good name'

Tributes have been paid to Catholic peer Baroness Shirley Williams of Crosby who has died at the age of 90.

Originally a Labour MP, Baroness Williams was part of the 'Gang of Four' who quit the party to found the short-lived Social Democratic Party in March 1981. It dissolved in 1988 and Baroness Williams later went on to support the SDP's merger with the Liberal Party and the formation of the Liberal Democrats. Prior to this, Williams had been a leading member of the 1970s Labour government and one of the first women cabinet ministers.



She retired from political life in 2016, after leading the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords.

She died peacefully in the early hours of Monday 12th April.

Lord David Alton of Liverpool said Baroness Williams "gave politics a good name and all who knew her will greatly miss her wonderful spirit".

"A rising generation, interested in politics, should carefully reflect on her life, times and ideas," he said. "She respected conscience – but she also expected others to respect her conscience".

Campaigners demand more Church action on climate

Catholics are calling for stronger leadership on the climate crisis from the bishops of England and Wales.

Catholics For Christian Climate Action held prayer protests outside Westminster and Cardiff cathedrals to raise concerns about the climate crisis and asking for stronger leadership on the issue by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in advance of the Bishops' Spring Plenary Assembly.

The campaigners prayed for the Catholic Church to take a more active lead in demonstrating the urgency with which the UK needs to act on the climate and ecological emergency ahead of COP26.

"The only way to avoid even more dangerous warming is for countries to stop emitting CO₂ and the need for action grows ever more urgent and more difficult," said Melanie Nazareth, of Catholics for Christian Climate Action.

"I want our Catholic leaders to speak out more about what the UK must do to protect our brothers and sisters in more vulnerable parts of the world."

She added: "This is a time of Kairos, the time of choosing for the world and for us. The voices of our Church



Catholics For Christian Climate Action prayer protests outside Westminster Cathedral. Photo: Melanie Nazareth/Catholics For Christian Climate Action.

leaders could make a big difference."

Those taking part in the prayer protests want an immediate commitment by the Church to fully divest from fossil fuels and funders of fossil fuel projects by the end of 2022, as well as advocating a commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

They are also asking the Church to advocate for the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, which now has the support of 106 MPs, as a measure that would ensure that the UK contributes fairly to climate mitigation

consistent with limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C.

Participants also took the opportunity to pray in thanks for the positive actions that have already been taken by the Bishops' Conference.

Columban Sr Kate Midgley said she prayed outside Westminster Cathedral "because there are some things that need to be shouted from the rooftops!"

"We are in a climate and ecological emergency. As Christians, as Catholics, we believe that the whole earth is a

miracle of God's creation and that is being held in every moment by God," she said. "We of all people need to be at the forefront of calling for the protection of our earth. So, I am praying that our bishops will be inspired."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who was not in central London at that time of the protest, said: "I assure you that every bishop in England and Wales is fully aware of the issues to which you are drawing attention and have been addressing them, in various ways, for some time."

UK leaves poorest to balance budget

Continued from page 1

"Our freedoms, our safety, our health and that of our families, and of course our faith: these are all very precious. We have each benefited recently from coronavirus vaccinations. How fortunate we are.

"And how much we long for all our sisters and brothers, wherever they are and whatever they believe, to know the same security. The pandemic has reminded us that no one is safe until we are all safe. Our lives are connected.

"Of course, our traditions and scriptures have taught us this for centuries. We must not walk by on the other side, and love must prevail over fear when it comes to our global neighbours," they said.

Citing Britain's role in the COP26 UN climate negotiations in November, the Church leaders also stressed that leadership on the climate crisis "re-



quires leadership on international development".

The clerics' call comes as President Biden has decided the USA should take the opposite approach to the UK and increase foreign aid spending.

Supporters say not only is it the morally right thing to do, but that it would increase US influence around the world at a time of fracturing relationships between many nations.

Biden backed: See page 16

Canterbury award for 'tireless' Pax Christi vice-presidents

Bruce Kent and Dr Valerie Flessati, vice-presidents of Pax Christi England & Wales, have been awarded the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Cross for Ecumenism.

The couple received the award 'for exceptional, tireless and lifelong dedication to the Christian ecumenical search for peace, both individually and together'.

In announcing the couple as recipients, Lambeth Palace pointed out that 'peace is one of three pillars

of the ecumenical pilgrimage towards a healed world'.

'Valerie Flessati and Bruce Kent chose spiritual warfare on all violence and war,' it said.

It also highlighted Mr Kent's leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) for many years which had, the citation said, inspired more than one generation to follow the path of peace and to fight for an end to the UK's nuclear weapons arsenal.

Bruce Kent and Dr Valerie Flessati were hailed as worthy winners of Anglican award



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Each year THE LITTLE WAY ASSOCIATION receives numerous requests from Religious Orders in mission lands for help to train their seminarians.

It costs approximately £84 a month (£1,000 per year) to feed, clothe and educate a student for the priesthood



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Priti gives way on NHS staff visas

Thousands of frontline health workers and their dependents will be granted free visa extensions, Home Secretary Priti Patel has announced.

Free one-year visa extensions will be automatically granted to eligible overseas health and care workers whose visas were due to expire before 1st October 2021.

Since starting the free extensions last year, the Home Office has extended the visas of more than 10,000 people across the UK. It is expected that the announcement will benefit a further 14,000 applicants.

This will mean that doctors, nurses, paramedics, midwives, occupational therapists, psychologists and others will be able to continue their work in the fight against Covid-19.

Schools step in to help poor pupils

School staff have been handing out clothes, food and furnishings to families who have been struggling financially amid the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers have revealed.

Some children have turned up at school with holes in their shoes and without winter coats, while others have been left worried about when they will get their next meal, the National Education Union (NEU) said.

A survey found the majority of members are working with intakes where more than a fifth are considered to be economically disadvantaged.

More than two in three (68 per cent) want more government support for children in poverty.

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Police apologise after raiding Mass for alleged Covid breach

Nick Benson

Police officers have said they “deeply regret” any upset caused by shutting down a Good Friday service at a Catholic church in London.

Two police officers attended a service at Christ the King Polish Catholic Church in Balham, south London, on Divine Mercy Sunday 11th April to address the congregation. They halted the Good Friday service, instructing the faithful to go home, with those failing to comply facing a £200 fine or arrest, *The Catholic Universe* reported last week.

However, Detective Superintendent Andy Wadey attended Mass last weekend to apologise to the congregation, saying there had been “significant reflection and learning” since that day by himself and Superintendent Roger Arditti, who was also at the service.

Thanking the parish for inviting



Commitment to Healing and Collaboration in Balham.
Photo: Mazur/cbcew.org.uk

him and Supt. Arditti to Divine Mercy Sunday Mass, Det. Supt. Wadey added: “The Metropolitan Police truly wishes to serve and protect you in the best possible way.

“I truly hope that today marks the

start of a renewed deep and lasting relationship, with the parish of Christ the King, Balham and also the wider Polish communities.”

The Archbishop of Southwark, John Wilson, also addressed the congre-

gation. He welcomed the officers and their “kindness and fruitful conversations” in moving on from the incident as part of a new commitment to healing and collaboration.

Expressing deep sadness at the events, the archbishop said the officers have since listened to the “genuine concerns” of the community.

“We all share the same desire to move forward in friendship, working together for the common good,” he said. “We are committed to enabling freedom of worship for everyone, in safe and secure environments.”

Mgr Władysław Wyszowadzki, parish priest of Christ the King, added: “In the spirit of the Gospel, we willingly extend our hand to the police in order to build a deep and lasting relationship between us, based on mutual respect and regard for the rights of worshippers to freely practice their faith.”

Catholic medics leader says he has no worries about the AstraZeneca vaccine

Nick Benson

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine remains safe for almost all people, an adviser on health to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has said.

Professor Jim McManus, Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire, Vice-President of the UK Association of Directors of Public Health and a member of the national Vaccine Equalities Board, said he has already received his first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and is looking forward to receiving his second.

His comments come as under-30s and those with a history of blood clots have been told they will be provided with alternative vaccines following reports of cases of unusual blood clots with low platelets occurring in people who received the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

“The latest news does not change my view of the vaccine and the benefits still far outweigh the risks. I will take the second dose of the AZ vaccine,” Prof. McManus told *The Catholic Universe*.



All medicines and vaccines have adverse event, he pointed out.

“The UK vaccination programme has saved at least 6,000 lives in the first three months and will help pave the way back to normal life,” he said.

Prof. McManus, who is also the first Catholic President of the Guild of Health and St Raphael, said the in-

vestigations into the vaccine, as well as providing under-30s and those with a history of clots with an alternative, should give reassurance that regulators have made safety their primary concern.

“No drug is safe. But the AZ vaccine has shown – proportionately – fewer side effects than Aspirin or many

other common drugs,” he said.

“If you won't take the vaccine, then why are you happy taking Indigestion medicines or common painkillers? Nothing is risk free. The safety profile of this vaccine remains good.”

However, Prof. McManus urged those with a history of clots to speak

‘The AZ vaccine has shown fewer side effects than Aspirin or many other common drugs’
Prof McManus



with their doctor.

As a further precaution, it is also recommended that anyone who had major blood clots and low platelet (red blood cell) levels after the first dose of the vaccine should not have the second dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. Those who did should discuss this with their doctor.

As a final precaution, those who have persistent new headaches more than four days after the first dose should call 111 for advice.

No to vaccine passports in church

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been urged not to impose controversial vaccine passports on churches in England.

Christian Action Research & Education (CARE) told the PM the idea was ‘antithetical to the very nature of the church’, adding in a letter that ‘the imposition of vaccine certificates on churches would be unwelcome and a fundamental undermining of basic freedoms.’

“The idea that access to a church

should require some special certification is antithetical to the very nature of the church as a place of refuge for the most vulnerable in our society.

‘Others have highlighted the prospect of a ‘two-tiered system’. On the one hand, citizens who are vaccinated would be free to go about their lives. On the other, those who are not vaccinated would be barred from certain entitlements.’

Nola Leach, CEO of CARE, said: “Christians are understandably con-

cerned at the prospect of a vaccine certificates that would bar those who have not had a vaccine from church.

“It makes little sense when churches are already abiding by regulations and taking care not to expose visitors to unnecessary risks.

“I urge the Prime Minister to think about this in the coming weeks, as I know he will be, and provide an assurance to the Christian community that the government will not go down this path,” Ms Leach added.



Westminster Cathedral.
Photo: Mazur/cbcew.org.uk

Alton wants world to unite in supporting Hong Kongers

Nick Benson

Lord David Alton of Liverpool has called for an “international response” to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s “systematic destruction of Hong Kong’s freedoms”.

While praising the UK on its dedicated package of support for Hong Kong citizens arriving here, the Catholic peer urged all countries to join in with “the lifeboat arrangements” to help those trying to flee the CCP.

“The government deserve congratulations for putting together a comprehensive welcome package for Hong Kongers on arrival in the UK,” Lord



Alton told *The Catholic Universe*.

“I would like to see other countries – especially other Commonwealth countries – also joining in the lifeboat arrangements to help those trying to flee.

“The systematic destruction of Hong Kong’s freedoms needs to be met by an international response which demonstrates to the Chinese Communist Party the unity and resolve of the free world in responding to the CCP’s totalitarianism.”

Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders and their

families who settle in the UK will receive a £43 million dedicated support package, including help to access housing, schools and jobs.

Councils in England, who are already playing a key role to ensure BN(O) status holders are warmly welcomed and supported, will benefit from £30.7 million to provide targeted support for new arrivals, covering English language support and help with housing costs for those who need it.

A further £5 million will be used to establish 12 virtual welcome hubs across every region to co-ordinate support and give practical advice and assistance in applying for school places, registering with GPs and even setting up businesses.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said: “We are a champion of freedom and democracy and will live up to our responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong, so that these families will come to find the UK a place they can call home.”

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the scheme reflects the UK’s “commitment to the people of Hong Kong – and those who have now chosen to start a new life here”.

However, Lord Alton insisted that while the UK welcomes those who have escaped the CCP’s totalitarianism, “we must never close our eyes to the millions who will be unable to do so or to the brave pro-democracy campaigners who are now incarcerated in CCP prisons and psychiatric units or arraigned before the courts”.

“Nor should we forget what is happening to Uyghur Muslims facing genocide, to Christians and other minorities who are persecuted, and to lawyers, journalists and dissenters who languish in CCP jails,” he added.

China likened to Nazis by MP

The Chinese government is trying to control every deed and thought of its citizens, former Tory Party leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith has warned.

The Catholic MP pointed out that while all such ‘totalitarian’ regimes fail, as its people reject their need for control, China is using vast databases, artificial intelligence and facial recognition cameras to spy on its people. ‘By spying on their every move – not by informants but by computers – China is assembling the bleakest digital dystopia ever conceived,’ Sir Iain wrote in *The Telegraph*.

He warned that the Uyghurs are ‘at the forefront of this process’, with Chinese authorities tracking them

over thousands of miles, as part of a campaign ‘intent on the eradication of the Uyghurs based on their religion and race’.

Defining this as ‘genocide’, Sir Iain likened China’s treatment of Uyghurs to Hitler’s totalitarian regime. He also borrowed Neville Chamberlain’s words on the Sudeten dispute, saying that China’s regime is no longer about ‘a quarrel in a far away country of whom we know nothing’.

“The time has come for the UK to show global leadership and recognise that what China is doing to the Uyghurs is genocide, and for us to us to disrupt the construction of China’s digital dystopia,” he added.

Prayers for church doors to open in Ireland



Catholics stand outside Ss Anne and Mary Cathedral in Cork, Ireland, praying that the Bishop of Cork and Ross, Fintan Gavin, will open the doors. Public worship remains banned in the country due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo: CNS photo/Cillian Kelly

MP vows to keep pressing on breakfast clubs

Catholic Labour MP Meg Hillier has vowed to continue pressing the Government to support a universal breakfast club offer for every school child.

Her pledge comes as Minister for Children and Families Vicky Ford responded to a letter from concerned MPs regarding school breakfast provision.

In her response, Ms Ford highlighted

the Government’s £38 million investment in the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP).

However, Ms Hillier said the NSBP “does not go far enough and is “likely to only provide breakfast club support to four per cent of children in the UK”.

“Every child deserves to start their day with a healthy breakfast. That is

why I joined Emma Lewell-Buck MP in urging the Government to scale up school breakfast funding and make support to schools permanent,” she said.

“I’ll continue working with colleagues across Parliament from all parties to press the Government to support a universal breakfast club offer for every child.”

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The reign of Queen Elizabeth II is one of the most illustrious in our island's history and the role played by the Duke of Edinburgh in that achievement can never be over-estimated. After serving with distinction during the Second World War, a promising naval career was surrendered when his wife became monarch at an unexpectedly early age in 1952.

From then on he subsumed his life to public service and when he pledged at his wife's coronation to be her "liege man of life and limb ...", he stuck to it.

The Duke was often caricatured as gaffe-prone and old fashioned but this was a man who was never out of touch, especially not with young people with whom he worked for many decades through the award scheme which bears his name and is to this day the world's leading youth programme.

Moreover, he was an innovator. His patronage of wildlife charities and the environment predated current concerns about the ecosystem and the future of the planet.

Prince Philip was never a mere adjunct to the Queen; rather, he was an individual who through his support for the Crown made a lasting contribution to the nation in his own right.

There was also a deeply spiritual side to the Prince. He had a deep faith and wide theological knowledge. Received into the Church of England before his wedding, with the Dean of Windsor, Robin Woods, later Bishop of Worcester, he explored theology and the impact of faith on the world. He was keenly interested in the relationship between scientists and theologians. Letters between the Prince and Michael Mann, later Dean of Windsor, on the concept of evolution, were published in 1984 as *A Windsor Correspondence*.

Baptised in the Orthodox faith, he shared in a truly global Christian faith. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

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Aid is a vital tool to keep the world on a democratic path

Miguel Nino-Zarazua



Democracy is having a hard time. In India, once the world's largest democracy, the pandemic has hastened the country's slide toward authoritarianism. In the US, the Trump administration's attacks on democratic norms reached new lows when the former president, backed by the Republican party, refused to accept his loss in the November 2020 elections.

In fact, studies show democratic norms are in decline worldwide. Freedom House recently argued that democracy has been declining since 2005, while the latest report from the Varieties of Democracy Institute reveals that 68 per cent the world's population now live in autocracies.

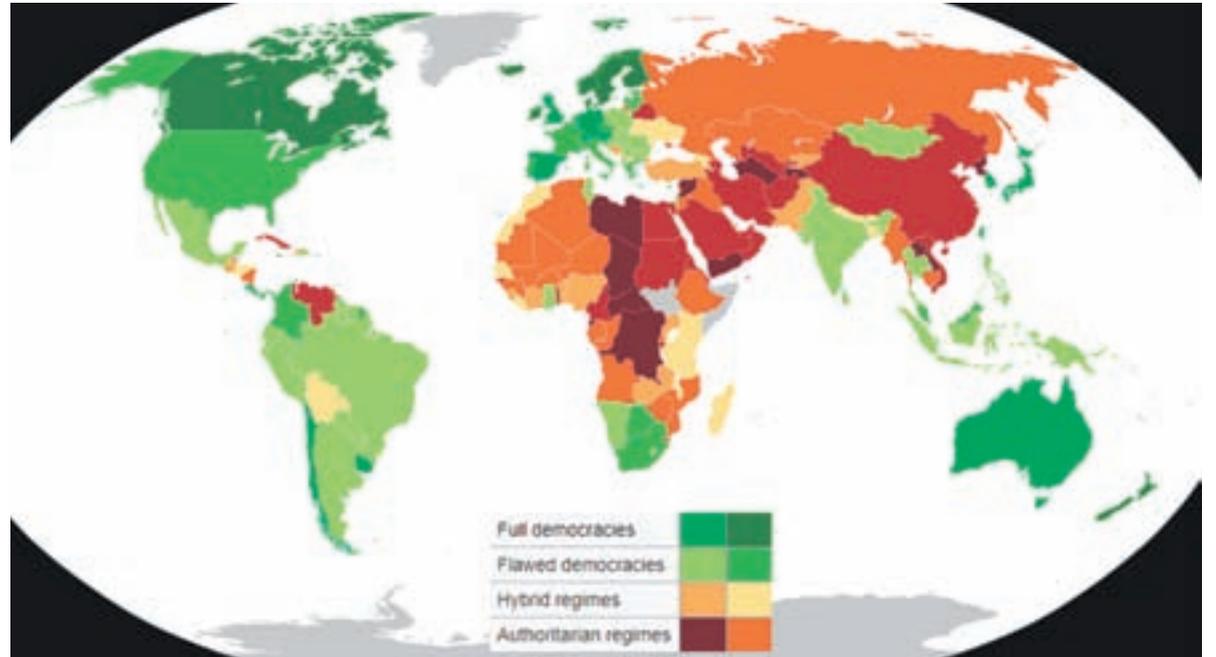
More countries have slid down the democracy ladder in the last decade than have moved up. States such as Hungary, Turkey and Venezuela that enjoyed a period of growing democratic norms now see a dramatic freefall in political freedoms. Several countries in south Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East are moving towards authoritarianism, while Brazil, Mexico and South Africa have recently experienced deterioration of democratic institutions.

This entails not just loss of civil liberties and political rights for those in 'backsliding' countries, but also a major shift in the international liberal order, with potentially far-reaching consequences for economic progress, prosperity and peace worldwide.

Champions and sceptics of foreign aid

These trends alone could make the case for investing in promoting democracy, through democracy aid – that is, foreign aid specifically to support core democratic processes and institutions including elections, political parties, civil society groups, the media and human rights.

The use of diplomatic carrots and sticks also plays a role. For example, in 2019 Sweden launched its Drive for Democracy, which made democracy central to its foreign policy including security, development and trade. Germany's foreign minister,



Heiko Maas, recently advocated for a 'Marshall Plan for democracy', while US President Joe Biden has called for a Global Democracy Summit.

But we should not paint too rosy a picture of democracy aid. Since its origins in the US Marshall Plan of 1948, foreign aid has been closely linked to the strategic political considerations and interests of the donor country. The implications and potential impact this has on local needs deserves careful attention.

In fact, a number of researchers have long claimed that foreign aid is actually bad for democracy. US economist William Easterly argues that foreign aid empowers dictators. Other research lays out the ways in which aid can weaken local accountability, governance processes and state institutions.

Equally, there is research that challenges these positions, showing how effective democracy aid specifically can be. For instance, it was foreign aid support that facilitated Mozambique's transition from war to peace and multi-party politics in the early 1990s, or symbolic and financial assistance in support of multiple free and fair elections in Benin.

Our study built on existing evidence to create a new analysis of the impact of democracy aid in 148 countries between 1995–2018. Our approach married quantitative analysis to the large amount of research on democratisation to present a framework that addresses how aid should, in theory, support democracy.

We had three main findings: first, aid specifically aimed at improving democratic infrastructure and institutions has a modest but positive impact overall. This impact is clearer than for the impact of development aid generally, but there is no evidence that either has a negative impact on democracy on average.

Second, aid aimed at supporting civil society, media freedom, and human rights seems to be the most effective in terms of its impact on democracy.

Third, democracy aid is more effective at supporting ongoing democratisation than at halting democratic backsliding.

The options ahead

In short, democracy aid works, but it's not magic. The sums invested are usually pretty modest in comparison to the funds available to domestic opponents of democracy, such as in electoral autocracies like Russia, Nicaragua and Turkey. And democratisation of a country tends to be a long, hard road – demonstrating that something has a specific impact along the way is a challenge.

The international community needs to staunch democracy's global decline, and our analysis identifies some clear recommendations.

First, maintain and consider increasing democracy aid. It surely will not work everywhere, but the evidence shows it can be effective. At the same time, domestic expectations need to be managed.

Second, recognise that prematurely cutting democracy aid can in-

crease a country's risk of democratic backsliding into authoritarianism, at which point it is harder for aid to help. This means we should reconsider the role of aid in middle-income countries. It is many of these countries in Latin America, eastern and central Europe that have seen sharp cuts in development and democracy assistance over the past decades, where there is now a pronounced slip into authoritarianism.

Third, direct aid toward the core elements of democracy: human rights, democratic participation and civil society, and a free media. A recent analysis, for example, reveals 70 per cent of the world lives in countries with limited media freedom. Assistance to other areas can support democracy as well, but this is where the best democratic returns on investment can be made.

Which nations among the international community can we expect to act? Embroiled in its own domestic politics, the role of the US in promoting democracy remains in question, although the new Biden administration has signalled a more active position to push back the advance of authoritarianism.

Against this backdrop, support for democracy from the heart of Europe is now more important than ever.

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One of the vandalised posters

Aontú hits back after posters are vandalised

All-Ireland political party Aontú has condemned the defacing and tearing down of posters calling on everyone to cherish all the children of the nation equally.

Aontú Deputy Leader & Mid Ulster Cllr Denise Mullen hit out at the vandalism and called on all political parties to condemn the undemocratic, illegal actions.

"It is incredible that our posters, which articulate a simple democratic message calling on everyone to cherish all the children of the nation equally, are being vandalised, stolen and defaced in the north," she said.

Earlier this month, Aontú members in the six counties began to hang up posters across the North which spoke about 'Cherishing all the Children Equally' in response to Sinn Féin and the SDLP's stance on abortion being imposed on the North.

"Sinn Féin had reversed 200 years of Republic policy which opposed Westminster legislation for any part of Ireland and actively lobbied London to impose this law," Cllr Mullen said, adding: "While the SDLP leadership ditched not only the will of the people of the North but the will of their own party and reversed a right to life policy that went back to John Hume."

However, "rather than debate democratically on these issues, it seems some people have deceived to deface, steal and vandalise posters that contain a key line of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic," said Cllr Mullen.

Commenting on the symbol for womanhood being used to deface the posters, Cllr Mullen said as "one of the many politically active women in Aontú who has fought discrimination, prejudice and censorship for years" the party "abhor the misuse of this symbol".

"This type of vandalism will not stop us. It will galvanise us into fighting for a society where all the children of the nation are cherished equally," she added.

Priest praises brave mum at the heart of a triple tragedy

Anne O'Sullivan loses fight for life after coping with death of husband and sons

Mourners at the funeral of a mother whose husband and two sons died in a suspected murder-suicide last year have been reminded that "Christians never lose hope", even "in the face of all darkness", including death itself.

Fr Toby Bluitt told mourners at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Kanturk, Co. Cork, that Anne O'Sullivan, 61, had faced unimaginable loss in 2020 when her entire immediate family was taken overnight in tragic circumstances.

Mrs O'Sullivan was praised for her courage in how she fought her battle with an illness and dealt with the unimaginable tragedy, even finding the strength to attend a joint funeral of her husband Tadg, 59, and son Diarmuid, 23, and a separate service for her son Mark, 26.

She died earlier this month following a serious health condition.

Mrs O'Sullivan's husband and sons died at the family's home at Assolas near Kanturk over what is understood to be a tragedy caused by a dispute over an inheritance.

Mourners heard how "darkness came into Anne's life" when she lost her family.

"I know that we are conscious of



Happier times: Tadg, Mark and Anne O'Sullivan. Inset, Diarmuid

the fact that Anne's untimely passing was not the only tragedy in her life," Fr Bluitt told mourners.

"We here in our community are well aware of the recent painful and tragic loss that Anne suffered – a tragedy that affected us all.

"I suppose in an ideal world we would like to think of ourselves as living long and happy lives with friends and family to support us to the end.

"It would seem like a great gift from life to be thus blessed, to go to our forebears fulfilled and content that our work was done, that we had played our part in life's great rotation and that our own cycle had come to an end. We had no more to do.

"Like I said, in an ideal world. We don't live in an ideal world, that's the problem.

"Illness can come and challenge us

and defeat us.

"Tragedy, and serious tragedy, can come and haunt us and change our lives irreparably.

"The clouds that can, and do, settle over our lives sometimes rob us of fulfilment and peace, of an ordered and easy existence.

"They bring a darkness into our lives that we feel cannot be shaken. We feel helpless and, even perhaps, afraid.

"Darkness came into Anne's life when she lost her family in very sad and tragic circumstances, and when she lost her battle with the illness she had fought so courageously.

"All of which brings us face-to-face with the mystery of life: of its meaning, of the sense of it, and why, sometimes, life troubles us and troubles us deeply. We can find ourselves in a dark place. We can be troubled.

"Yet, in the face of all darkness, even that of death itself, Christians never lose hope. We are people of hope even when trouble comes our way.

"The fact is that when someone dies there is this great sense of emptiness, this enormous sense of loss.

"And we have an added sadness, I think, that for Anne, for one family, life didn't work out the way it might have. So, that we are in fact troubled, we are at a loss.

"A nurse by profession, Anne brought an attitude of care and concern towards those who were entrusted to her."

Pro-abortion taskgroup in threat to ban peaceful vigils

Pro-lifers in Northern Ireland have condemned a report from an abortion group calling for 'exclusion zones' to be introduced outside abortion centres.

The group, NI Abortion and Contraception Taskgroup, is comprised of pro-abortion doctors, nurses, midwives, GPs and academics in Northern Ireland. Its report makes 38 recommendations supporting more abortion in Northern Ireland.

The implementation of 'exclusion zones' would prohibit protests, demonstrations and pro-life prayer vigils.

Bernadette Smyth, director of Precious Life, the largest pro-life group in Northern Ireland, has condemned the call.

"Since our formation in 1997, Precious Life has held daily prayer vigil and outreach offering help and support to vulnerable women outside abortion centres," she said.

Pro-life supporters attend a vigil
Photo: Brian Lawless, Reuters.

Ms Smyth pointed out that Northern Ireland recently commemorated the first anniversary of Westminster's imposition of its abortion law on the country and mourned the 1,345 lives that had been lost due to it.

She criticised the pro-abortionists "calling for more babies to be killed" as well as the criminalisation of "innocent people who make a public stand to protect and save lives of unborn babies".



Yes we must be inclusive – but Church teaching comes first

The Primate of All-Ireland has said that the Church must be "as inclusive as possible", while maintaining its "strong teaching about marriage".

Responding to comments criticising the Vatican's stance on blessing same-sex unions, Archbishop Eamon Martin said the Church must be "sensitive" to gay people. "I do believe there's a huge amount still to do in reaching out, and ensuring that the Church is as inclusive as possible – even though we also have our strong teaching on marriage," he told Kieran Cuddihy on *Newstalk's The Hard Shoulder*.

He pointed out that the Church doesn't have a difficulty with blessing people. However, the blessing of a same-sex union "would give the impression that this was the same as marriage" and "wouldn't be in accordance with current Church teaching".

He added that this would also count for the blessing of a union between a man and a woman who have already been married. "We can't bless that either in a heterosexual situation," he said.

Signs of longer term thinking

John Battle



As a side effect of the international pandemic and efforts to tackle it with vaccinations there are emerging developments of longer term economic and political practices.

No longer is the mantra all about creating a 'small as possible state'; it is all about intervention, as highlighted by government furlough money to protect jobs and huge state investments in private sector scientific and pharmaceutical companies to speed up vaccine developments.

President Biden has launched a major investment package to rebuild American infrastructure, invest in a green future and the care economy. President Trump deleted the veto of rising public debt by cutting taxes to the super rich and he even broached giving cash direct to the poor. But President Biden's approach is not reckless debt regard. He has put forward an international proposal to raise corporate taxation on worldwide company profits and to tackle tax loopholes and tax havens. He has cited the Catholic social teaching tradition from *Re-rum Novarum* for fairer trading and distribution of wages.

His proposals are now gaining surprising support from the world trading and financial organisations such as the IMF as a means of controlling the largest digital and technology multinationals that move their activities to the cheapest tax and regulatory jurisdictions and their profits to low tax countries around the world, thus depriving nations of resources to invest in social needs such as public health and education without which there can be no common good and nations cannot survive.

Here in Britain the Chancellor's future proposal to raise corporation tax may prove part of a longer term international vision.

Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* provided a moral lead. It said: 'Global society is suffering grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes. Much needs to change through fundamental reform and major renewal.'

An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good 'could pave the way for different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress but rather directing that energy along new channels'.

He insists 'true statecraft is manifest when in different times we uphold high principles and think of the long term common good'. Perhaps we should now send every MP a copy of *Fratelli Tutti* as necessary reading.

A huge cloud mushroom over Bikini atoll in the Marshall Islands 1st July 1946 after a US atomic bomb test



The atomic cloud still hangs over US-Pacific relations

Patricia O'Brien



This year marks 75 years since the United States launched its immense atomic testing programme in the Pacific. The historical fallout from tests carried out over 12 years in the Marshall Islands, then a UN Trust Territory governed by the US, have framed seven decades of US relations with the Pacific nation.

Due to the dramatic effects of climate change, the legacies of this history are shaping the present in myriad ways.

This history has Australian dimensions too, though decades of diplomatic distance between Australia and the Marshall Islands have hidden an entangled atomic past.

In 1946, the Marshall Islands seemed very close for many Australians. They feared the imminent launch of the US's atomic testing programme on Bikini Atoll might split the earth in two, catastrophically change the earth's climate, or produce earthquakes and deadly tidal waves.

A map accompanying one report noted Sydney was only 3,100 miles from ground zero. Residents as far away as Perth were warned if their houses shook on 1st July, "it may be the atom bomb test".

Opinion in Australia split along political lines. Conservative Cold War warriors, chief among them Robert Menzies who became prime minister again in 1949, kept Australia in lockstep with the US, and downplayed the ill-effects of testing. Left-wing elements in Australia continued to draw attention to the "horrors" it unleashed.

The atomic question came home in 1952, when the first of 12 British atomic tests began on the Montebello Islands, off Western Australia.

Australia's involvement in atomic testing expanded again in 1954, when it began supplying South Australian-mined uranium to the US and UK's joint defence purchasing authority, the Combined Development Agency.

Australia's economic stake in the atomic age from 1954 collided with the galvanisation of global public opinion against US testing in Eniwetok. The massive 'Castle Bravo' hydrogen bomb test in March exposed Marshall Islanders and a Japanese fishing crew on *The Lucky Dragon* to catastrophic radiation levels "equal to that received by Japanese people less than two miles from ground zero" in the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic blasts.

Graphic details of the fishermen's suffering and subsequent petition to the United Nations followed.

Sir Robert Menzies, who became prime minister again in 1949, kept Australia in lock-step with the US.

When a UN resolution to halt US testing was voted on in July, Australia voted for its continuation. But the tide of public opinion was turning against testing. The events of 1954 dispelled the notion atomic waste was safe and could be contained. The problem of radioactive fish travelling into Australian waters highlighted these new dangers, which spurred increasing world wide protests until the US finally ceased testing in the Marshalls in 1958.

In the 1970s, US atomic waste was concentrated under the Runit Island dome, part of Enewetak Atoll (about 3,200 miles from Sydney). Recent alarming descriptions of how precarious and dangerous this

structure is due to age, sea water inundation and storm damage exacerbated by climate change were contested in a 2020 Trump-era report.

The Biden administration's current renegotiation of the Compact of Free Association with the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and its prioritisation of action on climate change, will put Runit Island high on the agenda. There is an opportunity for historical redress for the US that is even more urgent given the upsurge in discrimination against US-based Pacific Islander communities devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some are peoples who were displaced by the tests.

Australia is also embarking on a new level of engagement with the Marshall Islands: it is due to open its first embassy in the capital Majuro in 2021.

It should be remembered this bilateral relationship has an atomic history, too. Australia supported the US testing programme, assisted with data collection and voted in the UN for its continuation when the Marshallese pleaded for it to be stopped.

It is also likely Australian-sourced atomic waste lies within Runit Island, cementing Australia in this history.

Patricia A. O'Brien is Historian, Visiting Fellow in the School of History, Australian National University and Adjunct Professor in the Asian Studies Programme, Georgetown University



Politicians told to 'cool it' as hardliners stoke sectarian flames

The Bishop of Down and Connor has urged politicians to be more careful about their language following violence across Northern Ireland.

Bishop Noel Treanor has also appealed to young people "to stop engaging in disturbance and violence" after more than 70 police officers have been hurt in what police are calling Northern Ireland's worst violence for years.

Tension has risen after the decision not to prosecute members of Sinn Féin for breaches of Covid-19 restrictions at the funeral of republican Bobby Storey. Northern Ireland's First Minister and leader of the DUP, Arlene Foster, has been deeply critical of the decision and called on police chief Simon Byrne to resign.

In the aftermath of that decision the country has witnessed some of the worst rioting in recent years, with police forced to deploy a water cannon

to disperse young rioters.

The last couple of weeks have seen a number of attacks on security forces, with petrol bombs, fireworks and stones thrown. A journalist has also been attacked and a bus driver was injured when his bus was set on fire.

"Sadly, we have experienced a return to civic unrest and violence on our streets," Bishop Treanor said. "These scenes are deeply concerning for all of us who believe in and have worked for a shared, brighter future."

"I wish to express my concern and support for those police officers who have been injured, and for their families. The police service is an integral part of our society, made up of women and men from every background and tradition. They deserve our support."

"I ask politicians to weigh carefully the impact of their words, to avoid the deeply damaging politicisation of civic policing and to use the available



Debris burns as riot police clash with protesters in Belfast

mechanisms of accountability and influence to deal with any concerns that may arise," Bishop Treanor added.

Church leaders on both sides of the divide have pleading for rioters to stop. People as young as 13 have been arrested for disorder.

Police said they are concerned that hardline loyalist paramilitaries may be orchestrating the violence. Much

of the violence from youths has occurred near so-called 'peace lines' - walls erected to prevent clashes between Catholic and Protestant communities.

Addressing young people directly, Bishop Treanor urged them "to stop engaging in disturbance and violent activity now".

"Beware of being manipulated and

controlled by others who urge you on to violence while they themselves stay in the background so that they don't get caught," Bishop Treanor said.

The unrest comes almost 23 years to the day - 10th April - when the Good Friday Agreement was signed, which brought an end to 30 years of the Troubles and sectarian killings by paramilitaries.

Scotland's bishops point to Catholic issues as key to ballot

Nick Benson

The Catholic bishops of Scotland have urged the faithful to 'play our part' in the forthcoming Holyrood elections by 'putting human life and the inviolable dignity of the human person at the centre of Scotland's politics'.

In a letter addressing the country's Catholic population ahead of the 6th May elections, the bishops note that, while party politics can be an important consideration, particularly in the Scottish Parliament list system, it is 'critical to ascertain candidates' personal values and opinions and not concentrate solely on party policies'.

'It is individuals who will make up the parliament and form a government; and some of the most important issues, including abortion and assisted suicide, are commonly decided by a

conscience, or free, vote,' they point out.

Highlighting the Catholic duty to share the Gospel and help form the public conscience on key moral issues, the bishops say: 'This election is an opportunity to be the effective witness our Baptism calls us to be.'

They note that the new parliament and government will be tasked with leading the recovery from the damage wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic and to tackle the significant impact it has had on many aspects of life including health care, mental health and wellbeing, religious freedom and care for the poor.

'It must also build on the positives arising from the pandemic, including caring for the most vulnerable and a renewed sense of respect for human



Scotland's Catholic bishops have called on the electorate to think about the most vulnerable in society as they cast their ballots, and to consider the fundamental rights of parents to educate their children as they see fit
Photo: Scottish Catholic Media Office.

life, human dignity and the value of community,' the bishops say.

They urge Catholics to consider a wide range of issues in the forthcoming election, including the 'funda-

mental human right to life' from conception to natural death; the 'flourishing of family life'; and the 'fundamental' right of parents to choose a school for their children that corre-

sponds to their own convictions.

They also note that the next group of MSPs should follow Pope Francis' teachings on the environment and ensure that the scourges of poverty, human trafficking and modern slavery are tackled.

The issues of freedom of speech, expression, thought, conscience and religion are also critical following the passing of the SNP's Hate Crime Bill.

'If Scotland is to be a tolerant, open, diverse country then we must be free to discuss and debate ideas, even those which are deemed by some to be controversial,' the bishops say.

'Whilst being mindful of the need to protect citizens from hate, government must not overstep into unjust restrictions on free speech, conscience or religion.'



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IN BRIEF

Rate your maternity scheme launched

A panel of experts will begin work to rate the Government's progress on meeting its own targets to improve maternity services.

The targets will be assessed on halving the rate of stillbirths, neonatal deaths, maternal deaths and brain injuries that occur during or soon after birth by 2025.

The expert panel will give a Care Quality Commission (CQC) style rating to the Government's overall performance against each target, grading them from 'inadequate' to 'outstanding'.

The panel, chaired by Professor Dame Jane Dacre, is made up of clinical experts, patient representatives, lawyers, economists and qualitative researchers.

The Government will also be assessed on the progress it has made against its commitment that every woman expecting a child get a personalised care and support plan by 2021 and the majority see the same midwife throughout their pregnancy.

Countryside respect post lockdown

As the UK began unlocking social restrictions, Catholic MP Damian Hinds has urged the public to respect the renewed Countryside Code.

Mr Hinds said lockdown had given everyone a 'greater appreciation' of nature and proven how 'valuable' it is to access green spaces. The updated Countryside Code is a 'timely' reminder for everyone on how to enjoy the outdoors in a safe and respectful way.

"It's as simple as sticking to paths to protect crops and wildlife, ensuring gates are secured, not feeding animals you pass, disposing of litter and dog mess properly," he said.

The code also gives general guidance on how drivers should behave on roads with horses; cyclists and horse riders on paths with walkers; and walkers with all other path users.

Pandemic drive on food must continue

Government ministers must maintain the "impetus" to feed poverty-hit people witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic and consider enshrining in law a "right to food", a cross-party group of MPs has said.

The Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee also called for the Government to appoint a minister for food security in a recently published report.

Tory MP Neil Parish, who chairs the Commons committee, said the efforts to feed the most vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis should "set a precedent" for the future. There are 5.9 million adults in the UK who experienced food poverty in the six months up to February and 1.7 million children living in food-insecure households, according to the report.

Kind words and jokes are a fitting way to remember our grand old Duke

CATHOLIC COMMENT

Caroline Farrow

The outpouring of grief following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh is a reassuring sign that although society may have lost its way when it comes to many matters of morality, we are still, deep-down, a decent and compassionate nation.

I was particularly moved by the sight of one young woman in her early twenties outside Buckingham Palace, wiping away a tear. The responses evoked the reaction following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales but were less mawkish and lacking the over-the-top sentimentality than witnessed in 1997.

The reasons for this are manifold; most obviously the Duke's death was not unexpected, Palace sources of my acquaintance began alluding to his imminent demise over 18 months ago. Some of the fuel behind the hysteria surrounding Diana was both her age and the brutal manner of her demise, whereas the Duke had the sort of death that most of us would hope for; at home in his own bed, surrounded by his wife and family. Unlike the tragic Princess of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh was also fortunate enough to enjoy seeing not only his children grow up but also grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

While many of the tributes focused on the fact that the Duke of Edinburgh wanted minimal fuss and wouldn't have liked the attention, I think he would also be gratified to learn that despite his reputation for tactless gaffes and possibly because of them, he had earned a place in the nation's heart. My particular favourite being an exchange which took place at a reception for the papal visit of Benedict XVI at Holyrood House, Scotland in 2010. Spotting that the Scottish Labour leader, Iain Grey was sporting a tie fashioned from the special papal tartan, Philip turned to the female Conservative leader and asked her if she had a pair of knickers in the same material!

Of course, it was desperately inappropriate, which is what made it quite so funny! Prince Philip had a knack of cracking jokes in order to put people at their ease and both his age, the generation he came from and, of course, his royal status



The Duke of Edinburgh pictured with Prince George in an image taken by the Duchess of Cambridge

meant that he could get away with it in a way that his sons or grandsons would not. If Princes Edward, William or Harry ever came out with similar lines, they would very quickly be shamed and portrayed as total sleazebags by a nation which seems to be losing its taste for a bit of harmless innuendo.

Annabel Goldie – the Tory in question – reportedly found it hilarious too. She hooted with laughter and retorted: "I couldn't possibly comment – and even if I did (have a pair of knickers made out of the papal tartan), I couldn't possibly exhibit them!"

Other anecdotes about the Duke of Edinburgh speak to his overriding kindness. On a visit to Dorking, a town in my diocese, Philip noticed the look of disappointment on a little girl's face after the Queen hadn't spotted her patiently waiting with her bouquet. He lifted the little girl up over the barrier and told her to run over to his wife and hand her the posie. That's a gesture which has doubtless never been forgotten.

My friend has a funny one about the time his wife met the Duke of Edinburgh in a corridor, of all places, when she was walking between rooms at a conference. Noting the tall man was walking towards her, she realised it was His Royal Highness and thinking quickly as to what she should do and knowing his cheeky reputation, she

decided against deference, she smiled and winked. Apparently he let out a laugh, smiled and winked back without speaking a word.

Social media has been full of similar anecdotes all testifying to Prince Philip's warmth and wit as well as his devotion to public duty and, of course, his family. It was pleasing to see this reflected in the official statement from the Vatican, along with the mention to the Duke's commitment to the education and advancement of future generations.

Having found the circus around Diana's death distasteful, I was unexpectedly moved by the news this week. I think it has affected most of us more than we anticipated, partly because over the years Philip had endeared himself and earned the status of national treasure. I dread to say it, but Prince Andrew's description of his father as "grandfather of the nation" was bang on the money.

Philip was from a generation the like of which we will not see again. A generation who had witnessed the horrors of the war and yet unflinchingly got on with things without the need for endless navel-gazing and self-pity. He probably reminded all of us of our fathers or grandfathers and most of us probably can't remember a time when he wasn't a part of the royal family or in the public

consciousness.

Philip's death also reignited the sense of loss felt by my family when my grandmother passed away just a few weeks shy of her 100th birthday and we felt cheated of the milestone, although I don't imagine that Philip would have been eagerly anticipating a telegram from his wife!

Those who can remember a time when Elizabeth wasn't the monarch are growing few in number. Philip's death foreshadows the end of an momentous era in UK and world history. His death is a moment of grief, not only for his family who will miss him terribly, but also for us on an individual level, not just because his presence leaves a gaping hole in the Royal Family, but because it reminds us of our own feelings when a family matriarch or patriarch dies. A sense of grief and solemnity is entirely appropriate.

Thankfully, there has been little cynicism on display, partly because a public death reminds us of the universality of both death and grief. He may have not been British by birth, but Prince Philip belonged to all of us. Well done good and faithful servant. May you rest in peace and rise in glory.

Caroline Farrow is a Catholic journalist and UK campaign director and media commentator for Citizens Go

Fr Ray calls an end to his reality TV career

Celebrity Irish priest Fr Ray Kelly has called time on his career in reality TV.

The parish priest of St Brigid's & St Mary's parish in Oldcastle, Co. Meath, shot to fame in 2014 after a video of him singing a modified version of Leonard Cohen's classic hit *Hallelujah* at a couple's wedding went viral.

Since then, he has released an album, titled *Where I Belong*, reached the semi-finals of ITV talent show *Britain's Got Talent*; and featured on the Irish edition of *Dancing with the Stars*.

However, Fr Kelly recently admitted reality TV doesn't appeal to him.

"I'd never do a reality TV show again," he told *The Irish Mirror*. "Sometimes doing something like that is kind of like a drug as well. You can get hooked on it and want to be doing it all the time.

"Maybe it is because you're putting yourself out there and you're in the media and all that. It isn't something I crave towards at all.

"There are always the ones who make judgements. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, they will want you to become what they want you to be rather than who you are.

"I enjoyed the shows when I did them but I have another life here, which is great. A lot of people during the Covid times were out of work completely, but I had another life to get on with as best as I could."

However, Fr Kelly, who released his memoir, *Hallelujah: Memoirs of a Singing Priest*, in December 2019, said if he were to write another book he would like to focus it on his experiences on *Dancing With The Stars*.

"I really enjoyed it," he said of his time on the show, while admitting that he did have to "unshackle" himself



Fr Ray Kelly on Ireland's *Dancing with the Stars*. (RTE)

from the negative points of reality TV.

He said he had the full support of the Bishop of Meath, Tom Deenihan, when he told him about his invitation to feature on the show.



Bishop Tom was supportive ... he just said to be aware that there will be people out there who will bring you down

"He just said to be aware that there will be people out there who will bring you down and try to influence you and all that," he added.

During his time on the dancing show, Fr Kelly received a number of death threats, which he reported to Gardai.

"I get an odd anonymous letter still coming into my email," he said. "It just says stuff like 'you're a priest and you shouldn't be this or you shouldn't be that'.

"I just ignore it at this stage. I only get one or two of those emails in the last year. But for most people it's history now."

However, despite his retirement from reality TV, Fr Kelly's musical career continues. His forthcoming album, *Hallelujah Day*, is set for release on 23rd April.

'Being frank, it's easier to say I'm alcoholic than a Catholic'

Stand-up comedian Frank Skinner has admitted that speaking to people about his alcohol problems was easier than trying to talk to them about his Catholic faith.

Skinner, 64, who hosts Absolute Radio's Saturday breakfast show and poetry podcast, said he had often opened up about his faith during interviews earlier in his career but these particular comments were always cut from the article that followed.

Although he grew up in a Catholic family in the West Midlands, Skinner left the Church when he was 17 before reconnecting with the faith in his 20s after struggling with alcoholism.

However, he recently revealed that he found it easier discussing his drinking problems with people rather than his faith.

"People are much easier with my battle-with-the-booze stories than

'Here's some of my prayers,' he told *The Telegraph*.

"I think they were delighted to find that those who seem to have everything going for them have got dark demons.

"When I was doing interviews 25 years ago, I would talk about how I

Frank Skinner: 'People like to find that those who seem to have everything have dark demons'



read poetry and had two English degrees, and that I was a Catholic, but it never made it into print.'

During his more than 30-year-career as a professional comedian, Skinner also revealed that the number of religious believers he's met among his peers "would, if assembled, just about fill a Vauxhall Corsa".

Skinner's revelations come as he recently released his own prayer book.

Titled *A Comedian's Prayer Book*, the publication features his musings on faith; Heaven and hell; his beloved late mother, Doris; and the X-Men.

"Is there a place for comedy in prayer? If there's a place for comedy in life, there's a place for comedy in prayer," said Skinner.

"God is a tough audience as far as audible response is concerned, but I love that I don't have to explain the references."

Skinner said that praying to God is the only place he feels he doesn't need to put on an act.

"When I pray, it is the only conversation I have where I utterly drop my guard about every doubt and fear and idiocy and imperfection. If I didn't pray, I don't know where I'd find that unwrapping of myself," he said.



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Pornography left children 'corrupted', say teachers

Easily accessible pornography has "corrupted" schoolchildren, teachers have warned.

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), said social media and the easy availability of pornography had caused a backward step in boys' respect for girls.

Her comments came after the NEU recently debated the issue of sexual assault at its virtual annual conference.

"It's become 'that's the way things are', and teachers in our service said they were unsure about how to deal with it and 'if I stopped and dealt with it all the time, I would never get any teaching done,'" Dr Bousted told Sky News.

"We need a national programme to help schools tackle this behaviour.

"I think we've gone back in this respect," she added.

"I think the way girls are treated on social media, I think the fact that so many boys watch pornography, that really has corrupted the way boys and girls think about each other.

"It's lowered girls' expectations for how they should be treated by boys and its enabled too many boys to think that girls are just objects."

Dr Bousted's warning comes as over 14,000 allegations have been made by school pupils on the Everyone's Invited website, where people can anonymously share their experiences of abuse.

Police hunt vandals after Jesus window left shattered

Vandals have left a local community devastated and Christians disturbed after they used the faces of Jesus and saints depicted in stained glass windows for "target practice".

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) said it recently discovered that vandals had shot at the Victorian windows at St Helen's, Little Cawthorpe, Lincolnshire, deliberately aiming for the faces of the biblical figures, in the lead up to Holy Week.

"The faces of saints and of Jesus Christ have been used for what can only be described as target practice," the CCT said.

The national organisation, which protects historic churches at risk, said the carefully aimed projectiles had fractured specific areas of the glass, mainly several heads and faces of the depicted human figures and animals.

"Examination of the centres of impact which are circular and measure about 3mm-5mm in diameter would suggest an airgun pellet or small stone fired by a catapult," it said.

"Some of the damage is at a height too great to have been attacked from ground level except with some kind of long implement using exceptional force."

Built in 1859 to replace a medieval church, St Helen's is a redundant Anglican church.

CCT said the stained glass windows were installed from 1860-1890 and include depictions of Christ and the Doctors; the Presentation in the Temple; Noah's Ark; the Baptism of Christ; and the Crossing of the Red Sea.

It said the crime is "particularly upsetting" for the local community, who "cherish this church and who saved it from certain demolition in 1996".

CCT now owns the building and keeps it open for everyone to visit and use.

"Our conservation team are inspecting the damage and specialist stained glass experts will be brought in to evaluate the best way to repair the damage," said CCT.

"Sadly this will likely cost thousands of pounds."

The organisation has launched an appeal to help fix the smashed windows, while Lincolnshire Police has launched an investigation.

• Anyone with any information regarding the incident, has been asked to contact Lincolnshire Police, quoting crime reference number 21000175385.



Vandals deliberately targeted the windows and were precise in hitting the faces of Jesus (above) and left, the saints. Photo: Graham White/Churches Conservation Trust.

IVF firms accused of failure by exploiting vulnerable couples

The former chairman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has hit out at the IVF industry for taking advantage of vulnerable women and couples.

Sally Cheshire said IVF clinics are charging "eye-watering" prices as she accused them of taking advantage of women who had "lost a year of their lives" due to Covid-19 lockdowns and subsequent delays in the NHS.

Her criticism comes as some clinics are currently charging up to £20,000 per IVF cycle.

The latest data from HFEA revealed that the number of women opting to freeze their eggs or embryos in the UK rose 523 per cent rise between 2013 and 2018.

Ms Cheshire, who recently stepped down from her role as chairman at HFEA after 15 years, told *The Daily Telegraph* that she would have set a limit of £5,000 per IVF cycle.

However, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) has warned that as well as preying on vulnerable women and couples both

financially and mentally, the IVF industry also turns embryos into a commodity, with many destroyed.

"SPUC's basic objection to IVF is that it amounts to the manufacture of human beings," said a spokesperson.

"The practice of IVF assumes that our offspring may be produced in the laboratory, and that the role of the natural mother, in safeguarding with

Sally Cheshire said IVF clinics are charging "eye-watering" prices, taking advantage of women who had "lost a year" due to the pandemic



her own body the welfare of the embryo from conception, may legitimately be transferred to other people.

"IVF thus makes embryos vulnerable, exposing them to the risks of being discarded, frozen or experimented upon. Many thousands of

human embryos have perished in the development and practice of IVF."

The spokesperson also pointed out that "apart from the ghastly human price tag, in terms of human lives lost to IVF - 174,622 embryos in 2017 in the UK alone - the mental and financial cost for couples is horrendous."

"We should not forget that IVF is an industry preying on vulnerable women, as well as couples, who have not been able to conceive by natural means," they said.

The pro-life group has also joined Ms Cheshire in criticising the IVF industry for profiteering from the pandemic.

"Covid-19 is now being used to make even more money out of heartbreak, seeing embryos as a commodity, women as a source of money, and pandemic as an opportunity for greater gains," said the spokesperson.

Last November, SPUC reported that only 20 per cent of IVF cycles in Britain lead to a live birth - an 80 per cent failure rate.

Betting firms told to fund addicts' help

Gambling firms should pay a compulsory levy to fund addiction treatment, the national mental health director for NHS England has said.

Claire Murdoch accused bookmakers of profiting during the Covid-19 pandemic while leaving the NHS to "pick up the pieces" of addiction.

The current system to help addicts is funded by voluntary contributions from the betting firms, but it is thought to raise as little as £10-£15m a year from a billion pound industry. Some firms donate as little as £1 so that they are included on the list of donors.

"After seeing the destruction the gambling industry has caused, it is clear that firms are focused on profit at the expense of people's health, while the NHS is increasingly left to pick up the pieces," Ms Murdoch said.

"While fighting the pandemic, the NHS has also been treating hundreds of people with severe gambling addictions. The industry must take more responsibility and agree to a mandatory levy to pay for dealing with the harms of problem gambling."

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Hunters' shock as river reveals a fragment of military history

Nick Benson

A fragment of a hand grenade thrown during one of the most significant battles of the first Jacobite rebellion has been discovered in a Perthshire river.

Rick Edwards, presenter of Sky History's *River Hunters*, and US YouTube sensation Beau Ouimette, a river detectorist with over 30 years' experience, unearthed the iron fragment from the River Garry more than three centuries after the Jacobites defeated a government army at the Battle of Killiecrankie.

However, the Jacobites victory came at a heavy cost, including the death of leader John Graham of Claverhouse, 1st viscount of Dundee, known as 'Bonnie Dundee'.

The battle, which took place on 27th July 1689, was the first major clash between the opposing forces, as the Jacobites fought to reinstate Catholic King James II of England and VII of Scotland to the throne.

The Catholic King had been ejected from the throne a year earlier in favour of his Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William of Orange.

The battle saw the first usage on British soil of grenades and during the recording of the *River Hunter's* episode, Ouimette made what Edwards described as a "find of national importance". "It's only the second time a hand grenade fragment of this age has ever been found on British soil," the presenter said.

Archaeologist Dr Natasha Ferguson admitted that her jaw dropped when she saw the grenade fragment, while Dr Murray Cook said he shed "tears



Beau Ouimette holding the fragment of a hand grenade thrown during the 1689 Battle of Killiecrankie moments after discovering it in the River Garry in Perthshire, Scotland. Photo: River Hunters/Sky History.

of joy" at the "incredible" find.

"This is very likely to be a grenade from the battle, which is extraordinary as there has only been one other fragment of grenade found and that was up in the field...so there are only potentially two of these objects," said Dr Ferguson.

"An object that's as important as this will go into a museum collection so that everyone can see it."

Ouimette added: "It's certainly one of my most rare finds. I can't believe we actually found it... it's exactly the kind of battlefield evidence we came hunting for".

"It's fantastic because we spoke about the fact that this was an innovative battle and I didn't dare to dream that we would find something to prove just how innovative," he said.

Rick Edwards praised his hosting

colleague Ouimette's contribution to Scottish military history, saying he had made a priceless find.

In response, Ouimette said: "I think that's why I do what I do, because I want to contribute to the historical record and people will be able to look at that and see it in the museum."

• *River Hunters* series two airs on Sky History on Mondays at 9pm.

Celtic chief wants action on racism

More must be done to eradicate racism and discrimination from football, Celtic Chief Executive Peter Lawwell has said.

His call came after representatives from the club joined other teams at a Scottish Football Association (SFA) summit on the issue in response to onfield abuse received by Rangers midfielder Glen Kamara during a recent clash with Slavia Prague.

The star has since said he has continued to receive abuse "every day, easily" since the incident.

Mr Lawwell said Celtic would be delighted to engage with the SFA on the issue.

"Unfortunately, across many years, numerous Celtic players and staff have been subjected to various forms of racism and discrimination," he said.

"Whether it relates to Celtic or any other club, it is time it stopped. Racism or any other form of discrimination should have no place in football or society and we need to do all we can to eradicate such prejudice.

"We will continue to do all we can to promote this hugely important message and we look forward to working with other clubs and the wider football authorities to tackle this issue."

Mr Lawwell's call was echoed by Rangers skipper James Tavernier, who also attended the summit.

"Every black player in our squad had been the victim of racist abuse this season, either online or in the case of Glen Kamara, on the field of play," he said. "This is unacceptable and must stop.

In recent months many footballers have been targeted by trolls on social media.

The abuse has included racial slurs, as well as sectarian attacks.

Thousands praise football hero

Thousands have paid tribute to former Scottish footballer and teacher Alex Kiddie, following his death at the age of 93.

Dundee-born Kiddie played for Aberdeen, Falkirk, Celtic, Arbroath, Brechin City, Montrose and Forfar Athletic.

In the last few months of his life Kiddie held the status of being the oldest living former Celtic player following the death of Tommy Docherty on 31st December 2020.

While only 20 people were present at Kiddie's funeral at St Leonard and St Fergus RC Church, Dundee, due to Covid-19 restrictions, thousands paid tribute online and in personal messages.

Tributes included messages from Kiddie's former pupils and colleagues from the two Catholic schools he taught at in later life, Lawside Academy and St John's RC High School.

New website to boost the Christian vote

A website has been launched to help Christians in Scotland and Wales make an informed vote in the countries' May elections.

The website, launched by Christian Action Research & Education (CARE), includes full lists of all candidates; retiring MSPs and MSs; manifesto analysis; an online hustings event guide; and blogs concerning the elections.

"As Christians we want to vote in these elections because it's a crucial way we participate in the democratic process and make our voice heard," said Dr Stuart Weir, CARE for Scotland's National Director.

"Let's be praying for God to move this election season both at Holyrood and at the Senedd and raise up men and women of character and integrity."

Both Scottish and Welsh parliamentary elections take place on 6th May.

See CARE's website at: elections21.care.org.uk

SNP hit with 'anti-life, anti-family' tag amid fears of assisted suicide support

The SNP has been branded "an anti-life, anti-family party" after it said it would assess the law on assisted suicide if it is re-elected in the May elections.

The party has pledged to run annual Citizens' Assemblies to discuss "complex issues", such as reviewing the le-

galisation of assisted suicide in Scotland, according to reports in the Scottish media.

The Citizens' Assembly of Scotland was established in 2019 by the Scottish Government; it consists of around 100 citizens drawn from across the country who deliberate on Scotland's

future and what it describes as "complex issues".

Reports that these complex issues will include a review on assisted suicide laws has caused great concern among pro-lifers.

"The realisation that the SNP is an anti-life, anti-family party is becoming clear as now it chooses to position itself against vulnerable, ill people," said Michael Robinson, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC)'s director of communications.

"Assisted suicide fails to protect the right to life of all citizens no matter how weak, vulnerable or disabled their lives may be.

"The SNP now appears to be setting itself against vulnerable people in Scotland by envisioning a society which devalues their lives.

"We must oppose every move to legalise the abhorrent practice of assisted suicide in Britain."

In 2015, MSPs rejected the Assisted Suicide Scotland Bill by 82 votes to 36.



Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

Brazil still has most Catholics but Philippines is closing fast

The Vatican's Statistical Yearbook has revealed that the countries with the most people baptised Catholics continue to be, in order: Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, the United States and Italy – the same top five nations as last year.

But the order and countries are different when looking at the number of dioceses or other Church jurisdictions, the number of ordinations and the number of children under the age of seven baptised over the previous 12 months.

According to the yearbook, Brazil had 177 million baptised Catholics by the end of 2019; Mexico had 115.5 million; the Philippines had 89 million; the United States had almost 74 million; and Italy 57.8 million.

But the top-five countries in terms of the number of dioceses, eparchies, prelatures and other jurisdictions were: Brazil with 278; Italy with 228; the United States with 195; India with 175; and France with 99.

On baptisms, there were more than 1.6 million baptisms of children under seven in the Philippines, the largest number. This compares with Mexico (1.48 million); 1.05 million in Brazil; more than 595,000 in the US; and more than 442,000 in Colombia.

The pope's Argentina came close to breaking into the top five, with 441,572.

As for ordinations, two countries were tied for the top position: the United States and India, each with 415 new priests. Following them were Nigeria with 410; Brazil with 390; and Italy with 317.

The Statistical Yearbook also contains figures for the number of Catholic schools at every level and other institutions the Church runs to care for people in need.

The countries with the most Catholic hospitals, not counting dispensaries, are: India with 754; the United States with 551; Germany with 439; Congo with 419; and Brazil with 278.

Francis urges World Bank to act over poor nations' debts

Repeats calls for fairer, more humane society to rise from pandemic – and fairer access to vaccines that does not let 'law of market' rule

Junno Arocho Esteves

Poor countries cannot be expected to recover from the current financial crisis if the world returns to an economic model in which a small minority of people owns half of the world's wealth, Pope Francis said.

In a message to participants at the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund 2021 virtual spring meetings, the pope said that despite "our deeply held convictions that all men and women are created equal, many of our brothers and sisters in the human family, especially those at the margins of society, are effectively excluded from the financial world."

"If we are to come out of this situation as a better, more humane and solidary world, new and creative forms of social, political and economic participation must be devised, sensitive to the voice of the poor and committed to including them in the building of our common future," he said.

Although countries are formulating their own recovery plans, the pope wrote, there is a need for a global plan to create new institutions to advance "the integral human development of all peoples."

Using his message to repeat his call for debt forgiveness for poorer countries, the pope's appeal coincided with the launch of a campaign by the Vatican's Covid-19 commission calling for debt relief in Africa, where the situation of many countries has worsened because of the pandemic.

Poor nations, the pope said, not only must have "an effective share in

decision-making and facilitating access to the international market" but also a significant reduction in their debt.

"Relieving the burden of debt of so many countries and communities today is a profoundly human gesture that can help people to develop, to have access to vaccines, health, education and jobs," he said.

The pope also highlighted the "ecological debt" that exists in the world caused by "human-induced ecological degradation and biodiversity loss" that have affected poor countries.

Developed countries, he said, can pay this debt by "significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy or by assisting poorer countries to enact policies and programmes of sustainable development, but also by covering the costs of the innovation required for that purpose."

Pope Francis also said financial markets must be regulated and geared toward serving the common good during the current health crisis.

Calling "a justly financed vaccine solidarity," the pope said governments cannot allow "the law of the market-

place to take precedence over the law of love and the health of all."

"It is my hope that in these days, your formal deliberations and your personal encounters will bear much fruit for the discernment of wise solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable future, a future where finance is at the service of the common good, where the vulnerable and the marginalised are placed at the center, and where the earth, our common home, is well cared for," the pope told delegates from the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund.

The saints are always with you when you're at prayer



Pope Francis is pictured above in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican as he leads his general audience.

He used the weekly event – held socially distanced in line with regulations – to stress that Christians are never alone in

prayer but instead are accompanied by countless saints who have preceded them. Photo: Vatican Media

Tributes paid to Fr Küng, the critic who loved the Church

Tributes have been paid from around the world to Fr Hans Küng, the world-renowned Swiss theologian who died on 6th April, aged 93.

German and Swiss bishops who knew and worked with Fr Hans described him as a man who loved the Catholic Church, even though he sometimes went beyond the limits of Catholic doctrine and criticised the decisions of Church leaders.

At times the Swiss-born cleric seemed like he was fighting the Church, one bishop said. Bishop Felix Gmür of Basel, president of the Swiss bishops' conference, said that for all his criticism, "Hans Küng was a lover of the Church."

But in challenging the Church hierarchy "he did not want to make the

Church superfluous and did not want it to perish. He wanted a renewed Church, a Church for today's people," Bishop Gmür said.

"He fought for a Church that would deal with the realities of life as they are and with the world as it is.

"He wanted a Christian Church and a Christian faith and people of Christian faith who listen and are heard, with whom one can discuss, who get involved, who live out of their trust in God, who serve peace together with other believers," the bishop said.

Fr Küng had lived and taught in Tübingen, Germany, for decades. One of his closest friends and then fiercest critics before a reconciliation was German Cardinal Walter Kasper, the retired president of the Pontifical Council

for Promoting Christian Unity.

He served as a doctoral assistant to Fr Küng from 1961 to 1964, before a long period of distance and deeply diverging views on a host of theological questions and the proper way to raise them.

But in the past few decades, the cardinal said, their relationship was one of "mutual respect" and exchanges of cards and letters for holidays and other celebrations. "Certainly, the theological differences remained, but on a human level, the relationship was straightforward and peaceful."

Fr Küng was more than a critic of the Church; "he was a person who wanted to promote renewal of the Church and realise its reform," the cardinal said.

"However, in my judgment, he went too far – beyond Catholic orthodoxy – and so did not remain tied to a theology based on the doctrine of the church, but 'invented' his own theology."

The cardinal said he found "unacceptable" the way Fr Küng had sometimes spoken about Pope Benedict XVI, with whom he had served as an expert at the Second Vatican Council, but "I know Benedict prayed for him."

"He knew deep in his heart that he was Catholic and never left or wanted to leave the Church, even if his behaviour was not always that of a Catholic."

Obituary to Fr Küng: See Catholic Times, page 27



Pope Francis delivers the homily at Divine Mercy Sunday Mass in Rome's Church of the Holy Spirit. To comply with Italian state regulations, the congregation was sparse to allow for social distancing



Pope calls all Catholics to be missionaries of God's mercy

Cindy Wooden

Like the disciples, who experienced Jesus' divine mercy after the resurrection, all Christians are called to become missionaries, sharing the Gospel of God's love and mercy with others, Pope Francis said.

"Today Jesus tells us, too, 'Peace be with you! You are precious in my eyes. Peace be with you! You are important for me. Peace be with you! You have a mission. No one can take your place. You are irreplaceable. And I believe in you,'" the pope said.

Pope Francis celebrated the Mass for Divine Mercy Sunday at the Rome Church of the Holy Spirit, just a block away from St. Peter's Square. The church is the Rome Shrine of Divine Mercy, a devotion begun by St. Faustina Kowalska and promoted by St. John Paul II.

Because of Covid-19 restrictions, fewer than 100 people were present for the Mass, wearing masks and seated only two people to a pew, except if they were members of the same family.

At the end of the Mass, Pope Francis thanked those invited: nurses and doctors from the hospital next door, refugees, people with disabilities, priests serving as "missionaries of mercy," inmates from several correctional institutes and representatives of Italy's civil protection service. The



pope told them they represent "realities where mercy becomes concrete, draws close and serves those in difficulty."

After reciting the *Regina Coeli* prayer with those present, the pope greeted each individual personally, shaking hands, blessing them and even posing for a few selfies.

In his homily at the Mass, Pope Francis focused on how, prior to the resurrection, the disciples misunderstood so much of what Jesus said and how they abandoned or even denied him at the hour of his passion and death.

But when the disciples are hovering in fear in the closed room, he noted,

the Risen Lord appears to them and "raises them up with his mercy."

"Having received that mercy, they become merciful in turn," the pope said. "It's very difficult to be merciful if you have not been shown mercy."

Saying, "Peace be with you," Jesus sets their troubled hearts at ease and forgives their failings, he said, lifting them up and filling them with the courage they need to be his witnesses.

"The disciples were guilty; they had run away, they had abandoned the master," the pope said. "Sin brings torment; evil has its price. Our sin, as the psalmist says, is always before us."

"Like those disciples, we need to let ourselves be forgiven," the pope said. "Let us ask for the grace to accept that gift, to embrace the sacrament of forgiveness. And to understand that confession is not about ourselves and our sins, but about God and his mercy."

"We do not confess to abase ourselves, but to be raised up," he said, and "we – all of us – need this badly."

Speaking to priests, Pope Francis said that anytime they hear someone's confession, they "ought to convey the sweetness of mercy ... the sweetness of Jesus, who forgives everything. God forgives everything."

When Jesus showed the disciples

the wounds of his crucifixion, the pope said, he was not simply proving he had risen, but also made it possible for them to see and touch "the fact that God has loved us to the end. He has made our wounds his own and borne our weaknesses in his own body."

The day's first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, recounted how the early Christian community shared everything they had in common. "This is not communism, but pure Christianity," the pope said.

The disciples "discovered that they shared the mission, the forgiveness and the body of Jesus, and so it seemed natural to share their earthly possessions," he said. "Their fears had been dispelled by touching the Lord's wounds, and now they are unafraid to heal the wounds of those in need, because there they see Jesus. Because Jesus is there in the wounds of the needy."

Catholics today, he said, need to ask themselves if they show others the mercy they have been shown by God and if they feed the hungry like Jesus feeds them in the Eucharist.

"Let us not remain indifferent," Pope Francis said.

"Let us not live a one-way faith, a faith that receives but does not give, a faith that accepts the gift but does not give it in return."

IN BRIEF

Symposium to offer theological take on mission of priests

The cardinal tasked with organising a major theological symposium on the priesthood next year says that at its heart will be a drive to deepen the foundation of the Church's mission.

However, Cardinal Marc Ouellet also said it would look at improving the way laypeople and priests work together and ensure that service, not power, motivates the request for ordination.

The theological symposium will not offer practical solutions to all the pastoral and missionary problems of the Church, but it can help us understand ministerial priesthood and get away from the idea that ordained ministry is linked to 'ecclesiastical power,' the cardinal said at a news conference. The three-day gathering, titled *Toward a Fundamental Theology of the Priesthood*, will run from 17th-19th February 2022.

The relationship between baptism and ordained ministry needs greater emphasis today, Cardinal Ouellet said, but reviewing the foundations of a theology of priesthood also "involves ecumenical questions not to be ignored, as well as the cultural movements that question the place of women in the Church."

Cardinal Cassidy, ecumenical expert dies, aged 96

Australian Cardinal Edward I. Cassidy, a long-time Vatican diplomat and former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, died on 10th April 10 in Newcastle, Australia, aged 96. Cardinal Cassidy was regarded as one of the Church's finest experts and supporters of ecumenical matters.

He celebrated his 80th birthday nine months before the death of St John Paul II, so was not eligible to vote in the April 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI. "I missed the cut by a few strokes, as they say in the golfing world," Cardinal Cassidy told Catholic News Service at the time. "It would have been a special occasion" to have been part of the conclave, "but you turn 80 and, there you go."

Cardinal Cassidy spent 48 years abroad, the last 11 of those years as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and as president of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

He said the greatest privilege he enjoyed as the Vatican's chief ecumenist was signing in 1999 the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" with the Lutheran World Federation, providing a common basis for understanding how people are justified and saved.

World News

The throwaway street children

Fr Shay Cullen



We'll call him Angelico; he's just one of the 250,000 or more homeless Philippines children who live on the city streets, alleyways, in rubbish dumps and open markets.

They have no secure home, love, care, security and dignity. Most have no parents who accept them. They are the throwaway children of society yet for true Christians they are the most important people in the world, of great human value above all others. To accept and help them is to accept Jesus of Nazareth, as he said himself via Matthew 18:1-6.

Angelico was abandoned by his biological parents and was left to live a day-to-day existence scraping out a living on the streets, begging, stealing and eating from the rubbish carts.

Astonishingly, it is estimated that there are 126 million such children in the world. They live in constant stress, anxiety and fear of capture and abuse. They develop mental health conditions that few people know or care about. They are the throwaway children, considered useless to society, being illiterate, diseased, malnourished and suspected of having 'criminal minds' for acts such as stealing a banana or bread to survive the bitter pangs of hunger.

But they are not criminals: the real criminals are the corrupt authorities who abuse them and ignore their plight.

When they are arrested many are held illegally in detention camps. The irony is the reason most are arrested is because police see them as troublemakers when they find them out on the street late at night. But how can you not be on the street late when you have nowhere to live?

The good news is that in this case, Angelico survived. It was testimony to his resilience and conviction that he was a good boy and somehow, he made his way back to the provincial town. The authorities in the provincial town were more caring than those in the city and when they found Angelico they brought him to the Preda Foundation where he was accepted and given welcome, affirmation, kindness and understanding.

He is now happy, is studying, having therapy, learning practical skills in vocational training and enjoying freedom from fear, hunger and want. He enjoys art, playing games and basketball.

He has found a happy childhood with many others. If only every street child's story ended the same way.

Visit www.preda.org, and on Facebook, Preda Foundation.

Biden praised as he backs increase in foreign aid

At a time when the UK government of Boris Johnson has come under fire for slashing its commitments to foreign aid spending, President Biden has announced that the USA's fiscal budget for 2022 will include a request to increase foreign aid, with a focus on fighting poverty.

The news came as a surprise and was welcomed by Catholic aid agencies, who described it as a vital step in helping the world's poorest overcome the impact of Covid-19, and a move that would re-establish American influence around the world.

"The administration's proposal to increase poverty-focused international assistance in its FY22 budget request demonstrates a steadfast commitment to American leadership abroad," stated Bill O'Keefe, executive vice president at Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Included in the request is \$1 billion in US foreign assistance for fighting



infectious diseases around the globe, as well as \$2.5 billion for international climate programmes.

O'Keefe said that the proposed funding "will be vital" to fighting global

poverty, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Covid-19 has plunged tens of millions of families further into poverty, threatening their ability to put food on the table," O'Keefe stated. "The US is a blessed nation. It's our moral responsibility to protect the life and dignity of those most in need."

Increased foreign assistance will help the United States counter the threats of climate change and future pandemics, O'Keefe said, adding that it will also boost the US response to "the complex challenges plaguing Central America."

CRS was highly critical of President Trump's decision to slash foreign aid spending by nearly 25 per cent in 2018.

A spokesman for Caritas International said the planned foreign aid increase comes in sharp contrast to those "other wealthy nations who ap-

pear hell-bent on reducing their commitments to helping the poor.

Such a move "will weaken their influence and standing around the globe, while the US is increasing its own," they added.

More worryingly for US Catholics, the 2022 federal budget is also expected to spark a debate over taxpayer funding of abortion.

Biden's budget request did not specifically mention abortion funding, but pro-life groups are warning that a proposed \$340 million increase for the Title X family planning programme would fund pro-abortion groups.

While the Trump administration set up safeguards against Title X funding of abortion clinics – forbidding grantees from referring for abortions or being co-located within abortion clinics – the Biden administration is currently in the process of rolling back those requirements.

US archbishop appeals for prayers as tensions rise

Archbishop Bernard Hebda of Saint Paul and Minneapolis in the United States has called for the city to unite in prayer after the latest fatal police shooting in the city.

Daunte Wright was shot and killed by a police officer after he resisted arrest. Officers had stopped him for a motoring violation before discovering that he had a number of arrest warrants against his name.

It is believed the officer who shot Wright had meant to use his taser rather than his handgun.

"I have been praying for [Wright's] eternal repose, for his family and for all those who loved him," Archbishop Hebda said. He added that he was "also praying for the police officer involved in the shooting, and for her family and friends. I suspect that they

are grieving in a different way."

The shooting of Wright came as tensions in the state were already high because of the trial of Derek Chauvin, the Minnesota police officer accused of killing George Floyd. The coupling of events has sparked protests, rioting, and looting across Minneapolis. The National Guard was deployed and a curfew was imposed.

"While early indications point towards the shooting being accidental" the archbishop said, "I encourage allowing investigators to complete a thorough investigation before coming to any personal judgments as to what occurred."

He called on the community to "pause and pray, particularly during this time of already heightened tension due to the Chauvin trial."



Catholic investors pressure Bolsonaro to protect Amazon

Lise Alves

More than 93 Catholic investors from around the world have called on the Brazilian government to better protect the Amazon and the rights of its indigenous population.

The group sent a letter to Brazilian officials, including President Jair Bolsonaro, listing concrete demands for the rainforest and its peoples.

"Today we approach you not only as Catholic institutions, but also as investors and potential investors in Brazilian government bonds as well as in shares and bonds of Brazilian companies," said the letter.

Among the Catholic groups' demands is the implementation of a consistent plan to combat deforestation, including a specific budget and measurable intermediate goals.

Citing data that shows that more than 400 square miles of rainforest

was cut down between August 2019 and July 2020, the letter said the investors, 'as Catholics and citizen of this world,' are extremely concerned about the continuing destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

'This devastating environmental damage is in stark contrast to the Catholic guiding theme of preserving creation and the call of his holiness Pope Francis to protect the climate



The letter demands better protection for the indigenous

and the environment in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*," the letter said.

The Catholic institutions said they wanted to enter into a dialogue with the Brazilian government 'to motivate you to finally respect human and environmental rights and take appropriate countermeasures to remedy the current situation,' the letter added.

Among the demands made by the entities is the implementation of a consistent plan to combat deforestation, including a specific budget and measurable intermediate goals.

The group warned that if no actions were taken, they would divest from Brazilian companies and government bonds.

The initiative could force President Bolsonaro to act, as his government is desperate for overseas investment as it struggles to counter the impact of Covid-19. "The initiative seeks to

pressure Bolsonaro to change his policies in regard to the Amazon region and the people living there," Franciscan Brother Rodrigo de Castro Amedee Peret, a member of the Churches and Mining Network and one of the signatories to the letter, which also included several European – but no UK – banks.

"There has been a dismantling of the protection system of the Amazon region. This government adopted a predatory model, allowing the advancement of illegal miners and illegal clearings all over the territory," he said.

The response from Brazilian government representatives "was immediate, signalling that at least officials are listening," Br Rodrigo added, after it was revealed the ministries of Justice and the Environment were looking at the demands.

Failure to co-operate on Covid labelled the 'world's biggest failure'

The sister charged by Pope Francis to lead the Vatican's response to Covid-19 has criticised the way nations have co-operated to beat the virus.

Sister Carol Keehan said the pandemic has exposed how unprepared the world is to work together to stop an urgent crisis.

Sr Carol, a Daughter of Charity, told a World Health Day symposium on health equity that if the lessons of this pandemic are not learned, more people will needlessly die in future calamities.

"The paramount issue is the importance of honest transparency," Sr Carol said. "This pandemic has been made so much more serious and devastating by multiple failures – clinically, ethically and politically.

"But the overarching one," she said, "has been the inability for individuals, corporations and nations to work together in a transparent way."

Sr Carol heads the health task force of the Vatican Covid-19 Commission established by Pope Francis. The health task force has focused on the equitable distribution of vaccines and treatments as well as reducing resistance to getting the vaccine.

It was clear from the beginning of the pandemic more than a year ago that health equity would be an issue, and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization, told the symposium that the lack of equity has been deadly. "More than 2.7 million have lost their lives," Ghebreyesus said. "The hard

truth is some of those people died simply because they could not get the care they needed. Inequality is not a new problem, but Covid-19 has brought it into sharp focus."

Sr Carol said the Vatican is trying to use already-established networks and agencies for vaccine distribution, such as religious communities that have worked in poorer countries for decades and already have local facilities and – more importantly – the trust of the people they serve.

"One of the most senior scientists said to me, 'Sister, you can have the brightest scientists and these people will not pay attention. But many of these people have had someone of faith with them during the pandemic, and they will listen to them,'" Sister Keehan said.

Establishing partnerships is vital, and Sr Carol said her task force is willing to work with almost anyone of goodwill. "We've been meeting with pharmaceutical manufacturers," she said.

"They are often maligned for only being interested in money, but we've had very good conversations, and they've done some wonderful things to help the situation."

The task force is also working closely with COVAX, a WHO partnership aimed at getting vaccines to countries that cannot afford them.

A Rwandan man receives the Covid-19 vaccine. Failure to ensure vaccines have gone to the poorest countries is one of the examples of how the world has failed during the pandemic, Sr Carol said



Kenyan bishops beg government to drop plan to close refugee camps

Fredrick Nzwilli

Catholic bishops in Kenya have led calls for the government to shelve plans to close two refugee camps in the north, which are currently home to refugees from civil war and famine in Somalia and South Sudan.

The bishops' appeal came after the government ordered the UN Refugee Agency to close Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in northern Kenya. The two camps host 400,000 people.

"It is regrettable that the intention to close Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps comes at a time that these people need help," said Archbishop Philip Anyolo of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops. "This is the time to give protection and embrace the most vulnerable in our society."

He called on the government to shelve the decision, increase security for the refugees and treat them with care during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Kenya first said it would close the Dadaab refugee camp in 2016 after claiming it had become a recruiting ground for al-Shabab, the Somalia based al-Qaida affiliate in East Africa.

Although the Kenyan high court



has temporarily barred the closure, analysts say the camps controversy will persist as Kenya and Somalia engage in a maritime border dispute in the International Court of Justice.

Archbishop Anyolo said hosting the refugees has been a good gesture, necessary, important and human to support the most vulnerable in the society.

He said the refugees' lives had been

disrupted by various reasons, including effects of climate change and insecurity.

"Forcefully returning refugees to Somalia, where there is still insecurity and attacks on civilians, will lead to more suffering of vulnerable women and children," Archbishop Anyolo said, calling for a comprehensive approach to solve Kenya's complex refugee problem.



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NJPN Comment

Energised or paralysed?

Paul Southgate



Pope Francis proposed a striking image of Church: "I see the Church as a field hospital after battle." What the Church needs most today, he says, is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity.

This is the very quality Covid has denied us. We have been isolated, socially distanced, locked down, furloughed, un-hugged and un-plugged.

Francis' battlefield image is not a comfortable one: it evokes terror and trauma, suffering and sacrifice, death and devastation, and wondering where God is in all this. To make a difference, to uncover God's promise of "I will be with you" makes "nearness and proximity" the crucial strategy.

The Battle of Brexit gave us the opportunity to explore national identity, common values, international relations. We wasted it and are now losing sight of our national ideals, our national compass. There is not even the suggestion of healing and warming, of bridge-building over a growing and cataclysmic rift in the national spirit highlighted at the referendum. What are we steering by, guided by, aiming towards? What do we value most? On what basis can the UK stay together or will we disintegrate? Maybe the rich and powerful do not want the debate. Does the Church?

So, on to the Battle of Covid and its fearsome aftershocks. Will the Church be energised or paralysed? The bishops' *The Common Good* was published 25 years ago in 1996. Cardinal Hume introduced it by saying: "The future of humanity does not depend on political reform, social revolution or scientific advance. Something else is needed. It starts with a true conversion of mind and heart."

Now is the opportune time to re-frame *The Common Good*, to fashion solidarity with our allies in other Churches and faiths and call for a new conversion – ecological, educational, economic, equality.

Our young people ask, 'What's the point?' as they see their aspirations and prospects drain away. We absolutely owe it to them to make the point, inspire their hope and vision, get alongside them to educate, encourage and equip them. The elders need to dream dreams so that our young people can see visions and prophesy (Acts 2:17).

A member of the Justice & Peace Co-ordinating Council in Hexham & Newcastle diocese, Paul is Chair of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN). NJPN Conference 23-25 July at <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

Catholic who defied US Navy 'jailed' for his role in protest

A Catholic peace campaigner who broke into a US Navy secure dock in a symbolic act of protest against the nuclear weapons he believes are stored there has been given a 21-month prison sentence.

Mark Colville of New Haven, Connecticut was a member of the group known as the King's Bay Plowshares who broke into the Georgian naval submarine base in 2018. Once inside he and his fellow anti-nuclear protesters painted peace symbols on dock office equipment and caused some minor damage.

Despite the minor nature of the vandalism, Justice Lindsey Wood said the actions were worthy of a federal charge and handed down a 21-month sentence. However, as Colville has been held in jail for 15 months as he awaited trial, the judge applied his time served to the sentence and allowed him to walk free.

Colville, a member of the Catholic Worker Movement, was ordered to pay a share of the \$33,503.51 the US Navy said it cost to clean and repair the damage caused by the group.

Colville told the hearing that he believed his family and the wider community "have a right to live without a nuclear gun on hair-trigger alert held perpetually to our heads."

"That right is ours, both by birth and by law. It is neither granted by courts, nor denied by them, but this court's refusal to defend that right – or even recognise it – has ... placed it firmly in a posture of criminality," he said.



He concluded his statement by reading *A Prayer for Our Earth* by Pope Francis, which was included in the 2015 papal encyclical, *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*.

Four of the King's Bay Plowshares participants are currently in prison for their role in the protest, which was rooted in the Book of Isaiah's call to 'beat their swords into plowshares'.

One of the quartet to be jailed is Martha Hennessy of Vermont, granddaughter of Catholic Worker co-

founder Dorothy Day.

Elizabeth McAlister of New London, Connecticut, was also sentenced to time served after spending more than 17 months in prison awaiting trial.

The seventh participant, Jesuit Father Steve Kelly of the Bay Area in California, has been in federal custody since his arrest more than three years ago. He is scheduled to appear in a video hearing this week for violating a probation order stemming from another protest at Naval Base Kitsap

near Seattle in 2017.

The 'King's seven' cut their way into Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in St. Marys, Georgia, the East Coast home of the Trident submarine. The Navy's fleet of Trident submarines carries about half of the US active strategic nuclear warheads, according to military observers.

United States military officials have neither confirmed nor denied the existence of nuclear weapons at the base.

Five priests, two nuns, three laypeople kidnapped in Haiti

Clergy and religious are among the latest victims to be targeted in a spate of kidnappings in Haiti.

Police are said to be concerned after a group of 10 people, including five priests and two nuns, were abducted together on their way to a parish near the capital of Port-au-Prince early April 11.

In recent months kidnapping cases are happening almost daily in Haiti. The Caribbean nation has been experiencing increasing insecurity, political turmoil and gang violence; it is the poorest country in the Americas.

"This new case is a reflection of the collapse of the security apparatus of the state and the country. No one seems to be safe anymore," Redemptorist Father Renold Antoine told Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, on 12th April.

He blamed the latest kidnapping on "outlawed groups who continue to sow fear and sadness in the hearts

of the population," he said. It was possible the group was targeted because the kidnap gang thought the Church was "wealthy enough to pay the ransom."

Local sources confirmed with Fides the names of the 10 people kidnapped in the town of Croix-des-Bouquets. They were: four priests who are members of the Priestly Society of St. Jacques, one of whom is a French national; a priest of the Archdiocese of Cap-Haïtien; a French member of the Sisters of Providence of Pommeraye; one family friend and three relatives of another priest, who was not captured. The relatives included his aunt, a member of the Little Sisters of the Child Jesus.

Fr Ludger Mazile, secretary of the Haitian bishops' conference, told Agence France Presse that the kidnapers had demanded a ransom of \$1 million for the group's release.

The Conference of Haitian Religious issued a statement expressing its "deep

regret" over the latest kidnapping, but also its "anger at the inhumane situation we have been going through for more than a decade," Fides reported.

Kidnappings for ransom by armed gangs have increased over the past several months.

Bishop Pierre-Andr  Dumas of Anse-Veau et Miragone, vice president of the bishops' conference, told AFP, "This is too much. The time has come for these inhuman acts to stop."

"The Church prays and stands in solidarity with all the victims of this heinous act," he said.

Haiti is officially the poorest country in the Americas, with many of its citizens existing on a handful of dollars a week. Corruption is said to be endemic, and many aid agencies have questioned whether financial support sent to the country gets through to its desperately poor people.

It has also suffered severely in recent years from increasing extreme weather events, including hurricanes

Catholics step in as eruption hits islands

Catholics across the West Indies have rallied to send aid to their neighbours on St Vincent and the Grenadines after the La Soufriere volcano erupted, showing islanders with ash and forcing thousands to flee.

"There is an immediate response with the things they need most," said Archbishop Jason Gordon of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, who is co-ordinating aid to the affected islands. "At this stage they need emergency shelters, food suppliers and clean water."

La Soufriere first erupted on 9th April, forcing between 16-20,000 people to move away from the immediate danger zone. Over 3,000 people have been placed in emergency shelters.

Fr Alando Williams, diocesan chancellor of the Kingstown Diocese, said that many islanders had fled with nothing but the clothes they stood in, and getting food to them was a challenge. He said local water supplies "had been badly contaminated from the volcanic ashfall."



Carol Glatz

Abuse cases will help train canon lawyers - p22



Fr Michael Collins

The dominance of Florence during the Renaissance - p24



Fr Francis Marsden

The best preserved book in history - p28

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A CATHOLIC UNIVERSE SUPPLEMENT

Italy issues arrest warrant for broker in Vatican property deal

The Vatican in 2018 bought this building at 60 Sloane Avenue in Chelsea as an investment after first owning a partial stake in the property. The acquisition of the building has devolved into multidimensional scandal. In the latest development, Italian authorities issued an arrest warrant for Gianluigi Torzi, an Italian broker who served as the middleman in the Vatican's purchase of the property. The building is pictured in 2012. (Photo: © Marcin Mazur)



Junno Arocho Esteves

Italian authorities issued an arrest warrant for Gianluigi Torzi, an Italian broker who served as the middleman in the Vatican's majority stake purchase of a property in London's Chelsea district.

According to court documents, Italy's finance police requested the warrant after an investigation into Torzi and three associates who are suspected of money laundering, fraud and tax violations, the *Reuters* news agency reported on 12th April.

Although the charges are related to violations against Italian finance regulations, the charges stemmed from the Vatican's investigation into Torzi.

As of 13th April, the warrant had

not been served because Torzi is in the UK. The broker's Italian lawyer vowed to file an appeal against the warrant, *Reuters* reported.

The arrest warrant is the latest chapter in the investigation of the questionable property deal that has been at the centre of claims about financial mismanagement at the Vatican.

Vatican police conducted a raid on offices in the Secretariat of State and the Vatican financial oversight office in October 2019. The next day, the Italian magazine *L'Espresso* published an internal notice as well as leaked documents alleging the raid was part of a Vatican investigation into how the Secretariat of State used £145 million to finance the London property development

project.

According to the leaked documents, the Vatican Secretariat of State purchased a majority stake in the property in 2018, incurring millions of dollars in debt.

Last June, Vatican authorities arrested Torzi, accusing him of extorting £12 million from the Vatican as payment for the majority stake and his role in brokering the deal.

After spending 10 days in a Vatican jail cell, Torzi was granted a conditional release after providing "a detailed memorandum" and documents "deemed useful for the reconstruction of the facts under investigation."

Nevertheless, he still faced Vatican charges of extortion, embezzlement, aggravated fraud and money laun-

dering, and assets from his company Vita Health Limited, the fund used to receive the Vatican's £12 million payment to Torzi, were frozen.

However, a UK judge reversed the order to freeze Torzi's assets in March. In his 42-page ruling, Judge Tony Baumgartner said that after considering all matters related to the case: "I do not consider there is reasonable cause to believe that Mr Torzi has benefited from criminal conduct."

The judge also criticised what he said were omissions by the Vatican prosecutor regarding the accusations against Torzi and said the Vatican's "non-disclosures and misrepresentations are so appalling that" reversing the order to freeze the assets was justified.

Vatican Observatory launches new podcast and website

Vatican Observatory fans and astronomy nerds will want to check out the observatory foundation's new podcast, website and online store for the usual "merch" of hoodies, ball caps, tote bags and phone cases but also bright posters of the Horsehead Nebula, the Milky Way and other starry scenes.

People will find everything at vaticanobservatory.org and new content posted on social media: facebook.com/VaticanObservatory; instagram.com/vaticanobservatory; twitter.com/VaticanObserv; youtube.com/c/vaticanobservatory; and linkedin.com/company/vaticanobservatory.

The podcasts are available on several platforms and they feature one of the pope's own Jesuit astronomers speaking with a notable figure in the world of space exploration or science.

For example, one episode features Jesuit Brother Guy Consolmagno – a planetary scientist, director of the Vatican Observatory and president of the foundation – speaking with US astronaut Nicole Stott and her husband Christopher Stott of the International Institute of Space Commerce. They talk about moon tourism and what living on or in the moon would look like as well as a lot of personal anecdotes, including how their faith fits in with their love of science.

"The Vatican Observatory is one of the oldest active astronomical observatories in the world with its roots going back to 1582 and the Gregorian reform of the calendar," according to its website.

The observatory conducts astronomical research and public outreach to promote a "scientific understanding of our universe," it said. The website dedicated to the observatory's scientific activities is at vaticanobservatory.va/content/specolavaticana/en.html.

The Vatican Observatory works with the Vatican Observatory Foundation to educate and engage the public about astronomy and dialogue between faith and science.

In brief

MINSK: While Church leaders in Belarus appear to be avoiding public issues, Catholics across the country continue to demand the freeing of political prisoners and an end to regime repression.

“Bishops and priests are under pressure not to speak out about human rights, and many believe this follows Vatican recommendations,” Kaciaryna Laurynenka, a Catholic theologian and historian, said in an interview with *Catholic News Service*. “The previous widespread enthusiasm has given way to a more pessimistic attitude, with fewer expectations of change. But while many clergy and laity are afraid to talk openly, much work is being done to help those in need.”

Ihar Baranouski, an online editor with Belarus’ Eastern Catholic community, said more than 350 internationally recognised political prisoners were still incarcerated in Belarus, where 30,000 people had received “administrative punishments” and more than 2,300 faced criminal charges for participating in protests.

He added that residents of the capital who showed solidarity with protests still risked “severe repression” – including the cutting of water supplies to apartment buildings “allegedly for technical reasons. Such brutal repression has certainly affected the mood among Catholics, most of whom realise rapid change can’t be expected. But the possibility of a prayer life in parishes has enabled them to endure these trials in a hopeful Christian way. Many are writing to the imprisoned and offering material support to the families of those fined and convicted, so they don’t feel abandoned and forgotten.”

VATICAN CITY: In an effort to reach out to people with disabilities, the Vatican earlier this month launched a new Sign Language service on its YouTube account, and plans are being made to develop other technological tools that would help the disabled more easily access papal content.

On Easter Sunday, the Vatican’s new *No One Excluded* project formally went live, offering those with hearing disabilities access to the pope’s livestreamed general audiences and *Angelus* and *Regina Coeli* addresses.

Sometime in the next few months, the Vatican is also expected to release a mobile app for those with sensory disabilities allowing for integrated use of the Vatican’s social media content, with particular attention to the visibly impaired, as well as those with communications disabilities.

TALKING POINT



Carmel Matthews and Rita Ray visit their mother, Rosalyn Redmond, 92, in a specially constructed outdoor visiting cabin with a room divider to protect against the spread of Covid-19 at St Glady’s Nursing Home in Dublin on 14th March. The sisters have not been able to hug their mother in over a year due to government restrictions on social interactions. (Catholic News Service photo/Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters)

Pandemic will never deter care for the fragile, religious orders vow

Carol Glatz

Leaders from dozens of religious orders dedicated to providing health care services and residential homes for the elderly and the disabled reaffirmed their commitment to continue serving the most vulnerable as the global pandemic continues.

Despite having to face the pandemic’s onslaught one year ago with inadequate supplies of protective equipment – resulting in numerous deaths for workers and residents – religious men and women will continue to obey the Lord’s commandment to love and care for the weakest, the leaders said in a joint statement.

The statement was signed by the superiors general of 45 men’s and women’s religious congregations, marking a review of the past year, renewing their commitment and making an appeal for action. It was published on the website of the Rome-based International Union of Superiors General on 25th March.

One year after the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, “the superiors general of religious congregations at the service of the most fragile people give thanks to God for the generosity with which so many of

their members have given their commitment, energy and even their lives to care for those affected by the insidious virus,” it said.

Many members of religious orders who caught the virus died, and sometimes it was in “painful ‘solitude’ but always accompanied by the affection, prayer and closeness of their religious families,” it said.

The past year was both “consoling and hard-going,” said Father Carmine Arice, superior general of the Brothers of St Joseph Cottolengo, in an interview on 8th April with *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper of the Italian bishops’ conference.

The consolation came because consecrated men and women “showed vitality, generosity and urgency in responding to the emergency, even at the cost of their life,” said the priest who led the initiative for the joint statement.

Calling these men and women religious “martyrs of charity,” he said the orders were compiling a list of their names and documenting how many died the past year as a consequence of assisting those struck by the virus.

In fact, the past year has proven

to be “heavy” because of the many victims among caregivers, workers, patients and residents, he said.

“The pandemic found us all unprepared,” he said, noting how difficult or impossible it was at the early stages of the novel coronavirus’ spread to get needed protective equipment in some parts of the world.

Now that the vaccine has been prioritised for health workers, those living in residential facilities and the elderly, there has been an immediate decrease in Covid-19 deaths for this segment of the population, he said.

However, the latest spikes in infections are now “most of all among people living together as a family,” he said, emphasising how the priorities in vaccinations should shift according to the actual realities on the ground.

The joint statement said members of religious orders hope that “all the populations of the planet, even the poorest, will have access to this providential vaccine.”

“We urge all religious men and women to promote this commitment both in their own religious families and in the areas where they work,” it said.

The religious congregations signing the statement reaffirmed their “commitment to continue to place the person at the centre of the services offered and the promotion of life in the best possible quality as the specific purpose of our institutions, seeking to continuously improve the quality of our offerings” as they run numerous residential services for the elderly or those with disabilities.

While governments have been encouraging the “deinstitutionalisation” of assistance to people who are not self-sufficient, the statement said that “based on the experience of many of our realities, it seems useful to us to support the presence of facilities that, due to the possibility of providing even more specialised services, can be at the heart of the network of services on the territory.”

They will continue to support and advocate for the family as the best place for people to live the final stages of life, it said.

“Effective collaboration between residential institutions and the family of origin is possible and gives good results in terms of quality of life and continuity of care,” it said.

New Catholic says she ‘really enjoyed this journey’ leading her to the Church

Mark Zimmermann

Taking a momentous journey is not a new experience for Jillian Shen.

Born and raised in China, she moved to the USA to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of California in Los Angeles and her master's degree in that subject at California State University.

Then she moved to Maryland, where she is working on her doctorate in applied developmental psychology at the University of Maryland in Baltimore County.

And this past year, Shen has been on a spiritual journey preparing to become Catholic, and she received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and first Communion during the Easter Vigil on 3rd April at the Cathedral of St Matthew the Apostle in Washington.

Shen said after she began dating

Sean Montgomery – a Catholic who works as a project manager – she sometimes went to Mass with him and his family. The couple became engaged in 2018, and they decided they wanted to be married in the Catholic Church and raise their children Catholic.

After discussing their future life together and with Sean's encouragement, she joined the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults programme at the cathedral, and her journey of faith officially started, she said.

During the pandemic, the weekly RCIA classes were held virtually, and Shen remembers being struck by one of the first lines in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The desire for God is written in the human heart.”

“That really resonated with me,” Shen told the *Catholic Standard*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington.

Although she didn't grow up in a religious family in China, Shen's paternal grandparents were Christian and would say grace before every meal. She remembers as a little girl her father telling her to put down her chopsticks, that her grandmother was going to say grace.

Consequently, Shen said she has always been “very curious and respectful about religion in general.”

“When they (my grandparents) were in their 80s, they would take a bus to the only church in my hometown city,” Shen remembered, adding that as an adult when she would speak with her grandmother on the phone, “she would always encourage me to seek out Christianity.”

Shen added: “I'd like to say my grandparents planted a seed in me,” and then meeting, dating and becoming engaged to her fiancé “gave me the nudge to take the

first step to convert to Catholicism.”

The couple decided to postpone their wedding due the pandemic, and they hope to get married at a Catholic church in Rome, San Pietro in Montorio, in May 2022, after their marriage preparation at St Matthew's Cathedral. She's writing her dissertation and hopes to complete work on her doctorate this summer.

During the pandemic, Shen said, there were so many uncertainties in life and she found herself losing direction.

“Studying Christianity in general and Catholicism brought peace to my mind,” she said, noting that she felt she didn't know how to pray properly, so she asked her fiancé and also googled “how to pray” and watched related YouTube videos.

“When I felt depressed, lost, I'd feel this urge for praying,” Shen said. “When I felt that urge, it was



(above) Jillian Shen poses for a photo after the Easter Vigil at the Cathedral of St Matthew the Apostle in Washington on 3rd April, when she joined the Catholic Church, receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and her first Communion. (Catholic News Service photo/Andrew Biraj, Catholic Standard)

(left) Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory baptises Jillian Shen during the Easter Vigil. (CNS photo/Jaclyn Lippelmann, Catholic Standard)



like God was calling me to build this relationship with him.”

This year, Shen observed Lent for the first time, and she and Montgomery decided on something simple to observe the season. It harkened back to the example of her grandparents in China: They prayed together before dinner.

“It's a start for us, to be more mindful as a family to strengthen our relationship with God,” she said.

Interviewed a few days before the Easter Vigil, Shen said: “I'm very excited, a little nervous, too. I feel like it's a big moment.”

Asked how her life would change after Easter, she said: “It's almost like I've adopted a different mindset” when facing challenges. ... The long-term goal is to strengthen my relationship with God, and with other Catholics, too.”

And she'll continue learning about her faith. “That's a lifetime journey,” she said.

The woman who said she had to learn how to pray added: “I pray every day now.”

And as for all that led her to this moment of becoming a Catholic, she added: “I really enjoyed this journey.”

Carol Glatz



VATICAN LETTER

Past abuse cases will help train canon lawyers

When Pope Francis abolished the “pontifical secret” covering the Church’s judicial handling of cases of the sexual abuse of minors, it was hailed as a major step forward in promoting greater transparency and accountability.

At first glance, it means victims and witnesses are free to discuss a case and, even though Vatican officials are still obliged to maintain confidentiality, it “shall not prevent the fulfilment of the obligations laid down in all places by civil laws,” the amended law said.

But an additional consequence of this landmark change, enacted in mid-December 2019, will be its potential to provide much-needed practical training and multidisciplinary studies for those involved in the handling of abuse cases.

The faculty of canon law at Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University recently announced it is offering a new diploma in penal jurisprudence – an “innovative” yearlong course designed to give canon law graduates practical skills and guidance in handling evidence, appropriately questioning the different parties and gleaning insight from actual past abuse cases, according to a

recent university news release.

“There is a need to learn canon law not only in the theoretical dimension, but also in its applications,” Jesuit Father Damián Astigueta, a canon law professor at the university and co-ordinator of the diploma, said in the news release.

The release said people working in abuse investigations and trials for the Church can struggle with questions, such as: What “clues” will help understand what the “reality” is when sorting through documents, emails, photographs and other evidence? How are facts to be reconstructed? How should presumed victims and the accused be questioned? And when is there the moral certainty of guilt or not?

Fr Damián (pictured) told *Catholic News Service* that “the problem has been that many who work on church trials do not have enough experience” in some legal proceedings, and those who do are more familiar with working on marriage cases than with criminal proceedings for abuse cases.

The course, which will be in Italian and runs from October

2021 to May 2022 at the Gregorian campus in Rome, is meant for anyone working in Church tribunals or with a bishop in a diocese, because it will cover not just criminal procedures, but also disciplinary proceedings and sanctions that are imposed without a trial, but that still require an in-depth understanding of people’s rights, Church norms and what constitutes a fair process, he said.

The course also will cover what to do with accusations and cases of economic or financial crimes and abuse, such as cases of unfair wages for employees, the mismanagement of Church funds or the illicit sale of Church assets, Fr Damián said.

But one thing that makes the course unique and unprecedented will be students’ access to documentation from past abuse cases, so they can gain insight from real-life examples and legal precedents that had been inaccessible due to the “pontifical secret.”

However, the “secret of office” and strict confidentiality continue to be tied to these cases, which is why the course will not be offered online, and students will need to

sign a confidentiality agreement, he said.

The lifting of the pontifical secret only applies to cases involving the abuse of a minor, leaving other cases still inaccessible, Fr Damián added. But it still opens a whole new way of learning and skills-building for a field that is complex and lacks what would be called “a body of jurisprudence” – that is, access to reasons for and analysis of decisions from prior cases, including facts and events related to a case, what relevant laws and norms were referred to and how were they interpreted.

Fr Damián, who has collaborated with the doctrinal congregation, including as a judge in ad hoc tribunals, said often he had proposed that officials of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith meet regularly with canon law professors teaching at Rome’s pontifical universities to discreetly discuss certain abuse cases “because this clearly would help our teaching” and, in turn, help students benefit from the congregation’s experience.

“But it could not be done and now, with this proposal (of a course), it is a way to create a forum with students and professors

to discuss cases,” he said. “When a place like this is created for discussion, everyone learns, both the professors and students, because there is always someone who sees something the others don’t or asks a question that makes you think and this is a huge help.”

The course also will include input from the university’s Centre for Child Protection “in order to see the tragedy of the abuse of minors from the psychological point of view,” he said.

This way, students will “not simply be people who apply the law, but who know how to understand what is the underlying problem of a case” of abuse, he said. They will also learn how to understand “what kind of abuser we may find” and how to adequately and appropriately question and listen to the accused and presumed victims in a way that gets needed facts without triggering or revictimising them, he said.

People working in canon law usually don’t have this kind of experience when it comes to canonical crimes, he said, resulting in poorly worded questions and not following up on what a person says.

A precise and professional line of questioning also helps in “trying to unmask a lie,” he added.

“There are many, many cases, the majority I would say, that are true (accounts of abuse), but, unfortunately, right now we are seeing an increase in which there are many false accusations,” he said, or sometimes the accused is found guilty without sufficient proof.

But the scenario that hurts the most, the priest said, are those cases in which the accused is truly guilty, but it could not be sufficiently proven.

“This is serious because everybody loses – the community, the offender, the victim, everyone – because the process was handled poorly,” he said.

The new course is meant to ensure the process “is carried out better in every way possible,” Fr Damián said, and to serve the whole Church because “with due process, everyone wins.”

An activist protests to demand justice against a Catholic priest accused of sexually abusing a minor, outside the courts in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on 22nd February. The Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome is offering a new diploma that will help canon lawyers working in abuse investigations and trials for the church. (Catholic News Service photo/ Jose Luis Gonzalez, Reuters)



■ Chris McDonnell's page is temporarily on hold for a few weeks due to health reasons.

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Ana Borovecki



JOURNEY IN FAITH

The Lord will guide our lives to resurrection

This year the time of Lent was important for me as a physician and a person of faith. During this time of pandemic, I embarked on a journey with Jesus the man, prophet and also God. I contemplated his life following the accounts in Scripture.

When everything in our world was in turmoil – when the pandemic entered its third wave, when all our human flaws were seen in the countless problems we were facing, in our doubts and uncertainties and squabbles regarding vaccination – I saw him being tempted in the desert as we were tempted in our lives.

However, he was victorious over the temptations because he displayed courage, humility and trust in God, a lesson so important in these times of pandemic. Letting Jesus be a part of our lives, knowing him as a good friend, experiencing his love in everything around us, deepens our faith. It enables us to meet him, to walk on the water as Peter tried but failed because of his lack of faith. We must put our trust in God.

I also saw Jesus being transfigured, announcing his future glory in eternity. I saw him raise Lazarus as he has raised our lives from the ashes and as he has raised the lives of many who have faced uncertainty, fear and a lack of faith during the past year.

Then, as we approached Easter, the greatest mystery of our faith,

Let us all hope that, in preparing for Pentecost, the spiritual gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, good counsel, fortitude, piety and the fear of the Lord will guide us and enlighten us.



Jesus' human existence was contracting before our eyes. Thirty-three years of a man's life were put to the test in three last days of his earthly existence, culminating in the three hours of agony on the cross.

In the passion of Jesus and his suffering on the cross, the mystery

of our own lives is revealed, precisely as was witnessed by many of those health care workers who cared and still care for the people dying in this pandemic. They saw the suffering of Christ in their fellow men and women and tried as he did in his last days and hours to display love and

understanding for the dying and patience for their fears and doubts.

We may feel sadness as we remember those moments, but we should not be lost in despair. We may feel anguish, but we are not without hope, because we know that after the suffering comes resurrection.

When all our hope seems to be lost, we are reminded that we have witnessed the suffering of a man who is also God, a risen Christ. And the act of his resurrection brings a new turn in our lives but also puts us to the test.

Can our everyday existence, which has been plagued so long with the darkness of the pandemic, really be transformed? Can we truly find through our faith in the risen Christ love and hope for our fellow men and women and continue protecting health as a personal and social value? Can his patience and humility teach us patience and humility in continuing our journey until the end of this pandemic?

The message of the risen Christ is clear: "I am the resurrection and the life." Let him transform your life, bringing the good news that love, hope and faith will be victorious.

In the end only the love of God will remain, and the path to this love goes through loving and understanding our fellow men and women. Let us all hope that, in preparing for Pentecost, the spiritual gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, good counsel, fortitude, piety and the fear of the Lord will guide us and enlighten us.

■ Ana Borovecki is a physician with the school of medicine at the University of Zagreb in Croatia and is a corresponding member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Laura Kelly Fannucci



FAITH AT HOME

Ripping the roof off the house

Since I was young, leafing through colourful pages in my children's Bible, I've loved the Gospel story where the friends lower the paralysed man through the roof of the home where Jesus was staying.

It's a story to seize the imagination: the crowd pressing close, the creativity of determined friends and the drama of a man being lowered on a stretcher to Jesus' feet.

But the part that catches me now – as a homeowner – is the roof. They ripped it off the house.

Whether they removed tiles (Lk 5:19) or opened a hole in straw and clay (Mk 2:4), they decided no barrier could keep their suffering friend from the hope of healing. Whether the roof could be repaired

was no concern. They needed to get their friend closer to Jesus now.

This Gospel story teaches an important truth about dismantling barriers that keep others from God. The friends open up the roof, making a way where there was no way. What roof might need to be ripped off the structures we have built, to help people get closer to Jesus?

Many of us spend heaps of time, energy and money on the maintenance of our homes. But do we stop and ask what in our lives might be keeping people from closer communion with Christ?

If this story feels uncomfortable like a pebble in the shoe or unsettling like the shaking of a firm foundation, this is a good

sign. The Gospel truth is tearing down our own defenses.

Jesus sees and affirms the faith of the roof-wrecking friends. He doesn't yell at them for making a hole or shame them for not using the door like everyone else. He heals their friend's paralysis and forgives their sins – even more than they had hoped for.

Who in our life might be longing to get closer to God – and might need us to rip off the roof of the way we've always done things? How could our homes become more welcoming to friend and stranger alike, with all their messy humanity?

Our first reaction might not always be the most compassionate or Christ-like. If my kids tore a hole in the roof of our house

(literally or metaphorically) I'd likely yell or scold first. But Jesus sees what matters most: the need of the suffering man and the faith of his friends. He does not worry about the externals.

He reminds us there is always room, beyond what we think possible.

Christians are called not to close ourselves off to the world but to let others inside our homes and holy places and help them come closer to God.

Servant of God Dorothy Day urged people to keep a "Christ room": a place where strangers would always be welcomed. Every time I read her words, I'm challenged to consider whether this is true for my own home or heart:

"Every house should have a Christ's room. The coat which hangs in your closet belongs to the poor. If your brother comes to you hungry and you say, Go be thou filled, what kind of hospitality is that? ...

"Of course husbands must be considered, and wives must be considered, and children. One must look after one's own family, it is true. But Fr Coady said once, 'We can all do 10 times as much as we think we can do'" (The Catholic Worker, 1947).

How can we be unafraid to rip off the roof and help others (and ourselves) to get closer to God, whatever it takes? How could the walls of our hearts become more porous, letting in all whom God asks us to love?

Fr Michael Collins



The de' Medici (Part 2)

The dominance of Florence during the Renaissance

The birth of twins to Piccarda Bueri and Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici on 10th April, 1389 ensured the continuation of the de' Medici family name. The boys were christened Cosimo and Damian in honour of two brothers, Arab physicians, who were martyred during the persecution of Christians under the emperor Diocletian at the turn of the fourth century. Damian died shortly his birth.

Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici sent his firstborn to school with the Camaldolese monks at Santa Maria degli Angeli, who taught him writing, geometry, Latin, Greek, French and German. When he graduated from the school, Giovanni employed the humanist scholar, Robert de' Rossi, as his son's tutor.

Despite exposure to classical literature, Giovanni was determined that his first born and his second surviving son, Lorenzo, born in 1395, would follow him into banking.

Giovanni repeatedly warned his sons against both extravagance and the dangers of drawing attention to the family, telling them of various members who had died in jealous strife.

While still a young man, Cosimo was dispatched to Rome to serve in the family bank where he met and married Contessina de' Bardi, the daughter of Giovanni de' Bardi, his father's partner in the Rome branch of the family.

The de' Bardi family, once extremely rich, had suffered from a series of unpaid loans.



Cosimo de' Medici. Portrait by Bronzino.

Nonetheless, the young bride brought with her a generous dowry and properties. As was the custom of the time, the marriage was arranged by the groom and bride's fathers, and bonds and money had been exchanged to ensure the stability of the union.

Cosimo and Contessina were never close but their marriage remained stable over four decades.

In 1410, Giovanni's client Cardinal Baldassare Cossa was elected at the Council of Pisa, taking the name John XXIII. The election was not valid as Gregory XII was still alive, claiming to be the true pope.

In 1414, Giovanni took Cosimo with him to the Council of Constance where some 600 bishops and theologians tried to resolve the schism. John XXIII was deposed and Gregory abdicated, leaving the Spaniard,

Benedict XIII the third and last claimant to the papal throne. In 1417, the cardinals at the council elected Cardinal Oddone Colonna who took the name Martin V, thus effectively ending the schism.

With the accession of Pope Martin, Cosimo moved to Rome where he remained for three years fostering new business at the papal court. He purchased a villa south of Rome at Tivoli close to the site of the Emperor Hadrian's country residence.

Shortly before he died on 20th February 1429, Giovanni summoned his two sons and entrusted the bank to them. His parting advice was to remain in the shadows, avoid irritating other prominent Florentine families and only render public service when pressed. The sons knew that their most pressing public enemy was the Albizzi family, with whom they soon came into conflict.

Rinaldo di Messer Maso, head of the Albizzi clan, urged Florence to engage in war against the nearby city state of Lucca, which had sided with Milan in a military offensive against Florence.

Cosimo was elected, despite his protestations of unworthiness, to the Council of Ten, an assembly which met to govern the city in the face of war. Lucca appealed to Milan for help and Duke Filippo Maria Visconti dispatched troops under the command of the condottiere Francesco Sforza.

Florence was unable to raise an adequate army, forcing the city council to pay off the Milanese with a bribe of 50,000 florins.



Scarcely had the Florentines signed the financial pledge than more Milanese troops arrived, this time led by the fearsome Niccolò Piccinino. When the Florentines tried to flood the Lucchese troops, the soldiers turned the diverted river Serchio on their enemy.

Cosimo sensed that the war would soon turn definitively against Florence and he had no desire to be part of Council of Ten when Lucca claimed the victory. As the Albizzi pushed Florence towards an uncertain war against Lucca, Cosimo resigned, magnanimously claiming that others should share the honour of serving. He then travelled to Verona to watch events unfold at a distance, calculating that the undoubted disaster about to flood upon Florence would also wash away his enemies.

From Verona, Cosimo sent numerous letters to his allies and relatives, assuring them of his patriotic concern for their welfare and his hopes that the city would be spared the violent ire of the Lucchese. He concluded his letter, assuring the recipients of his prayers and expressing hopes that the warring families would always bear the greater good of Florence in mind.

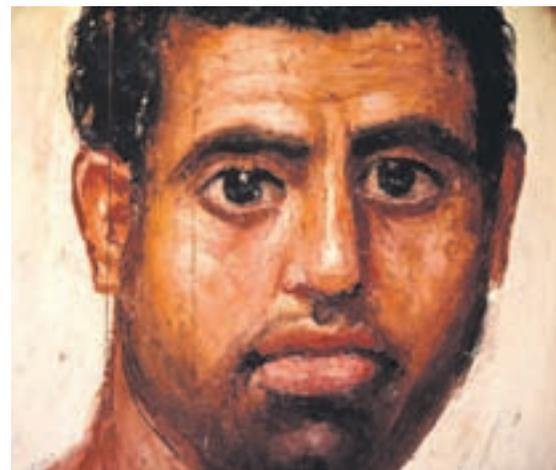
Cosimo underestimated the power of the gossipmongers whose tongues were lubricated by the money of the Albizzi.

As the conspiratorial whispers grew louder, Cosimo moved to his

villa outside Florence. He deposed chests of coin and jewellery in a variety of religious houses which had benefitted from his generosity. It was a prudent move, for in September 1433, he was summoned by the city fathers to the Palazzo della Signoria.

Cosimo met with *Gonfaloniere*, Bernardo Guadagni on 4th September. The de' Medici had many supporters and grateful clients who owed their financial security to the family. Cosimo knew that he could count on the influential support of a small band of articulate scholars who would influence the council. Guadagni told him to appear three days later to explain "certain voices" to the Signoria.

Cosimo returned to the palazzo on the morning of 7th September. But rather than enter the chamber, he was detained by the guard in a small cell overlooking the piazza. Two days later, the people were summoned to hear the pronouncement of the *Priori* (members of the government of Renaissance Florence between 1250 and 1532). As they gathered in the piazza, supporters and enemies of the de' Medici jostled towards the window where a judgement would soon be pronounced. A crowd of Albizzi supporters called for Cosimo's execution, shouting that he wanted to become the ruler of Florence. The claims unnerved the *Priori* who listened apprehensively to the



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The Palazzo Medici, also called the Palazzo Medici Riccardi after the later family that acquired and expanded it, is a Renaissance palace located in Florence, Italy. It is the seat of the Metropolitan City of Florence and a museum. The palace was designed by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo for Cosimo de' Medici, head of the Medici banking family, and was built between 1444 and 1484.

exorbitant interest on loans.

Cosimo's banking enterprise brought the family vast wealth, although he himself continued to live with an outward show of frugality. The external walls of the palazzo in which the family resided were marked by austere rustic panels. Eschewing fine silks and velvets, Cosimo dressed in plain linen and simple serge wool. His enemies grumbled that he ruled the city without ever speaking a word.

Few could make out Cosimo's largesse. It was difficult to understand if they had been bribed or simply been the objects of his open-handed generosity. Most chose the latter interpretation, although those who had been bribed with de' Medici coin may have commended themselves for discreetly pocketing the money while preserving their pride.

When plague broke out in Ferrara in 1439, Cosimo convinced Pope Eugenius IV to transfer the Ecumenical Council then in progress at Ferrara to Florence. Finances for the council were running low and Cosimo extended a loan to the pope.

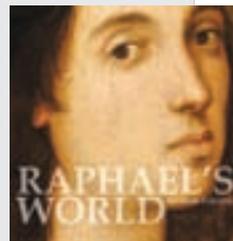
For weeks the city streets echoed with Greek as delegates from Constantinople discussed theological issues. The emperor John VIII Palaiologos attended with his colourfully dressed attendants.

After six months of theological wrangling, and with pressure from both pope and emperor to conclude business, the bishops and theologians agreed on a formulation to end the Schism of 1054.

On 6th July, Pope Eugenius promulgated a bull, *Laetentur Caeli*, 'Let the Heavens Rejoice' – celebrating the reunion of the Greeks. The promised unification never came about. The Byzantine empire was on the verge of collapse and the emperor wanted military and financial support from the West. The pope promised to send military troops, using money borrowed from the de' Medici bank. But the effort was to prove fruitless. Fifteen years later, in 1453 Constantinople would fall to Muslim forces, marking the end of the Roman Empire.

■ To be continued

Fr Michael Collins is a priest and author living in Dublin, Ireland, with a passion for history, arts, culture and travel writing. His most recent book is a short biography. **RAPHAEL'S WORLD**, published by Messenger Publications, was written in 2020 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the death of the High Renaissance painter, Raphael Sanzio da Urbino. The book is available to buy from www.messenger.ie Follow Fr Michael on Twitter: @frmikecollins



list of grievances.

The de' Medici hired a number of armed soldiers who took up position just outside the city. Their presence was enough to convince the *Priori* that Cosimo de' Medici should be banished, rather than executed. The sentence was commuted to an exile to last no less than five years during which he should not be allowed carry on his banking trade.

Cosimo left for Venice where he took up residence at the Benedictine abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore. In a show of magnanimous generosity, he paid for the restoration of the monastic library, claiming with a flourish that it was the least he could do for God who had obtained his liberty.

The city of Florence soon felt the absence of the Medici money, and the clients whose visits also enriched the local economy. Cosimo's luck changed when his faithful supporter, Niccolò di Cocco, was elected *Gonfaloniere*. The decree of banishment was rescinded and Cosimo was recalled to Florence.

According to the Florentine book seller, Vespasiano da Bisticci, Cosimo once asked Pope Eugenius IV how he could be absolved by God of his sins and yet retain his properties and riches. The pope proposed that the banker pay 10,000 florins to embellish the Convent of San Marco in Florence which had come under the care of

the Dominican friars in 1436. Eugenius, formerly the Cardinal Protector of the Dominican titular church of San Clemente in Rome, had forged a close relationship with the friars and often referred potential patrons to them. Cosimo followed the pope's advice and commissioned the architect Michelozzo de Bartolozzo to amplify and enlarge the convent, adding a new refectory and library in the classical style of ancient Rome.

Upon completion of the works, Cosimo asked the prior to inform the pope of his generosity, whereupon, some weeks later, he received a fulsome letter from Eugenius assuring him of God's pardon and blessings upon his wife and children. Cosimo placed the parchment in a chest in his library, perhaps wondering if he might redeem it at the gates of Paradise.

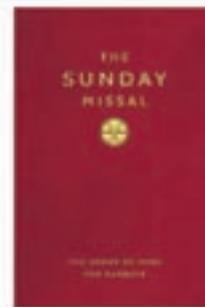
The friars continued to enjoy Cosimo's bounty, so much so that a popular saying maintained that "the friars of San Marco eat the bread of the Medici."

The family business continued to spread throughout northern Europe. Branches opened in London, Antwerp, Bruges, Lübeck, Cologne, Lyons, Geneva, Basel as well as in the Italian peninsular cities of Venice, Ancona, Bologna, Pisa, Venice and Naples. The diversification allowed the Medici banks trade in many currencies, accruing profit from exchange rates as well as

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■ David Torkington's page is temporarily on hold for a few weeks due to health reasons.

EVANGELISATION

New document from US bishop looks to inspire deeper love of the Eucharist

Joyce Coronel

Utilising the annual celebration of the Last Supper as a focal point, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix released a landmark document on 1st April on the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church.

Described by Bishop Olmsted as an "apostolic exhortation" and titled *Veneremur Cernui – Down in Adoration Falling*, the document explores the key history and theology as well as the beauty of the Eucharist.

The bishop called on priests and laity to embrace a deeper love for and understanding of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Catholic faith.

Holy Thursday, which commemorates the institution of the Eucharist, seemed the appropriate time for issuing the document, Bishop Olmsted said.

"I as your shepherd implore each of you to seek out Jesus in the Eucharist to be strengthened and renewed in your faith," he wrote.

A vivid personal narrative near the beginning of the document described the bishop's upbringing in an ardently Catholic family that prayed together daily.

From the reverence his parents showed and the witness of their pastor, he wrote, "a solid conviction about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist" was embedded in his heart.

In setting the stage for the document, the bishop acknowledged the "grave crisis of faith in the Eucharist" the Church is experiencing – from declining vocations to the priesthood, marriage and religious life to "abysmal Mass attendance" and attacks on the truths of the Catholic faith. He observed that "in such troubled waters, our greatest anchor in these storms is Christ himself, found in the holy Eucharist."

The three-part document takes its title from *Tantum Ergo*, the hymn composed by St Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century that illuminates the mystery of the Eucharist.

The first part explores the history of the Eucharist, laying groundwork by describing how Jesus brought the first Passover experienced by the Israelites to ultimate fulfilment at the Last Supper.

"At the Last Supper, which the Church commemorates today, Jesus took part in and forever transformed the Jewish Passover



Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix celebrates Mass at St Thomas Aquinas Parish in Avondale, Arizona, on 29th March.

(Catholic News Service photo/Billy Hardiman, Catholic Sun)

ritual meal," he explained.

Objections that Christ's words at the Last Supper ought to be understood as merely symbolic are addressed as well.

"Jesus meant exactly what he said: He is truly present in the Eucharist," the bishop wrote. "If Jesus had meant it as a symbol, he would not have repeated this message seven times in this dialogue. ... Despite the uproar caused by his teaching, Jesus did not soften his claim. On the contrary, he strengthened it."

Whenever the Mass is celebrated, Bishop Olmsted explained, "the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary that happened in the past is really made present to us at Mass, here and now."

The sacrificial love that Jesus showed by his self-offering on the cross, he continued, is an eternal sacrifice that transcends time and

is present to the faithful at every Mass throughout time.

In the second part, Bishop Olmsted clarified that the Eucharist is "truly the sacrament of Christ's love" and encourages the faithful "to go all out" in their response to "Jesus' most extravagant gift of himself."

In consuming the Eucharist, "a Christian ... is transformed into Christ" and is invited to accept "Jesus' invitation to walk the same path of sacrificial love," the document said.

Bread and wine themselves are powerful symbols of what sacrificial love entails; from the harvesting, thrashing, crushing, grinding, kneading and baking to the plucking and smashing of grapes, we see a foretelling of the agony Jesus suffered in his passion and death, it said.

"This is what true love really

means. Every time we come to the Eucharist, we are invited to imitate this sacrificial love of Christ," it added.

The third part contains practical suggestions for priests and laypeople regarding the Eucharist. Bishop Olmsted encouraged lay Catholics to attend daily Mass, spend time in eucharistic adoration and honour Sunday as the Lord's day, enumerating specific ways to accomplish such ideals.

He quoted the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to underscore the significance of the Sabbath.

"Sunday is a 'day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money,'" he wrote. "Sunday is the time to herald to the world that we are no longer slaves to sin and death. This day is meant to be a weekly gift from God to his people: a day of freedom, joy, charity and peace."

Bishop Olmsted also addressed his brother priests, encouraging them to make the Eucharist the source of their priestly fruitfulness, setting aside time before the Blessed Sacrament each morning before engaging in pastoral work, having a daily eucharistic Holy Hour and celebrating Mass each day.

He also urged them to "start or join a Jesus Caritas group to provide fraternal love and support ordered around Jesus' eucharistic love for his priests." A call to pastors to make eucharistic adoration more available and to organise yearly eucharistic processions at their parishes are other key elements of the document.

■ The full text of Bishop Olmsted's exhortation is available online at <https://dphx.org/veneremur-cernui>

OBITUARY

Influential Vatican II theologian, dies at 93

Anli Serfontein

Father Hans Küng, the prominent and sometimes controversial Swiss Catholic theologian, died peacefully in his sleep in the university town of Tübingen, Germany, where he had lived and lectured since 1960, said a spokesman for his Global Ethic Foundation. He was 93.

Fr Küng was one of the most outspoken Roman Catholic theologians and one of the sharpest critics of St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. He had worked with and studied with Pope Benedict, then-Father Joseph Ratzinger, in Tübingen in the 1960s.

Along with Fr Ratzinger, Fr Küng was one of the youngest theological experts advising bishops at the Second Vatican Council in 1962-65, but not long after the council he stirred controversy with his views on papal infallibility.

Because of this he had his *missio canonica*, the licence needed to teach Roman Catholic theology, withdrawn in 1979 and was no longer allowed to teach as a Catholic theologian at Catholic universities. Thereafter, he became professor of ecumenical theology in Tübingen, until his retirement in 1996. Fr Küng remained a Catholic priest.

In 2019, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of having his *mission canonica* withdrawn, Fr Küng told *KNA*, the German Catholic news agency, that after an exchange of letters with Pope Francis he saw himself as “quasi-informally” rehabilitated ecclesiastically. He spoke about a “handwritten, fraternal letter” and insisted that a public rehabilitation by the Church was “not so important” to him. What matters, he said, is that things move forward for the people and for the Church.

After his retirement in 2011, he co-founded the Global Ethic Foundation at the University of Tübingen, “not least because my years are numbered and I would like my life’s work to be continued after my death,” Fr Küng told *KNA* at the time. Behind the project was his conviction that, without peace among religions, there can be no peace among nations.

In the decades after Vatican II, he frequently criticised mandatory priestly celibacy, the loss of the Church’s credibility, the ban on women priests and the “Kremlin”-like Roman Curia. He expressed



Swiss-born Father Hans Küng, a prominent and sometimes controversial theologian who taught in Germany, died on 6th April, aged 93. He is pictured in 2015. (Catholic News Service photo/Harald Oppitz, KNA)

support for the demands of grassroots organisations calling for more democracy in the Church.

Yet in 2005, just a few months after Cardinal Ratzinger was elected pope, he and Fr Küng spent several hours together at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo. The papal spokesman at the time said Pope Benedict and Fr Küng “agreed that in the space of this meeting it made no sense to enter into an argument about the doctrinal questions remaining between Hans Küng and the magisterium of the Church.”

Instead, the spokesman continued, they focused on two topics of Fr Küng’s recent work: the possibility of developing a “global ethic” drawing from all religious traditions and the dialogue between Christian faith and science.

But on the fifth anniversary of Pope Benedict’s papacy, he published an open letter to bishops in several newspapers around the globe in which he listed the opportunities that the new pope missed, like long-term reconciliation with Jews, dialogue with Muslims and helping the people of Africa fight HIV. He said he was motivated by his “profound concern for our Church, which now finds itself in the worst credibility crisis since the Reformation.”

The criticism of Pope Benedict was nothing new. In 2009, Fr Küng criticised the pope as isolated and unable to take creative steps to deal with a series of internal Church questions, including priestly celibacy and birth control.

He published a book in 2011 and spoke of clergy sexual abuse,

saying the Catholic Church was seriously, possibly terminally ill, and only an honest diagnosis and radical therapy could cure it.

In *Can the Church Still Be Saved?* he argued that the malady of the Church went beyond sexual abuse scandals and included resistance to reform, its secrecy, lack of transparency and misogyny.

Speaking at a book launch in Munich in 2011, he said that at the time the Catholic Church in the United States had lost one-third of its membership. “The American Catholic Church never asked why,” he said. “Any other institution that has lost a third of its members would want to know why.”

He also said that at the time, 80 per cent of German bishops would welcome reforms.

He said it was not possible for Pope Benedict to reform. In an interview with *Ecumenical News International*, when asked why, Fr Küng recalled how, as a young student after World War II, he had travelled through Europe to explore, while the young pope “did not want to travel. He is, in essence, a person for medieval liturgy, theology and a medieval Church constitution.”

Referring to the celibacy debate that arose after the sexual abuse cases, Fr Küng said: “The Roman Catholic Church survived for the first thousand years without celibacy.” He remained strongly in favour of allowing priests and bishops to marry.

Fr Küng, who was born on 19th March, 1928, in Sursee, Switzerland, was a prolific writer and wrote several bestsellers that were translated into more than 30 languages.

Ellis Heasley

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

China: Church elder nears a month in criminal detention

Zhang Chunlei, an elder of Love (Ren’ai) Reformed Church in Guiyang in China’s Guizhou province, has now spent nearly a full month in detention after a police raid targeting a Christian gathering.

Elder Zhang (pictured) was detained on 15th March after he went to the police station to make inquiries about 10 Christians who had been arrested earlier that day. The arrests took place when local police and officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau stormed a privately rented property where a number of Christians had gathered.

Officers also raided his home, as well as those of several other Church members, and subsequently issued Elder Zhang and three others with penalties of administrative detention for ‘illegally operating as an association.’

While those detained alongside him were released on 20th March, reports later emerged that Elder Zhang had been criminally detained. He is now approaching a full month in detention, and his case provides an indicator of the ongoing crackdown against Christians in Guizhou province, and indeed across the country.

At least two house churches in Guizhou have been formally banned since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) official Shen Yiqin was promoted to Guizhou party chief at the end of 2020. Shen previously served as the secretary of the Guizhou Political and Legal Committee, during which time she oversaw an intense crackdown on the unregistered Living Stone Church involving the closure of various church premises and the arrest, detention and imprisonment of several church leaders and members.

Shen’s former colleague, Chen Min’er, was Guizhou party chief when Living Stone Church was targeted. Chen has since been moved to Chongqing to be the party chief there, where two other unregistered house churches have been shut down in 2021 so far.

Regular readers of this column will know that the experiences of Christians in Guizhou and Chongqing are by no means isolated. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) continues to receive reports of

Christians, along with members of other religion and belief communities across the country, facing widespread violations of their right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB).

Violations vary according to religion, location, ethnicity, attitudes of local officials, and other factors, and include the forced closure and demolition of places of worship, harassment, intrusive surveillance, arbitrary arrest, detention and imprisonment, enforced disappearance, and torture.

Those who defend the right to FoRB are also often targeted. Last month CSW learned that charges against human rights lawyer Chang Weiping have been changed from ‘inciting subversion’ to ‘subversion’.

Chang, who had represented clients in cases relating to FoRB and other human rights issues, has been in detention since October 2020, and was also previously detained in January 2020, during which time he alleges he was subjected to torture by the Chinese authorities. The recent move to change his charge is particularly concerning, as the charge of ‘subversion’ can carry punishments of up to a life sentence, compared to charges of ‘inciting subversion’ which could carry a sentence of approximately five years, depending on the act and level of involvement.

Please pray for the immediate and unconditional release of Elder Zhang Chunlei, Chang Weiping, and all those detained in China in connection with their religion, belief, or the defence of human rights. Pray also for an end to the targeting of religion and belief communities across the country, and for the international community to hold the CCP to account for its ongoing and egregious violations of human rights.



Fr Francis Marsden



CREDO

The New Testament: The best preserved book in history

“If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said?” Timothy Keller (American pastor and apologist)

In the face of growing numbers of “nones” – non-religious – in Britain, it is important that Christians realise how well grounded Christianity is in history. We perhaps speak too much about faith and not enough about fact, the hard facts of history, demonstrable by the normal techniques of historical research.

Christ is risen indeed! The Temple Establishment of Jerusalem, the High Priests and the Sanhedrin, never denied the empty tomb, although they energetically opposed any idea of Jesus’ Resurrection. The empty tomb was a mystery to them. How had unarmed disciples managed to overcome or hypnotise the Roman guards, move a massive boulder, and spirit away the corpse? And now these uneducated idiots were disturbing the whole city with talk of the Nazarene’s Resurrection!

Pilate himself was not interested in the fate of one more crucifixion victim. He crucified tens, if not hundreds of criminals each year. The Jewish religion with its interminable internal quarrels was simply an added nuisance in the dirty job of government. So long as the Jews paid their taxes, kept the peace, and did not sully his reputation with Caesar, he couldn’t have cared less about their religious disagreements.

Jerusalem was always a tinder box at Passover time. Fortunately the Passover of 29/30 AD had passed over without insurrection. Its possible rebel leader, the Nazarene, was dead, even if his corpse had mysteriously evaporated.

On the other hand, the Apostles spent the rest of their lives proclaiming the Resurrection, at great risk and cost to themselves. All but John met a martyr’s death. “I believe witnesses who get their throats cut,” commented Blaise Pascal.

Our faith in the Resurrection rests upon the testimony of the Apostles, as crystallised in the New Testament, a book which is

better recorded and attested to than any other document of the ancient world.

Let me explain by taking one of the most famous characters of classical Rome, Julius Caesar. Try to keep Shakespeare’s version out of your mind!

The key historical sources for Caesar are his own account of the Gallic Wars, hardly impartial because he was interested in proclaiming his own military successes, and the speeches of Cicero. Sallust’s *Bellum Catalinae* praises Caesar and Cato for preserving the republic from Catalinus’ ambition. Suetonius’ *De Vita Caesarum* gives biographies of the first twelve Emperors. Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* covers 48 personalities, Julius Caesar being one.

How well grounded are these sources for Julius Caesar? The earliest manuscript copy of his *De bello Gallico*, dates from 900 AD, nearly 1000 years after its composition. There are ten copies extant.

Cicero’s *Letters to Caesar* are lost, but three speeches before Caesar survive, plus some orations and a letter to Brutus. There are about 15 manuscripts ranging from AD 400 to 800, but most of his works are in medieval or early Renaissance copies. Only a single page of *On the Republic* comes from the fourth century.

A few fragments of Sallust survive from the second to fourth centuries, but the earliest complete scrolls were created in the ninth century. Because of his style, he was popularly used for teaching rhetoric and Latin in the Middle Ages. Our earliest copy of Suetonius comes from Tours in France, written about 820 AD. *Plutarch’s Lives* appear in six key manuscripts from the 10th and 11th centuries.

Classics scholars have constructed our understanding of Caesar around these sources, although the manuscripts mostly come a thousand years after his death.

Now compare and contrast: for Jesus Christ we have no autobiographical writings. We have the four Gospels, written 60-

100 AD in the tradition of classical biography but with a strong moral and faith commitment to the subject. *The Acts of the Apostles* record the continuation and preaching of Jesus’ work. The Epistles explore elements of Jesus’ teaching and apply it to contemporary issues in the early Christian communities. Revelation is an apocalyptic vision of the end times, so of little historical value.

The New Testament books are far better attested than their classical companions. Our earliest manuscripts appear within decades of their composition. The fragment p52 in Manchester’s Rylands Library is dated around AD 125 and carries a few verses of John 18. The *Bodmer Papyrus* p66 dated 150-200 AD has most of John’s Gospel. P75 carries Luke and John’s Gospels and dates to 175-225 AD. The *Chester Beatty Papyrus* (200 AD) in Dublin also contains major portions of the New Testament.

By the fourth century we come to the great Uncial Codices. *Codex Vaticanus* of 300-325 AD has almost the entire Bible, written in Greek capitals, on 759 leaves of vellum. *Codex Sinaiticus* of 350 is in the British Museum and contains most of the Old Testament and the complete New Testament. Up to 500 AD we also have the *Codices Alexandrinus* (British Museum), *Ephraemi* (Paris), *Bezae* (Cambridge), *Washingtonensis* and *Claromontanus*.

Up to the invention of the printing press in 1460 we have no less than 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. It is the best preserved book in history. Slight variations due to scribal miscopyings affect only one-two per cent of the verses, and none has any doctrinal import. The copying process was exceptionally careful.

Compare Homer’s *Iliad*, 643 copies, the earliest 400 years after its writing. *Plato* seven copies, with a 1,300 year time gap. *Livy*, 19 copies, after a 1000-year gap, *Pliny* seven copies, gap 750 years.

New Testament manuscripts are not only in Greek. Starting from 400 AD we have over 10,000 Latin *Vulgate* copies, 2000 *Ethiopic*,



Rylands Greek P 457, The St John Fragment. On display in the Rylands Gallery at John Rylands Library in Manchester.

Photo: RylandsImaging, Wikipedia

4,100 *Slavic*, 500 *Armenian*, 350 *Syriac*, 75 *Arabic* etc. A total of over 19,000 manuscripts. Nothing in the ancient world can compare with this.

The early Fathers quote the New Testament over 36,000 times. Even had the original been lost, it could almost all have been reassembled from Patristic quotations. As a historical document, the New Testament is absolutely rock solid.

Further evidence for Jesus and the early Christians comes from hostile pagan writers: the Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, Thallus, Phlegon and a Stoic philosopher, Mara bar-Serapion. The Jewish historian Josephus and the Talmud are also important if unsympathetic witnesses.



Page from *Codex Vaticanus*.

For example, the Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata wrote in the late second century: “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time... that they are all brothers from the moment they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage and live after his laws.”

We must leave for another occasion the internal criteria which support the genuineness of the New Testament accounts. Nevertheless: “The benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.” (Aristotle)

If one were to reject the New Testament, then to be consistent, one must also reject almost everything we know about ancient Greece and Rome and their characters: Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Augustus, Nero and Caligula, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Archimedes and Pythagoras. The disciplines of ancient history and classics, of Greek philosophy and Roman law, would need to be scrapped, and replaced by a cloud of unknowing. The New Testament is the most certain document we have from the ancient world, bar none.



‘Why did you fear, Oh you of little faith?’

18th April, 2021 -
Third Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 3:13-15

Peter blames his Jewish listeners for the death of Jesus, then calls them to repentance.

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

Responsorial: from Psalm 4

R./: Lord, let your face shine on us.

*When I call, answer me,
O my just God,
you who relieve me
when I am in distress;
have pity on me, and
hear my prayer! (R./)*

*Know that the Lord does
wonders for his faithful one;
the Lord will hear me
when I call upon him.*

*O Lord, let the light of your
countenance shine upon us!
You put gladness
into my heart. (R./)*

*As soon as I lie down,
I fall peacefully asleep,
for you alone, O Lord,
bring security to my dwelling. (R./)*

2nd Reading: 1 John 2:1-5

Even Christians are prone to sin. But if we sin, forgiveness is available to us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. Whoever says: “I have come to know him,” but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him.

Gospel: Luke 24:35-48

The risen Jesus appears to his apostles, for he is real and not a ghost.

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in

“...look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”



The appearance of Jesus to the disciples as depicted in a fresco in the Basilica di Sant'Andrea in Mantua, Italy.

the breaking of the bread. While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them: “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them: “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them: “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them: “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from

Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Repent and be forgiven

“You see how it is written that the Christ would suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations.” This prediction or mandate of the risen Christ is echoed by Peter in the first reading: “Now you must repent and turn to God, that your sins may be wiped out.” In John’s epistle too, we are urged to stop sinning, and if we have sinned the sacrifice of Christ can take our sins away. People who live without thought of God or of His will, may silence their consciences with the promise of repenting some future day. But is it possible that a change of heart can happen in a single day? Can we our character and habits possibly improve by an act of our will?

Some may be inclined to wonder: “Why all the fuss if everyone is a sinner, and if forgiveness is easily got?” To this, St John has a sober warning: “We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments.” Knowing God has a moral dimension and has

almost nothing to do with intellectual understanding. To know God means to have a close and personal relationship with our Maker and Father. This happens most surely if we live in imitation of Christ, or put on Christ, as St Paul says. Being Christians gives us the great privilege of a relationship with Jesus; but it also makes great demands on us, for we cannot be like Christ unless we aim to become pure in heart.

There was a poor and simple man who regularly visited a certain church, and there pray on his knees before a large crucifix. When he was asked why his lips never moved while praying before the cross he said: “I just look at him, and he looks at me.” Words had given way to contemplation. Those who look long enough at Christ, will finally become like Christ, seeing him as he really is.

Empowered with trust

This is one of the many post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, except that here more than elsewhere, he is at pains to convince them that he is real, that all has happened as foretold in scripture, and was part of a divine plan.

It’s an extraordinary fact that one of our basic attitudes towards

God is one of fear. The first time fear is mentioned in the Bible is when Adam and Eve sinned. We are told that they hid, because they were afraid. From then on, most contacts with God begin with the words fear not; be not afraid. This was even said to Mary, as it was to the shepherds. It is reckoned that Jesus used this expression several dozen times throughout the gospels. When the apostles cried Out to him in the storm, he replied: “Why did you fear, Oh you of little faith?” Today’s gospel speaks of the apostles being terribly frightened. This seems strange, as the reason for the fear is the one person who had always been their best friend. This fear certainly shows up the limitations of our humanity. It was always a put-down, when I was a child, to be told that I was afraid of my shadow.

Imagine Jesus pleading with them to believe him. He invites them to touch him, to give him something to eat, to examine his hands and his feet. Human nature is so fragile, and so fickle. I’m not blaming anyone here. Obviously, this is the first time the apostles ever came across a situation like this. We might think that seeing Lazarus, or the daughter of Jairus, or the young man in Naim, getting up and walking after seeming to be dead, should have prepared them for this moment. They had known Jesus on a personal basis, and had felt at home in his company. This time things were different. He had broken free of the constraints of the human body, and there was a unique presence in him that they had never seen before.

We cannot grasp the utter transformation they felt, when someone they knew and loved was so utterly transformed, and now has an unearthly aura about him. While they still doubted, they were filled with joy and wonder as Jesus spoke to them about the promises of scripture, and how he had fulfilled them. Then he sent them to continue what he had begun. In the following line, that is not included in today’s gospel, he promises that he will send them the Spirit and they will have a whole new power, when they will share in the new power into which he has now entered.

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Questions and answers... with Fr Francis Doyle

Does the Church still observe Rogation Days?

Q. Years ago, our parish in a farming community celebrated Rogation Days. If I remember correctly, these were the three days before Ascension Thursday, which often came during or right after planting time.

At Mass we would pray for good weather and a bountiful harvest. The priest would even visit the farms and bless the fields. I'm no longer in farming, but I was wondering: Does the Church still observe Rogation Days?

A. The marking of Rogation Days, set aside to bless the fields, has a long history in the Church. Rooted in the Latin verb meaning 'to ask' and traditionally tied to the spring planting, the days were first instituted in the fifth century by a bishop in France whose diocese had suffered greatly from pestilence and other natural disorders. By the ninth century, the observance had been extended to the universal Church.

In 1969, when the Church's liturgical calendar was revised, the celebration of Rogation Days became optional, at the discretion of national conferences of bishops – primarily due to the fact that the Western world had become increasingly industrialised, with the primary focus no longer on agriculture and the changing of the seasons.

In some rural communities, though, the celebration continues to be observed, particularly in certain parts of Europe, and a recent posting by the Bishop of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in the United States, suggested that this might be an opportune time to revive the Rogation Days, given the plight of so many farmers who are struggling to make a living.

Q. What does the Church teach regarding sex in marriage during later adult years? My wife insists that since we are no longer capable of having children (Abraham and Sarah we are not), sex is something that should no longer be an important part of our marriage.

But I believe that intimacy is important at any age for a couple to keep a strong and healthy marriage intact. Obviously, much depends on the agreement of both spouses, but could you enlighten me on the Church's view?

A. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks in No. 2363 of the 'twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life'. When the procreative aspect is no longer possible (you're right: Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90 would have to be considered as



Rogation procession, Hungary, 2017. The Rogation Days are 25th April, called 'Major', and the three days before the feast of the Ascension, called 'Minor'.

outliers), the unitive aspect remains.

Sexual intimacy can be an important part of that loving union, even into old age. The Church recognises this, endorses it and encourages it. True, the nature of that intimacy and its frequency depend on the agreement of the couple; often, a frank sharing of feelings with a physician or counsellor (especially one who shares your moral outlook) can help in this regard.

Q. I know I speak for many, many concerned grandparents who put their children through Catholic school in the 1980s and 1990s, foolishly trusting that the schools were still truly Catholic, as they were when we attended them.

I am not naive; I remember when we lost the wonderful, devoted nuns who taught me and my friends. But now we agonise over our precious grandchildren, who are not being baptised because their parents were never really taught the faith. I feel terrible guilt now that I didn't go over their religion texts thoroughly.

My question is this. I desperately want my precious eight-month-old grandson to be baptised. If I ask a priest to do so, I'll probably be turned down. Can I baptise him myself, or would that baptism be valid only if there were danger of imminent death? (God forbid.)

A. Like you, I regret that the days are long gone when we had large numbers of women religious

staffing our parish schools. I, though, am still a strong believer in the value of Catholic education. From direct experience, I am familiar with Catholic schools today, which are staffed by faith-filled laypeople, using texts that are theologically solid and turning out students who are academically proficient and spiritually sound.

As for your grandson, I, too, am bothered that he is not yet baptised, but you should not baptise him yourself. First of all, for a baptism to be done licitly (i.e., lawfully) in a non-emergency situation, it is required by the *Code of Canon Law*, in No. 868, that at least one parent (or the person responsible for raising the child) must consent and that there be a well-founded hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.

Technically, if you were to perform the baptism yourself it would be 'valid' – i.e., it really happened, provided you had the right intention. But it would violate Church law. Even if it were lawful for you to perform the baptism, I would advise against it.

If the child's parents were to find out, they could be legitimately resentful, which would drive them further from the faith and make it less likely that your grandson would ever be raised a Catholic.

My guess is that you are worried that, should the child die without being baptised, he could never enter heaven. You should lay that worry to rest. The Church has never defined limbo as dogma, and the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* suggests in No. 1261 that we can confidently

entrust an unbaptised infant to the mercy of the Lord, knowing that God wants all people to be saved and that Jesus said: "Let the children come to me."

Surely, though, the ideal is that the child be baptised soon and raised a Catholic, so you should look for an appropriate opportunity (perhaps you've done this already) to explain to the parents how much your faith means to you, how it has helped to guide your life and how deeply you desire that your grandson might have that same gift.

Don't discount, either, the importance of prayer. For decades, Monica – with daily prayers and many tears – pleaded with God to guide her son Augustine to the Catholic faith, and he became, in the end, one of our greatest saints.

Q. At the church I attend, the priest has been telling the congregation (or having the lector tell us) that people do not fulfil their Sunday obligation if they leave Mass before the final blessing. Is there any documentation to validate that?

I understand that priests don't like parishioners to leave before Mass is completed, but this sort of threat does not sit well with me. I remember years ago when we were told that we had to hear the scriptural readings in order for Mass to 'count', but aren't such rules technicalities that miss the point of why we participate in the Eucharist?

A. A half-century ago, before the Second Vatican Council, canonists and moral theologians

would sometimes try to answer your question with technical precision: They spoke of three principal parts of the Mass – the offertory, the consecration and the (priest's) Communion – and said that if you missed any one of those parts, you could not 'count' the Mass.

Since the liturgical renewal, with its emphasis on the overall unity of the Mass as an act of worship, no one takes such a minimalist approach. The current *Code of Canon Law* (No. 1247) says simply: 'On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass'. (Note that it doesn't say 'part' or 'certain parts' of the Mass.)

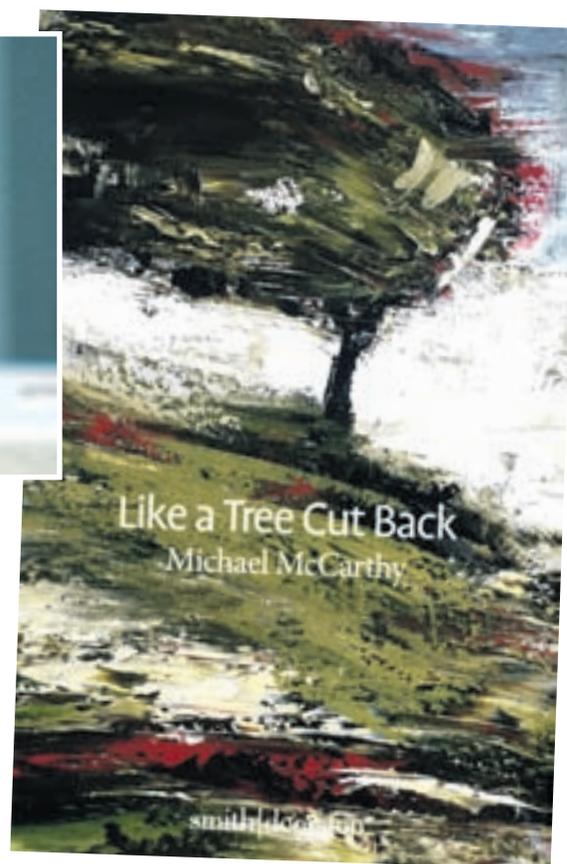
By answering your question directly, I might give the (mis)impression that some parts of the Mass are unimportant. But I'll take that risk by saying that I think one who leaves just before the final blessing has substantially fulfilled the Sunday obligation.

My question, though, would be, "Why would you want to?" Not only are you depriving yourself of the priest's blessing, but you are insulting the faith community with whom you have joined in a public act of worship.

You have also taken away the opportunity to thank God properly for the gift of his son. I remember being taught that 'the priest is the last to enter church and the first to leave'. That strikes me still as good advice.

■ Please note that Fr Doyle cannot answer readers' personal questions through this column.

A final flourish from the pen of one of Ireland's finest poets



Michael Winterbottom reviews the last published work of celebrated Irish priest-cum poet, Fr Michael McCarthy

I met Fr Michael McCarthy only once, when I had the good fortune and pleasure to be seated at the same table at a luncheon shortly before his death.

I knew nothing of him before that afternoon but the meeting remained in my memory long after the event.

He was gentle, erudite, witty and, of course, a great raconteur but what left an indelible mark on my mind was a deep spirituality that shone through him.

Michael McCarthy was a poet as well as a priest. He grew up on a farm in West Cork, Ireland. His first poetry collection, *Birds' Nests and Other Poems* (Bradshaw Books, 2003) won the Patrick Kavanagh Award and was followed by children's books, which have been translated into 17 languages. *At the Races* (SmithDoorstop, 2009) was the overall winner of the 2008 Book & Pamphlet Competition, chosen by Michael Longley, while *The Healing Station* (SmithDoorstop, 2015) was selected as a Book of the Year by Hilary Mantel in the *Guardian*.

Michael worked as a priest in North Yorkshire where he died in July 2018. *The Bright Room* and

other poems (SmithDoorstop, 2019), brought together poems written over the last decade of his life.

But now his last and much awaited book *Like a Tree Cut Back* has been published posthumously.

Like a Tree Cut Back actually combines two biographies in one: it interweaves the life of Michael McCarthy and the history of Carlow College, St Patrick's, in Ireland.

The College motto, *Rescissa vegetior assurgit* – 'that which is cut back burgeons forth more abundantly' – encapsulates essential features of both.

The book opens with 'the accident' that cut short the young life of Michael's brother, James, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of his family members. Overshadowing Michael's early years in 1950s Ireland, it is also the tragedy that renders sweeter and all the more delightful the innocent pleasures of rural childhood, a 'Growing up Among Ferns'.

James's death remains a backdrop in 'Beyond Childhood', through the triumphs, trials and tomfoolery of Michael's young adulthood and his studies at Carlow College.

Later on, after Michael has been ordained a Catholic priest, the childhood trauma continues to make its presence felt, manifesting itself in a sense of inferiority and deep-rooted anxiety offset only by acute powers of perception and an eloquent humour that set him apart from the rest.

In 1990s Chicago, Michael finally turns to confront the unspent grief of the little boy he was. He finds, as

he does so, a gift for poetry and new access to the healing power of the written word.

Before meeting his own history backwards, surrendering to the moment and embracing his younger self in 'A Tree Cut Back', Michael reflects on the 200-year history of Carlow College in 'A Chink of Light'. He merges historical materials archived in the college's Keefe Library with new poems generated by the encounters and conversations that enriched the period he spent as poet-in-residence at his alma mater in 2017.

Mining the biography of one of its first students, Fr John Joseph Therry, he orchestrates a chorus of voices that testify to the horrors of penal colonies in 19th-century Australia and Van Diemen's Land. First published in Rev. Eris M. O'Brien's book, *Life and Letters of Archpriest John Joseph Therry, Founder of the Catholic Church in Australia* (1922), Therry's correspondence becomes the raw materials for 'found poems', as Michael calls them, which give voice to convicts and to others who sought, in the hours before death, the 'consolation of religion'.

These poems bear witness, too, to the threat to authority posed by figures like Therry: they show colonial secretaries and governors conspiring against him and his support for the poor and downtrodden. Noteworthy, here, is the alignment not so much of Irish versus English or of Catholic versus Protestant in the penal colony, but of powerless versus powerful. Noteworthy, too, is the ab-

Like a Tree Cut Back... the last work in the stellar literary career of Fr Michael McCarthy (above)

sence of voices from those positioned even lower down that social scale, the 'Aboriginal youth', represented here only as Therry's prospective charges or as the 'Black Native' that one of the convicts confesses to having murdered. Offering a messier picture than we are perhaps used to seeing in our history books, 'A Chink of Light' brings to life the desperate struggles that pitted the 19th-century poor against the ruling classes and their administrators across the colonial globe.

Michael's diagnosis with incurable pancreatic cancer in April 2018 threatened an untimely truncation of *Like a Tree Cut Back*. Fortunately, as he wrote in an unpublished letter to Fr Conn Ó Maoldomhnaigh, he was blessed in his last months of life, not only with 'a calm spirit and a deep gratitude for the life I have been given', but also with 'a burst of creative energy'.

He thought of this as the upside to a terminal diagnosis and wished for 'the necessary time and the creative clarity' to 'pull it off'. Michael found the time: he rested his pen on a

complete typescript on Friday, 8th July, just three days before he died. The creative clarity left little for those he asked to look after the project – Peter and Ann Sansom, Richard Scholar and his niece Ita McCartym – to do.

'My Journey of Conversion', the last part of the book, offers an eloquent retrospective on the entire process of Michael's turning to poetry and evolving spirituality.

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A joy to work with... and be around

Peter Sansom, Co-Director of The Poetry Business and Fr Michael's editor, pays his own tribute as the poet's last work is published

It was a privilege and nothing short of a joy to publish Michael McCarthy. He had great insight and warmth and was quick to notice and to understand — which means that his poems are often moving and sometimes profound — but also just as often they make you smile and sometimes laugh out loud.

His poems can be angry too at social injustice, but their key note is compassion and caring. He cared about people and about language, he was a natural story-teller but with a lyric gift and grace.

A poem like 'Cold Hill Pond' speaks for all time about a twist of road he always took too fast, with its body of water whose 'depth is upwards. The mirror it makes is what matters'.

That is from his first collection with us; I remember he signed the contract actually after the book was published, in a pub in the Lake District in fact after a mesmerising

launch reading at Wordsworth's Dove Cottage.

Ann (Sansom) and I had both worked with Michael for some months on that collection; he enjoyed being edited and was quick to grasp what needed doing, the small changes here and there, and crucially was always willing to revise more fully, to get to the truth of the experience in the poem.

One Saturday when a later book came out, he rang us to say he'd just fallen off his chair reading *The Guardian* because Hilary Mantel had chosen him as her Book of the Year.

Fr Michael was a great friend to us as well as one of our most cherished writers. He led the service when our eldest son died, and we felt supported by him especially always from that time.

His memoir, *Like a Tree Cut Back*, has at its centre a number of short essays, about growing up on a rural farm in Co Cork, and about his time studying for the priesthood; then about his early time in his work as a parish priest.

His clear-sighted and often touching warmth comes through, lighting up the writing. It was a pleasure to work with him.

His poems can be angry too at social injustice, but their key note is compassion and caring. He cared about people and about language, he was a natural story-teller but with a lyric gift and grace.

Feature

History questions give us faith to believe in Jesus and his disciples

CATHOLIC VIEW

Dr Lucy Russell



How do we come to belief? Do we believe because our parents believe? It was important to the Gospel writers that there were rational witnesses to the resurrection. As it says in the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles on Easter Sunday, 'You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth... now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead.'

Reports of the shroud, an angel and an empty tomb are followed by resurrection accounts where Jesus walks among the living and eats and drinks with his friends. These accounts are presented by trusted witnesses. But do we trust them?

I teach history at St Edmund's Catholic School in Dover. The purpose of teaching history is to give students a sense of ownership of so-



ciety and provide perspective. It's about where we have been and where we are now. One of the things I most enjoy about my subject is encouraging students to think like a historian and develop their critical thinking skills. On one of the display boards in my classroom are examples

of questions we should ask of the past: How did people in the past view their world? What were the causes of past events? What were the effects? How did past decisions and actions affect future choices? What has changed? What has stayed the same? How does the past help us

make sense of the present?

Just before the start of Holy Week, Year 7 were learning about the medieval Church and Thomas Becket. It led to some wonderful questions. A couple of years ago, my Cambridge graduate cousin expressed surprise that Jesus existed as a figure in history. Her first-class honours weren't awarded for theology. I gently pointed out to her that Jesus is different to the person of Father Christmas. The choice of whether to believe Jesus is the Son of God was hers to make, but the fact Jesus exists as a figure in history is just that. Since then, I have taken every opportunity to make this clear in my own teaching. So, when one of my Year 7s piped up, "Miss, I am a Catholic and I do believe in God, but do you mean that we know Jesus was actually a real person who existed?", I was happy to say, "yes".

Jesus was born in Palestine towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great, around 4 BC. He lived in a highly structured and class-conscious society. One of the most exciting things about Jesus is that he turns history inside out because he teaches as he lives. His teaching style is egalitarian, which is one of the reasons he attracts so much attention. Jesus doesn't simply teach with words – he backs this up with his actions. He spends time with people who are despised (tax collectors), touches people who are considered to be unclean (lepers) and invites children to come and sit with him after the disciples have tried to chase them away. Jesus is a great teacher. We know that Jesus lived and died.

The more interesting question for me as a historian is whether there is historical evidence that he died and lived. It's interesting to apply some of those questions from my classroom wall to the events that took place between Good Friday and

Pentecost, a period in time when everything changed.

Lent last year was a very real journey. Last Easter I understood why the disciples were afraid and hiding. All of us were afraid and hiding behind closed doors. For the first time, I felt I knew something of how Jesus' friends must have felt: in fear for their lives. Terrified. Hopeless. Bereaved. The apostles thought that if they were caught, they too would be crucified. It was easy to identify with their feeling of devastation.

What I couldn't reconcile was how just 60 days later, Jesus' friends had done a 360 degree turn and were out on the streets telling everyone and anyone that Jesus was alive. In history we look at cause and effect. So, what had happened?

Like my Year 7 student, I am a Catholic. I believe in God and I believe Jesus is the Son of God. I am also confident Jesus existed as a person in history. But until last year I hadn't thought about the events of Pentecost as a historian.

The Apostles, still in Jerusalem, gathered in a safe house for the feast of Pentecost. Suddenly, 'there came from Heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:2-4).

We don't have any historical evidence or accounts from inside the room. But what we do have is this dramatic development: around this time the disciples lost their fear. They came out of hiding and reported – in public – seeing Jesus, risen from the dead. They preached about Jesus as the risen Christ. When accused by the Romans, they stood their ground. When convicted, they embraced their martyrdom.

The scholar Reza Aslan writes that, 'One after another of those who claimed to have witnessed the risen Jesus went to their own gruesome death refusing to recount their testimony.'

What would have made me stop hiding, stop being afraid, and go out on to the streets and preach about seeing the risen Christ? The only explanation for such a dramatic turnaround is that it is true. Arthur Conan Doyle wrote some brilliant words for Sherlock Holmes: 'Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.'

How do we come to belief? I've come to belief because it makes sense.

Dr Lucy Russell teaches at St Edmund's Catholic School in Dover and is editor of *Journeying with Jesus: Personal Reflections on the Stations of the Cross and Resurrection* (Bloomsbury).

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To foster inclusiveness, Nigerian nuns mainstream pupils with disabilities

Valentine Iwenwanne

On a sunny afternoon, the Rev. Gideon Oyabugbe, a minister at a local Baptist church, walked into St Vincent's Centre for Inclusive Education to pick up James, his eight-year-old son. James has autism spectrum disorder, a condition that impairs communication and social interaction.

Rev. Gideon had never heard about ASD until James was diagnosed with it as a baby.

"We noticed it from birth as he was growing up; he has not been able to speak, and sometimes he seems to hear, more like he has a partial hearing challenge. So we took him to the hospital, and the doctor said it could be a problem from the brain that is interpreting sounds, asking us to give him some time as he grows," Rev. Gideon told me.

So as James grew, his parents expected him to speak, but he could not. They knew the problem was as a result of his inability to hear, which also affects his speaking, and thought about getting him a hearing aid, but their family doctor advised against it.

Nigeria has few schools for children with disabilities, so many do

(right) David Polycarp works with students in sign language at the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul school of inclusive education in Uyo, Nigeria. Nigeria offers few schools for children with disabilities.

(below) Sr Scholastica Achinkumbur, school administrator, poses in her office on 9th March. (Catholic News Service photos/Valentine Iwenwanne)



not attend and face stigma and rejection. The country has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, and absence of official data to determine the percentage of those with learning disabilities makes everything difficult, including establishing educational plans.

Part of the challenges children with special needs encounter stems from lack of awareness of learning disabilities coupled with teachers and parents who expect quick and miraculous solutions.

In a bid to address the challenge, a school of inclusive education run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul ensures that children with disabilities enjoy full access to education with no exclusion on grounds of disability, language, gender, ethnicity or any other barrier.

Sisters Scholastica Achinkumbur and Victoria George currently teach at the centre and specialise in special education. Twenty teachers and nine auxiliary staff deliver inclusive education to more than 100 students.

"The essence of establishing this school is to help children without disability coexist and break the myths and stigma surrounding their conditions," Sr Scholastica, school

administrator, told me.

She said children with disabilities also have the rights to live and exist in society without any limit to their basic rights, including rights to education. "So, if the children without disability are not exposed to inclusion, they may not be able to relate properly with those with disabilities," Sr Scholastica told me.

In each of the classes, the sisters combine the pupils. This, Sr Scholastica said, will enable those with disabilities to learn faster and eliminate discrimination and communication barriers. The nuns and their staff teach the pupils total communication, which is the use of both words and sign language to speak.

"It's not enough to talk with fingers alone," said Sr Scholastica, noting all students are taught to write and to communicate in sign language. If all students "are not exposed to inclusions, they may not be able to relate properly with those with disabilities."

"But because we have started in that manner with them, you'd see that they mix up very well, you won't even see the difference, because they have been taught how to live with them."

To meet the needs of the pupils and ensure that those who are slow learners can keep up, the sisters put two teachers in each class together with student teachers from local universities.

Staffer Precious Timothy uses the Montessori pattern of teaching and playing to help the children learn quickly.

"When you are teaching a child, don't just be the child's teacher alone, be the child's friend, the mum; with that, he'd get so close to you and you achieve what you want. So, for them to learn quickly, you'd need patience." She told me it requires a lot of time and patience when teaching children numbers, "you can take them for a whole week; you emphasise on it each day, as we're playing, they are learning numbers, shapes and colours."

Children in primary 3, 4 and other classes have a unique way of greeting parents and visitors in sign language when they enter their classes: The class monitor beats the desk to get everybody's attention, including those with hearing impairment, to enable them stand and greet visitors simultaneously.

The school also runs a programme to help parents to communicate with

Nigeria has few schools for children with disabilities, so many do not attend and face stigma and rejection. The country has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, and absence of official data to determine the percentage of those with learning disabilities makes everything difficult, including establishing educational plans.

the children at home. Rev. Gideon rarely attends this programme, so the school gave him a book to help him learn, and he has downloaded some visuals on the internet.

"Sometimes when (James) signs, I go on the internet to find out what he is saying and how to respond," Rev. Gideon told me. "And most times, his younger sister helps with interpretation," because she, too, attends the inclusive school.



Universe weekly special

Around the Parishes

CATHOLIC NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM ACROSS THE UK AND IRELAND

“Remembering all those in our parishes who have lost their lives during the pandemic”



OBITUARY

Rev Dwight Hayter RIP

A requiem mass was celebrated last week at Brentwood Cathedral for the Rev Dwight Hayter who died at the end of February.

Dwight was ordained as a permanent deacon at the cathedral in May



1992 and served the Diocese and Cathedral parish of Brentwood for many years before his retirement.

He was a well-known, respected and popular figure both in the cathedral parish and wider community. Please remember him in your prayers and especially his sons who grieve his loss at this time.

Heavenly Father, since the time of the Apostles you have inspired the Church to commission certain members to assist in a special way in the pastoral mission of Christ.

Bless Dwight Hayter, who faithfully and humbly served your Church and who has now gone to rest with you, in the hope of rising again. May he rest in peace.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen May the Lord reward him for his ministry of service and faithfulness. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.

Of your charity please pray for his soul.



After the Easter Sunday Family Service at St George's Southwark creme eggs were handed out to the young (and young at heart) ... Photo: Mazur/Catholic Bishops Conference, Westminster

Finchley Foodbank continues tackling food poverty one year into pandemic

Fr Peter Michael Scott, Parish Priest at St Mary's, East Finchley and Chair of Finchley Foodbank

One year on from the start of the pandemic, Finchley Foodbank would like to thank everyone who has given donations in the past pandemic year.

Finchley Foodbank was founded in 2013 and is based at St Mary's Catholic Church in East Finchley. We are independent, seeking to help those suffering from food poverty in the London borough of Barnet.

Before the pandemic, our average client numbers were just above 50 but since March last year and the first lockdown, that number has

risen dramatically. During the first week of the lockdown, we supported 107 clients. One year on, we are regularly supporting over 400 clients.

We are fortunate to be able to house the foodbank within St Mary's Parish Hall and to use the grounds around the church to distribute food and provisions. We are also blessed with excellent volunteers who live within the East Finchley neighbourhood. The local community has been generous in its support. In addition, we have been particularly helped by Caritas Westminster and Foodbank Aid. The project has also been supported by the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund.

As an independent foodbank, Finchley Foodbank can tailor some of our food distribution to clients' needs. For instance, we are able to offer Halal products alongside meat, fish and vegetarian food. We also provide durable masks and a weekly newsletter informing clients of the latest developments in the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our projected aim for this year is to organise a Finchley Foodbank helpline, empowering clients to explore their benefit options or to access educational courses.

As with every foodbank, we rely on donations. If you would like to help, please visit our Finchley Foodbank Facebook page or visit the Finchley Foodbank website.



Light of Easter celebrated with Church newcomers

Five catechumens and two candidates became full members of the Church as Bishop Alan Hopes celebrated the Easter Vigil at St John's Cathedral in Norwich.

In his homily Bishop Alan reflected on our journey from chaos and darkness into the new creation and the light of Easter. “The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is the unique event on which the whole of our history turns,” said the bishop. “That is why we celebrate this Easter light with as much joy and thanksgiving as we can muster.”

He spoke of the powerful symbols which we use to express the mystery in which we believe.

“First, darkness. We begin our vigil in the dark. Like the chaos and darkness which existed before God created the universe. Like the darkness of the tomb in which Jesus had been buried.

“Second, light. The new fire was kindled, and from the Easter candle,

the symbol of the risen Lord, all the candles were lit, and the whole cathedral is ablaze with light. It is as if God had said, all over again, as at the moment of creation, ‘Let there be light.’

“Third, water. We are made part of the new creation, undergoing a new birth through the waters of baptism. We die to our old ways of life and are born again as His children and made members of His body, the Church.”

Unlike the apostles, the Bishop said, we have no need to go and look at the empty tomb.

“For as we gather around His altar, we know that He will be truly present among us again in all His risen glory. As we receive this heavenly food for our earthly pilgrimage, His risen and glorified life fills our lives and heaven is with us long before we are in heaven.”

“The Lord is risen,” Bishop Alan concluded. “He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”



Bishop Alan baptises one of the new members

To see your parish featured in these pages, contact Michael Winterbottom on 07949 987771 or via michael.winterbottom@thecatholicuniverse.com

Around the Parishes

Aquinas altar restored for 800th anniversary of English Dominicans

Very Rev. Fr Lawrence Lew OP of Our Lady of the Rosary and St Dominic, Haverstock Hill, reports on a stunning restoration project that has brought new life to a historic altar just in time for a landmark occasion

The altar of Saint Thomas Aquinas, at the top of the south aisle of Our Lady of the Rosary and St Dominic, sits right up against the great organ. It was donated by Mrs Monselle in memory of her four sons, all of whom became priests. As the brass plaque to the left of the altar indicates, three of her sons (two of whom were Dominicans) died tragically young.

Heartbroken, Mrs Monselle erected this beautiful altar, a veritable shrine, dedicated to St Thomas Aquinas, to whom her sons must have had a great devotion. St Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican friar and priest, the pre-eminent theologian and philosopher of the Catholic Church, and declared the Common Doctor of the Church, who died on 7th March 1274. His feast day is still celebrated on this date in the Dominican rite calendar, although the Universal Church now observes his feast day on 28th January, the anniversary of the translation of his relics to Toulouse where they are enshrined in the medieval Dominican church (L'eglise des Jacobins).

This year, the English Dominican Province gives thanks to God for its 800th Jubilee, for the first Dominican friars arrived in England in 1221, sent by St Dominic himself. They established their first priory in Oxford on 15th of August 1221.

In commemoration of this historic event, and to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the province, the friars at St Dominic's, London decided to restore and, for the first time, gild the altar of St Thomas Aquinas. The plan to gild the altar, as it was a new addition to the interior of this Grade II* listed building, had to be submitted to the Historic Churches Commission for consent.

The friars noted that the three altars in the Lady Chapel, which have similar stonework and gables to the St Thomas altar, are all gilded, and felt it would be fitting to thus complete the gilding of this set of four altars, which are the only altars in the church not dedicated to one of the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary; the other fifteen altars in the church, including the High Altar, are effectively Rosary altars.

Happily, approval was granted by the HCC, and they were asked to consider replacing the finial that surmounted the central gable but which had gone missing. The re-



Pictured: Main photo, the gilded altar. Below, inset, how it looked before the restoration project. Far right, the 'missing' finial was happily found and restored. Below right, the brass plaque commemorating Mrs Monselle's original generous donation in memory of her sons. Photos: Fr Lawrence Lew OP



stor was prepared to re-create this, using a historic photograph to help him replicate the original finial.

As work commenced and the altar was cleaned, the original finial, although broken in parts, was found on top of the altar. This saved time and money so the finial was repaired and then gilded and put back in its place, where it beautifully crowns

the entire work.

The Aquinas Altar was completed and beautifully gilded just in time for the saint's *dies natalis*, his heavenly birthday, on 7th March. The gold highlights include the carving of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, the edges of the pages of his books, the sun emblem on St Thomas' chest, and the stars on the

predella and around him. The sun and stars are inspired by this verse of scripture: 'They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the heavens: and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity.' (Daniel 12:3)

Funding for this project came from generous donations, including one from members of the Priestly Fraternity of St Dominic. This was particularly fitting, given the intention of the original donor of this altar.

A Mass will be celebrated for all those who donated towards this restoration.

We trust that Mrs Monselle will be pleased with this work, and we ask St Thomas Aquinas to pray for her and her sons, and for the English Dominican Province.

May the Lord grant us many vocations, fervent lovers of divine wisdom and preachers of truth like St Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor.

For more on this story see Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary and St Dominic's Parish
- <https://rosaryshrine.co.uk/>
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Education

Fellowship honour for vice-principal

Professor Malcolm Todd, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Leeds Trinity University, has been awarded Principal Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA).

The honour recognises a sustained record of effective strategic leadership in academic practice and academic development as a key contribution to high quality student learning.

Fellowship also demonstrates a personal and institutional commitment to professionalism in teaching and learning in higher education, and recognises professionals influencing this across the wider UK university sector as well as internationally. There are only around 1,300 other Principal Fellows of the HEA around the world.

Professor Todd said: "I am delighted to be awarded Principal Fellowship and represent Leeds Trinity.

"As a university, we are committed to excellence in teaching and learning, enhancing the student experience and developing highly employable graduates. I look forward to engaging further and contributing to this community."

Professor Charles Egbu, Vice-Chancellor at Leeds Trinity, added: "We are incredibly proud that Professor Todd has been recognised with this prestigious award. The Fellowship highlights Malcolm's commitment and contribution to student learning, as well as strategic leadership in teaching. It is a fantastic achievement for him and great news for the university."



Fellowship demonstrates Professor Todd's commitment to excellence in teaching

It's all go at Good Shepherd as pupils visit local parks

A Catholic school in Coventry has been named winner of a council active schools challenge which encouraged pupils to visit their local parks.

Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, part of the Romero Catholic Academy, was one of five schools in the city to win the Go Parks: Active School Challenge.

The free-to-enter challenge was organised by Coventry City Council in partnership with Coventry East and West School Games Organisers, who host sport and physical activity competitions across Coventry's schools.

The school finished first in its group after working tirelessly throughout February to complete challenges set by Coventry City Council.

Pupils and their families visited parks across Coventry and shared their visits on social media – while also scanning the Go Park QR code when arriving at their park of choice.

Good Shepherd earned a total of 21,345 points and contributed to the overall city total of 385,905 points.

The school has been awarded with a £250 prize after winning the competition and the money will be invested in outdoor play and sports equipment – with the goal of encouraging pupils to keep active and enjoy the outdoors.

Principal Andrew McConville said: "It has been brilliant for the school to be involved in the Go Parks challenge and the response received from pupils and parents has been phenomenal.

"In a time where we spend so much time in front of a screen the challenge has encouraged everyone to head outside, get some fresh air and explore their local parks.

"The challenge has seen our pupils



and their families heading out and taking in the benefits of visiting a park, which has great physical well-being and mental health benefits.

"The challenge has had real social benefits too, with pupils able to share their park visits digitally and keep in touch with their classmates at the

same time. I know everyone at the school thoroughly enjoyed the day-to-day challenges set by Coventry City Council and made a real effort to complete the tasks.

"We will be using the prize to further support outdoor physical activity at our school and plan to keep the mo-

mentum generated from the challenge going over the coming months."

Pictured above with the award are, from left to right, back: Andrew McConville, Declan Connelly (Coventry City Council) and Michael Kirby. Front – Emily and Jaden.

St Mark's Primary is gold standard for languages

A languages programme has awarded St Mark's Primary School in Ipswich Gold Accreditation for its teaching.

Claire Jackson, headteacher of St Mark's, said she was very pleased to receive the accreditation, along with language teacher Carole Starling and her pupils.

Dr Dixon from Linguamarque said: "Congratulations to you all – you truly deserve this.

"The teaching of languages at St Mark's is really outstanding, and well done to your amazing pupils for all their hard work."

The programme has been developed to help primary schools meet the statutory requirements for primary languages teaching. The programme is used throughout the UK, and has currently been adopted in four counties in East Anglia.



Egg-stravagant fundraiser at Barlborough Hall



Barlborough Hall School pupils hosted an Easter 'egg-travaganza' which raised more than £500 for local charities.

Pupils donated 165 Easter eggs and everyone in school was invited to buy raffle tickets to win them back. More than 1,000 tickets were sold and each year group had a first, second and third place winner.

"This was a fantastic Easter fundraiser which involved our whole school community," said Barlborough Hall headteacher Karen Keeton. "We raised an amazing £560 for the Good Shepherd Fund which will be used to help children in the Hallam diocese."

"We also had eggs left over which have been divided up between local charities including the New Hope Food Bank in Killamarsh."

Mrs Keeton said it was wonderful to be able to do something as a school family at the end of a term which began with remote learning.

She added: "This was a wonderful initiative which encompasses the very essence of what we are about – shaping young people to become young men and women for others."

To see your Catholic school or college featured in *The Catholic Universe*, send your stories in to **Michael Winterbottom** at michael.winterbottom@thecatholicuniverse.com or call him on 07949 987771

Pupils rise to the challenge of walking to Jerusalem

As part of its 2021 Lent Challenge, pupils from St John Lloyd Primary School in Cardiff walked all the way to Jerusalem.

The journey – all 3,827 miles to the Holy Land – wasn't done in one go, obviously, but completed a bit at a time, with the pupils counting up their steps during the week, seeing how far they had travelled together on what became a virtual pilgrimage.

The idea came from teacher Miss Chapman who broke the journey down into small stages, setting the children goals each week. Initially she thought the children would only get as far as Canterbury in the first week but they walked so well and collected so many steps that they walked all the way to Ghent in Belgium, where they virtually visited the cathedral of St Bavo.

The next week's collection of foot-steps took the group all the way to Milan in Italy, where they learned about St Ambrose and Pope Paul VI, were both bishops there.

The journey continued through Italy, passing Assisi where we remembered St Francis, and Rome where we prayed for Pope Francis.

Another week of walking took the pupils across the water, (only they had to go by boat as they sensibly reasoned they couldn't walk on water!), arriving in Trikaala, Greece, where they discovered some of the very earliest Christian churches.

By the following week the intrepid explorers had collectively reached Istanbul in Turkey where Pope John XXIII worked for many years in the Cathedral of St Anthony of Padua.

The last leg of the journey took the children through Syria and Lebanon, finally reaching Jerusalem in time for Palm Sunday.

After completing their task the children were asked why they had picked Jerusalem as their final goal. Perhaps the answer to that comes from David in Year Six who wrote: 'Jerusalem is a Holy City and it is the most holy place in the world for Christians.'

'Jesus lived much of his ministry in



Jerusalem and rode into the city on a donkey while the people waved palms at him. Jesus held the Last Supper in Jerusalem. He was crucified on a cross on a hill called Golgotha and rose from the dead three days later. As a school community we are very proud to spiritually walk to Jerusalem and challenge ourselves to get as close to Jesus as we can.'

The children were so excited each week to see their journey on the map on the school's Twitter page (@SJL-CARDIFF) and find pictures of themselves out walking and to learn about the people and places on the way.

During the journey the school was also reminded of how many special things Jesus did for us all while he was in Jerusalem. You can find these pictures on the school's Twitter page.

To celebrate their arrival in Jerusalem the whole school took part in aversion of the Jerusalem dance which you can watch on You Tube (search You Tube St John Lloyd-Jerusalem)

On the last day of term the children donated some of their pocket money so that we could actually get into the city – this was so that they were thinking of other people. The 'entry tax' to finally be allowed in to Jerusalem raised over £220 for Cafod's water appeal. Well done, Team SJL!



Jack with Mr Mobberley and his prized Walsall shirt

Walsall FC treat is a 'well done' to Jack

Jack Patterson, a Year 7 pupil at St Francis of Assisi Catholic College in Aldridge and parishioner at Christ the King in Kingstanding, Birmingham, received a special surprise last week when he was rewarded for the brilliant work he has done in his lessons, both at school last term and at home during lockdown.

Jack's English teacher Mr Mobberley arranged for him to receive a person-

alised shirt and signed ball and programme courtesy of Walsall Football Club.

In addition to this, later in the year Jack has been invited to have a meeting with some of the players and lead out the teams at a match at The Banks's Stadium and act as a ball boy and mascot.

This gift was chosen as Jack is a big football fan and promising football

player himself, both for the school and his club Holly Lane.

Jack received his award in school from headteacher Mr Salkeld and was absolutely delighted.

Mr Salkeld described him as a credit to St Francis of Assisi and himself and really does demonstrate all the values the school stands for.

Well done Jack and keep up the amazing work.

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Hospital chaplains display fearless faith

Among the many heroes that have emerged from hospitals and other care facilities during the pandemic, Catholic hospital chaplains are especially inspirational. Whether virtually or in person, they have persevered to bring spiritual care and sacramental support to critically ill and dying Covid-19 patients while also providing a pastoral presence to families and health care workers at the heart of the crisis.

Maureen Pratt reports

In the spring of 2020, when New York City hospitals were beginning to fill with critically ill patients, Paulist Father Paul Rospond could look through the window of his room in the rectory at St Paul the Apostle Church and see the ambulances lined up in front of the emergency room at Mount Sinai West Hospital – but he couldn't go inside and minister.

"It was overwhelming," says Fr Paul. "There were so many ambulances, against the unusual quiet of the city. But for several months during the pandemic, we couldn't go into the hospital at all."

Calls for prayer helped to reach across the ambulance-clogged street, and then the hospital started setting up Zoom calls with Fr Paul, other chaplains, dying patients and their families. The calls were not a completely satisfactory substitute.

"Touch and anointing are part of the sacrament of the sick," says Fr Paul. "Also, when a family is physically together, they can touch, talk, comfort each other as they cry."

Still, virtual connections had benefits, especially with multinational families.

"It was possible to unite a number of family members," says Fr Paul, "whether they were here or in Latin America. Waiting for the nurse to set up the call was a good opportunity to start a conversation among themselves as a substitute for family gatherings at the deathbed."

In California, the pandemic's arrival shattered regular chaplain ministry.

"It's the closest thing I've seen to a mass casualty event," says Conventual Franciscan Father Peter Mallin, senior priest chaplain at Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Centre in Torrance, California.

Hospital lockdowns precluded administering sacraments and created a multilayered sense of social and spiritual isolation.

"It's not just social distancing," says Fr Peter, "but the isolation people feel not only in the hospital, but at home."

Fr Peter used technology to bring together patients, families and staff and said Mass by closed-circuit television, even at the height of the pandemic, offering the prayer for spiritual communion as a way for distanced faithful to participate in Eucharist.

"Here in the hospital, where people's spiritual needs are intertwined with their health needs, particularly with COVID, there's a level of frus-

tration in trying to meet their needs." But, Fr Peter says: "The Lord is not inhibited or frustrated by the sense of our isolation. God is still in that room."

Besides chaplains' efforts to minister electronically, some dioceses sought ways for priests to personally minister to the dying. Among these was the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Father Matt O'Donnell, pastor at St Columbanus Catholic Church in Chicago, says: "Very early on hospitals were shutting down to visitors. Last March, Cardinal (Blase J.) Cupich recognised it would be important for people who were in danger of death from COVID to receive the anointing of the sick."

Justin Lombardo, chief human resource officer of the Archdiocese of Chicago and co-lead of the archdiocesan Covid-19 task force, says: "Across the US, priests were hungry to continue ministry."

An archdiocesan task force studied how this could be done safely and in late March 2020, 24 younger priests, including Fr Matt, 34, answered the call for volunteers. Training included PPE protocols and how to administer the sacraments.

Often, patients were intubated and unable to speak.

Fr Matt says: "It was humbling for me to be able to pray with them, blessing them with the sign of the cross on their forehead and hands, even to know if they weren't able to respond that they were able to feel my presence there. Other rooms, they're awake and very grateful."

"I saw one person in a nursing home. I asked her if she wanted to receive Communion and she immediately started to cry. After all those months (of not being able to receive), she just cried. As a priest, it's a reminder of what we do."

Fr Matt says he will be "mindful of the trauma of the number of people who passed away in a short amount of time" and believes parishes can help everyone heal.

"Creating spaces for people to talk about what they've felt and process what they've been through," says Fr Matt, "that's definitely a thing parishes can do something about."

Chaplain Bill Simpson of Shawnee, Oklahoma, USA, prays with a patient undergoing testing for coronavirus at SSM Health St Anthony Hospital on 23rd April, 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic showed us the heroes in our midst and hospital chaplains rank high on that list. (CNS photo/Nick Oxford, Reuters)



How to deal with rivalry among siblings

With a bit of gentle encouragement, it's possible to create harmony in the household. Here are some steps to help handle sibling rivalry between children.

HEALTH

It is the dream of so many people, probably including you, to have a large family. After all, based on what we see from other large families and media that depict the lives of large families, it just seems so fun. Your children are always playing with each other, and you can also join in on all the merriment. A house full of children and adoring parents just seems like a version of heaven. That is, until your children start fighting with each other.

While it's true that having more than one child is exciting, it's also true that it can be frustrating. No matter what you do, your children will fight, maybe over some toy or an issue that's slightly more complex.

And when this happens often, you just feel tired and lost because as a parent, you are not sure what to do to stop this from happening. To help you on this matter, here are some tips on how to handle rivalry between your children.

Teach kids how to handle conflict in a positive manner

First things first, you have to acknowledge that your children will fight each other from time to time, and you need to prepare them by teaching them how to handle conflict positively and constructively. If you do this, there's a strong chance that your children will be better at managing disagreements with each other.

They will also carry this behaviour as they grow up, so they must know how to deal with conflict early on.

Try to figure out why your kids fight

To solve a recurring problem once and for all, you must find the root of that problem. The same can be said for sibling rivalries.

When your children fight often, you should ask yourself:

- Why are they fighting?
- Are they fighting over something trivial? Or is there something more to it?
- Is one of your children jealous of



the other?

- Do they feel like they compete against each other, so they can't get along often?

If the answer is yes:

- Why is one of your children jealous?
 - Why do they feel like they compete against each other?
- Finding answers to these questions involves you actually getting to know your children.
- What are their individual temperaments?

Try to talk with your children and listen to all sides.

This is the only way to get to the root of the problem.

Try not to get involved too often

This seems like an odd tip, but it's a valid one. You see, when you step in every time your children argue, you actually risk creating other problems. Your children may start expecting your help and wait for you to swoop into the rescue instead of learning to work out the problems on their own. You also risk inadver-

tently making it appear to one child that the other child is your favourite child, which will also cause more resentment. Likewise, the rescued child may also feel that they can get away with anything because they feel like they're your favourite.

"To solve a recurring problem once and for all, you must find the root of that problem."

For this reason, it's encouraged that your children resolve the crisis on their own. Only step in when the altercation has become physical, and if you do step in, try to resolve problems with your children, not for them.

Patience fosters healthy relationships

As parents, you hope that your children will get along fine with each other, so it's frustrating when they fight sometimes. Luckily, sibling rivalry is something that you can deal with, and as you get better at teaching your children how to manage disagreements, you'll be able to foster a healthy relationship with them. It might take time and patience, but it will be worth it.

Hay Fever: Top tips for dealing with allergies

These recommended tips will keep your child's allergies to a minimum...

HEALTH

New research has discovered that 30% of children who suffer with hay fever believe it makes everyday life difficult – and nearly a quarter of parents maintain it makes their lives a misery.

Sleep problems

Physically, hay fever, or seasonal allergic rhinitis, causes sneezing, as well as an itchy, blocked, or runny nose, and often affects the eyes as well, causing itching, inflammation, and streaming. The survey by Allergy UK also revealed that 43 per cent of children with hay fever find it difficult to sleep which could, inevitably,

have a detrimental effect on their schoolwork. And more than one in 10 don't even like leaving the house when they are suffering.

"Hay fever is often perceived as a trivial condition, but the reality is far different," says Lindsey McManus, Allergy UK. "Seasonal allergic rhinitis brings with it a great deal of suffering for months at a time.

"At Allergy UK we want to raise awareness of the true impact hay fever has on children's lives."

Tips for keeping allergies to a minimum

- Keep pets away from your child as they can carry pollen in their fur.
- Antihistamines have a proven track record, so get your GP or pharmacist's advice as the modern one-



a-day, non-drowsy kind are suitable for children over the age of 12.

- Monitor pollen forecasts and take extra precautions when the pollen count is high.
- If you do drive children anywhere, keep car windows closed and the air intake on re-circulate.
- Invest in a pair of wraparound sunglasses for your child to keep allergens out of their eyes.
- Help your child get a good night's sleep by keeping bedroom windows and doors closed overnight.
- Make sure they wash their hair and change their clothes before they go into their bedroom
- Use an air purifier in your child's bedroom
- Apply an effective pollen barrier around the edge of each nostril to trap or block pollens.



Resist the urge to pop that next pimple

Is popping spots really that bad? It might feel satisfying but it could be doing more harm than good to our skin.

BEAUTY

The world splits in half fairly equally: those of us who can't help but get stuck in when we've got a spot and it needs a squeeze, and the rest who can't think of anything worse. Popping your spots may feel like fun and the moment of the 'pop' may even give you a little thrill, but what's the real deal with pimple popping, and could you be doing



more harm than good when you go in for the kill?

How bad is it really when you pop a spot?

The feeling of a pimple or spot rising to the surface can be a feeling of joy for people who just love to get to grips with their own spots and anyone who loves this kind of thing is also bound to enjoy the escapades of the famous Dr Pimple Popper on YouTube! And you may think popping spots on your face or anywhere else on your body will lead to a clearer complexion, but in reality, you're likely to end up with more spots spreading, scarring or even a serious infection. The only person who should pop your spots is a professional or they should be treated appropriately with the right skincare regime and treatment.

What actually happens when you go in for the pop?

When you squeeze the problem spot, you're tearing the surface of your skin and this gives the pus a



Spots can be treated by a professional to avoid the risk of scarring or serious infection

chance to escape. Once you've torn the skin, it becomes a wound and in time it may heal, but it may also scar. What's more, the pus that's just escaped can even contain bacteria which causes more spots, so it's the

"You may think popping spots on your face will lead to a clearer complexion, but in reality, you're likely to end up with more spots spreading."

last thing you want spreading on your skin.

Why do I enjoy popping pimples so much?

There is a genuine reason people can truly become addicted to zapping their zits, and it's all about dopamine. A lot of people find real satisfaction in the moment of the 'pop' and it comes with an immediate sensation of both pleasure and release.

This is all down to dopamine, the happy hormone, and it is very easy to want to keep popping to get that hit of dopamine but finding an alternative is probably better for your overall skin health and to avoid scarring.

Turn to the doctor when you feel the need to squeeze

Next time you feel the urge to go in for a squeeze, consider the impact on your skin or go one better and work to avoid the spots popping up in the first place. Putting in place an effective skincare routine is your first step and then the spots aren't going to be there to be popped. If it all gets too much you can always switch on an episode of everyone's favourite spot specialist, Dr Sandra Lee, otherwise known as Dr Pimple Popper. Rather than getting stuck into your own skin, you can feast on the latest of Dr P's patients and keep your habit at bay. If you're not a popper then everything we've said here probably seems a little strange but for a lot of you, we know you're thinking about that next pimple and the satisfying moment of the pop.

Expert tips for a perfect beard

Top tips for the perfect facial hair from Dafydd Rhys.

Beards have been all the rage for some time now and are showing no signs of going away! If you are the proud owner of a beard, or are planning to try the look out, here we've shared some top tips for the perfect beard from TV hair expert Dafydd Rhys.

Beard trimmers for shape

If you've made a decision to grow a beard, the most important thing is to be confident in your decision, don't let other people's personal opinions change yours. It will take approximately four weeks for your beard to start to take shape. It's important to refrain from attempting to shape your beard before four weeks, even if you are only going for a goatee or handlebars, as this may result in you shaving off a little too much. Once you have grown



It will take four weeks for your beard to take shape.

your beard to a reasonable thickness and length, it is time to start the exciting part - shaping. The best place to start is the neckline; using any good high street neck trimmer and start at the neckline at your desired perimeter. Do not shape the beard at the cheekbones as this will create a cartoon-like effect. Most good beard trimmers will have a grade setting which will become your best friend. Start short at the beard line and work your way up to thicker or longer areas.

Don't forget the shampoo

Some shampoos will include exfoliating beads, such as Aveda Men Exfoliating Shampoo, and this will help to get rid of dead skin cells stuck around the root of the hair which may cause irritation. If you do not normally use a conditioner, it may be worth applying a small amount on a daily basis to your beard as the texture may be coarser than that of your hair. Finally, try to set yourself a six to eight-week target. This should stop you getting tempted to shave it off and will give your beard a chance to develop to its full potential.

Find the perfect brow shape for you

Gone are the thin lines of the past few years - thicker, bushier brows are in.

BEAUTY

Eyebrows have been a thing for a while now and getting the perfect brow is something of an art. But what's the best way to embrace this look?

Recent years have signalled the return of the eyebrow with the beauty pages and catwalks debuting thicker, bushier looks which hark back to the 1980s before 'barely there' brows swept a trimmed and waxed world in the 1990s. We're talking full-on Brooke Shields bushy as sported recently by icon-in-the-making Anne Hathaway, the latest Hollywood star to herald a whole

new look. But whatever your brow desire the important thing is to keep them groomed, colour them well and choose the right brow shape and shaping method for you.

Here's how to get the best brows:

Start with colour

Your eyebrows are, generally speaking, a couple of shades darker than your hair so pay attention to the best colour for you. If your brows are lighter, often a problem for strawberry blondes, you may wish to have your brows salon dyed where a professional can advise you on the best colour to suit.



Start a shade or two darker, working up to your darkest colour over the course of a couple of months to avoid mistakes and to bring in the change naturally. Brow colour fades more quickly than hair dye as our faces are more regularly washed and wetted so make regular appointments and use a good eyebrow pencil in between dyes.

Define your shape

Like in clothing or make up, not everyone suits every new eyebrow trend. However, you can nod to a new look by adapting your brow to suit. The best shape for your eyebrow follows the natural shape you were born with, whether that's a rounded arch or an Angelina Jolie point. Follow the line of your brow, taking hair only from underneath and between, never above the eyebrow, adapting colour or

thickness to follow fashions. For example you may choose to let your brows bush out for a few weeks before removing less hair than usual from below the brow line or to darken your dye for the newer strong eyebrow.

Method: As with bikini line and leg hair removal, the way you choose to shape your eyebrows is a very personal thing. Most people choose to pluck at home which allows regular adjustments and is totally free once you've purchased good tweezers. Always pluck in good direct light and, for the ideal shape for you, visit a salon every few months to keep up a line before tidying at home. Waxing and threading are both good salon options, less time consuming than plucking. Both can be painful with the pull back of the wax strip truly yelp-inducing and threading fairly eye watering too. Take a painkiller about fifteen minutes before your appointment to minimise pain.

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Spruce up your space: Decorating your city flat on a budget

Stuck with the generic look of your flat? These tips will add some personality to make your rented flat feel like home.

HOME

City-living is great. After all, they're the centre of so many vital activities, economic, social and cultural, so a lot of people dream of living in a city at least once in their lifetime to bask in all of that energy and beauty.

Unfortunately, there are some challenges that come with city living.

Firstly, the cost of living there is exponentially more expensive than anywhere else, so renting a place to

live in will take a lot of your money.

Secondly, since cities are overcrowded places, flats are generally small and limited, despite their high prices.

And thirdly, if you do rent a flat in a city, it's likely that your landlord won't let you do extravagant decorations, such as changing the colours of the walls, floors, and cabinets.

So, more often than not, you're stuck with the generic and dull look of your flat. Luckily, despite all these limitations, there is a way to transform a rental space into your abode

without breaking the bank and doing a lot of labour. Here are some tips on decorating your city flat while on a budget.

Throw rugs are your friend

Aside from making your flat a tad bit more colourful, throw rugs also protect the floor and add warmth and pattern to an otherwise bland space. So, use throw rugs to your heart's content.

Consider wall art

You can start by hanging pictures in frames, and, eventually, you can buy a cheap painting from a store. If you have a knack for painting yourself, you can make your own artwork. Wall decals are also a great and inexpensive way to add some colour to your dull walls. Curtains add both colour and texture to the space, and mirrors greatly enhance a place because they make a small area, like within your flat, brighter and bigger. All these are affordable and readily available to you.

Add additional lighting

Flats already come with lighting fixtures, but these may not be enough to brighten the place. If this is the case, then you should add extra lighting fixtures.

When it comes to lighting, it's a



Brighten up a ground floor flat with bold and contrasting prints

good idea to think in layers from top to bottom. In other words, there should be fixtures overhead, as well as floor uplighting and accent lighting.

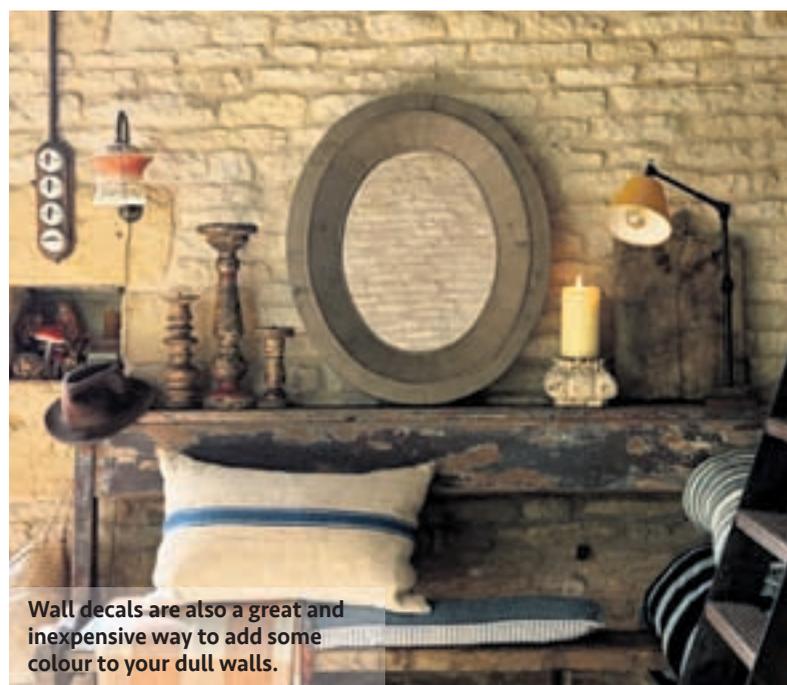
Adding all these extra lights will definitely make your apartment brighter and cosier.

Add accessories

Accessories can be throw pillows, potteries, photo frames, and vintage items. You can even add a houseplant if you want to. These items

generally won't cost a lot of money, and you can find them everywhere - in supermarkets and online stores such as Etsy.

A city is an undeniably beautiful place to live, but unfortunately, it's also expensive. Luckily, there is a way to decorate your city flat. You can add just a few throw rugs, throw pillows and photo frames, and your place will look a lot better already. So, make a list of what you want to add to your space, and find these items in your nearest stores. You'll be glad that you did.



Wall decals are also a great and inexpensive way to add some colour to your dull walls.

Green ideas for an eco-friendly home office

Here are just some of the benefits of considering a sustainable work space

HOME

For thousands of us, working from home has become a staple of our lives, and while many of us make do with working from our beds or kitchen table, some have a proper home office. But if you do, how environmentally friendly is it? When you're at home, it's easier to make changes as you're the boss of the space. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Be energy efficient

One of the easiest ways to be energy efficient when working from home is to switch to a green en-

ergy supplier. Other things to consider are LED or energy-saving light bulbs in the room, and thick curtains over the window for extra insulation - come evening when you close them they can help trap the warmth inside better. Laptops, computer monitors, printers, and any other electronic devices will all have options to switch to an energy-saving mode so make sure to put them on hibernate when you're not using them.

Maximize the natural light

According to scientists, working near a sunlit window will give you a higher production rate, and reduce the chance of eyestrain or headaches. In contrast to artificial

indoor light, sunlight will also give you Vitamin D and tends to make people feel more energetic. But even more importantly, in a well-lit room, you will be using less electricity on artificial light by being able to turn on the lights later in the day.

Downsize your paper waste

If you have loads of paper documents around, try to switch to digital versions as much as possible. If you need a way to jot down ideas of notes, perhaps a tablet or a whiteboard would be something useful to invest in, rather than having post-it notes everywhere.

Use eco-friendly supplies

From paper to paper clips, shop around for sustainable or responsibly-sourced stationery for your home office. This includes ink cartridges if you are using a printer.



Working near sunlight increases production rate while reducing eyestrain and headaches

Eliminate all waste

From throwing away food waste into the compost or ditching the coffee pods, there are plenty of areas where you can reduce, or eliminate entirely the waste created from working at home. Similarly, spend a little more time making healthy food rather than buying ready-made snacks.

Recycle, reuse & repurpose

If you need to buy something for your home office make sure they are sustainably sourced, or try and look out for second-hand items. If you can repurpose household items, for example, for storage options, you will reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfill.



Is now the time to buy an electric car?

There's a lot to think about when purchasing an electric car, here's what you should know...

MOTORING

For many drivers, the world of electric cars is somewhat unknown, yet new EV drivers are increasingly taking to the roads. With the combination of the UK government proposing to ban sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, and the rise in more affordable models, the future looks bright for potential buyers. If you still have reservations and are wondering whether purchasing an EV is the right choice for you, then here are some crucial questions to ask.

How much do you drive?

Making the decision of whether an electric vehicle is the right solution for you essentially comes down to the type of driving you intend to do. An EV could be the answer if you don't plan to drive more than 250 miles a day, for example. If you're racking up a number of short journeys in a city or town, an electric vehicle will serve you well. The only thing to be aware of is to know where your local public charge stations are and the charging speeds they offer.

Can I afford an electric car?

The initial outlay of an EV can set you back anything from £15,000 upwards, although a decent second-hand one normally starts at around £5,000. While you'll spend a large chunk of cash buying one, the subsequent general running of the vehicle is surprisingly low. Additionally, with technological advances ongoing, electric vehicles are becoming more budget-friendly, particularly

family-friendly models. Throw in the UK government's ultra-low-emissions vehicle grant, no road tax bills and up to 40 per cent cheaper annual servicing costs and you'll be saving a small fortune!

Is the charging network reliable?

This is quite possibly one of the most important questions to consider if you're intending to buy an electric car. Costs can vary considerably: in some instances, such as supermarket locations, they are often free to use while you're inside shopping; faster chargers in service stations, on the other hand, will range in both speed and cost. An extra bonus is that charging stations can be installed at your home if you have off-road parking, which can be extremely convenient.

What electric cars can I buy?

Although it depends on your lifestyle and reasons why you would want to invest in an electric car, the choice of vehicles is huge. Car manufacturers are diverting their attention away from diesels and investing their resources into creating more environmentally friendly electric cars. Test drive models produced by Skoda, Audi, VW and even Porsche for a super electric car experience. Tesla is probably the most popular EV-only manufacturer in the UK.

As the popularity of electric cars grows, so their prices will become more affordable, and with far more options on offer than ever before, there's a lot to think about when electric car shopping. If you're ready to take the plunge then make sure you choose the model that will best suit your needs.

Second-hand shopping: your consumer rights and rules

Be aware of your protection rights on second-hand purchases

FINANCE

Buying second-hand is a great way of getting a bargain for something you want or need. Many people find amazing deals in charity shops, online or even by chance when they spot a garage or car boot sale. The rules around refunds and replacements differ when it comes to second-hand shopping, however, and it's important to know your rights and whether you have a chance of getting anything back if you buy second-hand.

Used versus new

When you buy something second-hand you may be buying from a business or an individual. It can be tricky when buying from another person as you may have less protection, but it differs from case to case. The main impact on your rights as a consumer depend upon who you have bought something from, not the condition of the item. When you buy from a retailer, even one who specialises in second-hand goods, you are protected by the Consumer Rights Act 2015. Anything you buy must be:

- 1) Of satisfactory quality
 - 2) Sold as described (on any listing or advertisement)
 - 3) Fit for purpose
- This applies to any used item you buy as well as anything you buy brand-new, but only if you're buying from a retailer or other type of business.

"The main impact on your rights as a consumer depends upon who you have bought something from, not the condition of the item."

Buying from a private seller

If you buy from a private individual online or in-person, the same level of protection is not provided. The same Consumer Rights



Act states that private sellers are only obliged to provide the goods 'as described'. This means that as long as the description of the product is not misleading, you have no right to ask for a refund if you are unhappy with the item.

Getting money back for second-hand goods

If you buy second-hand goods from a business, you have the right to take it back and ask for a repair, replacement or refund if it does not work as it should or is faulty. Remember, you do not have any right legally to return an item because you've changed your mind, although some retailers will exercise discretion and allow this.

For advice and guidance, if you believe you are unfairly being refused a refund, you can visit your local Citizen Advice Bureau

If you have bought an item from a private seller you can only really ask for a refund if the item is not as described. If they refuse, you may be stuck with no resolution or you may consider the small claims court. This can get very costly so you will want to weigh up whether it is worth the risk.

"If you have bought an item from a private seller you can only really ask for a refund if the item is not as described."

The benefits of using a recognised online platform

Buying second-hand items from a well-known online platform or trading website has its benefits because these sites have their own in-built dispute and resolution centres. They also allow buyers to leave feedback so a seller's reputation can be damaged if they don't deal with your complaints or refund requests fairly. This can help ensure you get the result you want, but only if you have a legitimate complaint of course. Shopping for second-hand goods can be a real adventure; you'll uncover treasures amongst the trash and may find some amazing bargains. But treat every transaction with care and be sure to check items over before committing to buy, as getting your cash back may not be as easy as you think.

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Amazing uses for olive oil beyond the frying pan

Check out these alternative uses for olive oil for around the home and even as part of your skin care routine.



FOOD

The health benefits of olive oil are well-known. The Mediterranean diet is believed to be one of the healthiest there is and almost all of us have at least one bottle of the stuff in our kitchen cupboards. Olive oil is great for many things beyond pouring over bread, and below we're looking closely at handy ways you can use olive oil around the home and even as part of your beauty regime.

Olive oil in the home

There are many ways you can use olive oil in the home - for cleaning, caring for household items and for keeping everything looking its best. These include:

Protect wooden boards

Olive oil can be used to coat your wooden kitchen utensils and chopping boards. If you leave it to soak in for five minutes and then

buff away using a soft cloth this can help prevent cracking and preserve the wood's quality, making sure it lasts for longer and looks great too.

Remove sticky labels and old sticker marks

Kids stick stickers all over the place and if you want to get rid of the sticky residue and marks they leave it isn't always easy. Pour a little olive oil over any sticky marks and even onto stuck-on labels, and within 15 minutes it will be much easier to remove.

Fix hinges

A squeaking door can very quickly become very annoying and rather than heading out to buy some maintenance oil, you can simply use what you've got in the cupboards. A few drops of olive oil on a squeaky hinge will soon see it like new.

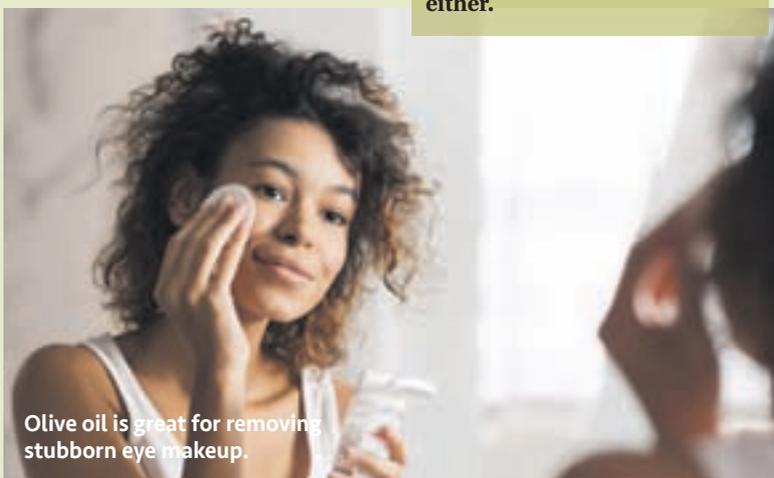
Keep razors in top condition

Razor blades are expensive and finding ways to make them last longer is always appreciated. Olive oil is once again your friend here as

it is can be added to the blades, left for a few minutes, and then washed off before your next use.

Olive oil for skin and hair

Olive oil has been added to many of our favourite cleaning and cosmetic products already but even in the neat form, you can include it in your daily routine. Here are some ways to use olive oil for your skin and hair:



Olive oil is great for removing stubborn eye makeup.

Eye make-up remover

Olive oil may seem greasy, but it isn't sticky and only actually sticks to other oil-based products. This means its great for removing stubborn eye make-up. You can wash it off easily after, so the oil is fully removed from your skin and you're not left with smudges and stains from your makeup either.

Eczema treatment

Whether you have occasional patches of dry skin or irritating eczema, olive oil can help. It is sensitive to your skin and helps to provide the moisture that your thirsty body is craving. It's good when applied to dry or cracked areas such as the soles of the feet or elbows. Applying it before bedtime will help replenish skin overnight.



Combat ear wax

If you want to deal with stubborn wax build-ups, olive oil is your pal. A few drops of olive oil can be popped directly into the ear each evening and it will help to loosen any trapped wax and make it easier to safely remove.

Olive oil's amazing qualities don't just stop at taste, so if you've got a bottle too many in the kitchen cupboards put it to work all around the home.

Smart hacks to make your oven look like new again

It may be our least favourite chore but there's plenty of tips and tricks to make cleaning the oven that bit easier...

HOME

When it comes to household tasks that everyone tries to avoid, cleaning the oven must be near the top of the list. The longer you avoid it, the worse the situation gets. Realistically, you should be looking at giving the oven a good clean at least once every three months and the door should be getting a good wipe down every week or so.

Keeping on top of the cleaning

means you can avoid the need for any serious chemicals or bringing in the deep cleaners.

Below are some top tips for getting that oven to sparkle, shine and ready to show off.

Vacuum out the nasties

Using the vacuum cleaner in the oven may sound like madness but it does make logical sense. Rather than wasting hours picking out all the loose crumbs and burnt bits of food, get the vacuum on the job and they'll be sucked up in minutes.

Make sure your oven is completely cool before doing so and remove any attachments from your vacuum before getting started.



Use your old toothbrush for nooks and crannies

Don't throw out your old toothbrush, use it to get into every last crack and crevice of your oven to fish out any leftover burnt bits and scrub away any hard-to-reach stains.

"An eco-friendly combo of fresh lemon juice and water is a great choice as it will help pick up any final residues or left-over dirt."

Soak the shelves to see them sparkle

The oven shelves can be the hardest part to get clean. Stubborn food sticks in the corners and can be difficult to remove. Try soaking your shelves in the bath and you'll see great results. Begin by laying old towels in the bottom to prevent any scratches to your tub and fill the bath until the shelves are completely submerged. Dishwater tablets or washing up liquid are the perfect options for cleaning off any burnt-on food and you can leave the shelves in the bath for as long as five hours.

Once fully soaked you should find it easy to use a cloth to simply wipe away any stains and a final rinse should be all that's needed before you leave them to dry.

Don't forget the door

The oven door can be the ugliest and filthiest element of the whole

appliance if left uncleaned. Grease can build up quickly and needs removing to ensure a thoroughly clean cooker. Sometimes the glass door can be easily removed and soaked in the bath with the shelves. A glass scraper and glass cleaning fluid are a great choice for removing tough stains on the oven door and while it may take a little time, it's worth the effort.

Finish with lemon and water

Once your oven is looking almost perfect, it's time to give it one final rinse. An eco-friendly combo of fresh lemon juice and water is a great choice as it will help pick up any final residues or left-over dirt which may have been missed. That citrus smell is also simply perfect for a kitchen waiting to be used. Once done, it's time to pop the shelves back in and decide what to cook next.

Let's Create a World Without Racism Columban Competition

The real world

This is the winning article in the 2021 Columban Schools Media Competition in Ireland. It is by Ella Fleming, a student of St Dominic's Grammar School, Belfast.



I wake. I get up and do everything that any other person does. Get dressed, brush my teeth, and eat breakfast. But then the time comes, the time that I fear the most... walking outside alone.

I take one last breathe as my sweaty hands reach for the cold, silver door handle and before I know it the crisp air is filling my lungs. I walk. Make sure your hood is down, hands out of pockets and don't look anyone in the eye, I remind myself as I walk along the grey pavement. My eyes observe the street.

My brain knows the drill. Is there anyone on the other side of that street that could feel threatened? Don't make eye contact with the lady who is clenching her handbag so tightly that I don't think the strongest man in the world could take it from her.

I'll take the 'scenic route' today because there are lots of people around. A family are walking towards me, but as I walk closer to them, they are practically walking in the middle of the road. The parents whisper to their daughter and immediately she looks at me and points at me. The mother clenches her daughter's wrist and quickly walks across the street, as if I am an animal about to attack its prey.

I try to get used to it but every time it happens, I relapse, I feel bad for myself and make myself wonder what I did wrong. As I walk along a path around the back of a cul-de-sac of houses, I notice a group of older boys ahead, and my eyes instantly drop to the ground and my heart starts beating rapidly. As I get closer to them, they start to notice me. My heart still beating, rapidly. Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom.

Suddenly I reach them. My eyes still looking down to the ground, I try and get past them. But I cannot. They start to shout. They start to shout all sorts of things that I can't even process. Then, it started. One boy pushes me to the ground and spits in my face. Another kicks me in the stomach and it feels like a thousand knives stabbed me all at once. I try to scream for my mummy, but no-one would hear.

It turns out they were only starting. Punches came from everywhere; kicks came from left right and centre. I couldn't see anything. I felt like I was slowly starting to drown in my own blood. Suddenly, it stopped.

I lay there for hours. I cried so much I had no more tears left. I was experiencing so much pain that I went numb. I closed my eyes and

dreamt of my family, I kept trying to remind myself that they would be alright if I wasn't here. But I kept imagining what would happen to them. My baby sister would grow up without me being there to protect her from the world. My mummy wouldn't have anyone to help her wash the dishes when she is feeling down, or to put my sister to bed when she is working late. It felt like I had just lost everything – including my faith in humanity.

Then everything went black. That was the last thing I remembered from that day. I wake. I couldn't get up; I couldn't brush my teeth and I couldn't get dressed. I wanted to eat but it felt impossible. The time that I feared the most every morning was different, but I wasn't scared of it this time... I was petrified. I couldn't leave my room for three weeks, I was petrified of what lay outside of my house, more than ever.

That was four years ago, and I still know that story like the back of my

What the judges said about Ella's entry:
"An at times frightening but always mature take on a very real subject of our times..."

hand. My physical injuries were not fatal, but mentally it scarred me. The lady who found me lying on the once grey pavement was a lady who didn't see skin colour, all she saw was a hurt child who would never see the world the same again. And I didn't.

I used to see the world as a bad place, where you didn't know what or who is around each corner. But now I see the world as an awful place, a place where more and more deaths keep happening just because of someone's skin colour. A place where if someone doesn't look like 'your kind', then they are dangerous. A place where we have to explain to our own children why their dad was attacked yesterday or why their mummy isn't here anymore. And it should not have to be like that.

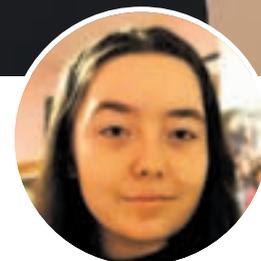
Our population is growing and growing, it is time that we started to educate others. And make them understand that we should all be equals, no matter what colour of skin you have.

Our faith in humanity could change if you let it. This is the real world; make it better while we still have the chance.



Columban Competition: Images

The winning image in this year's Columban Schools Media Competition for Ireland was submitted by Emily Grimes (pictured) of St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda.



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Classified/Crossword/Sudoku

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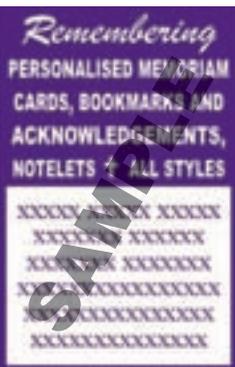
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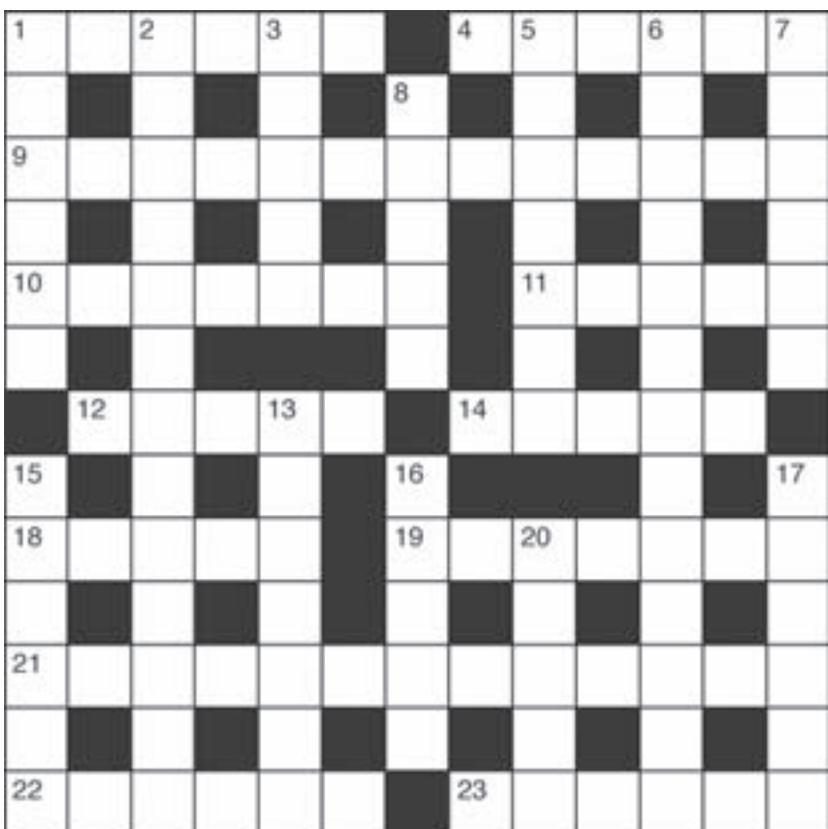
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The Catholic Universe Crossword

No. 693



- Across**
1. Concealed (6)
 4. Mean (6)
 9. Unaided (3,4,3,3)
 10. United States (7)
 11. Weird (5)
 12. Jumped (5)
 14. Postpone (5)
 18. Garret (5)
 19. Superintend (7)
 21. In a somersault (4,4,5)
 22. Scabbard (6)
 23. Speechmaker (6)

- Down**
1. Turkish pipe (6)
 2. Discriminate (13)
 3. Boredom (5)
 5. Not in any place (7)
 6. Confusion (13)
 7. Tremble (6)
 8. Composition (5)
 13. Select (4,3)
 15. Sentiment (6)
 16. Arbour (5)
 17. Hot spring (6)
 20. An anaesthetic (5)

SOLUTION - see page 47

The Catholic Universe Sudoku

No. 293

Every Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically. Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.



Stuck? see page 47

Classified/Crossword/Liturgical Calendars

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Crossword Solution (from p46)

Across: 1 Hidden; 4 Intend; 9 Off one's own bat; 10 America; 11 Eerie; 12 Leapt; 14 Delay; 18 Attic; 19 Oversee; 21 Head over heels; 22 Sheath; 23 Orator.

Down: 1 Hookah; 2 Differentiate; 3 Ennui; 5 Nowhere; 6 Embarrassment; 7 Dither; 8 Essay; 13 Pick out; 15 Pathos; 16 Bower; 17 Geysir; 20 Ether.

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Sudoku Solution (from p46)

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| 3 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 1 |
| 7 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| 6 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| 9 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 5 |
| 8 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| 1 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| 5 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 3 |

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THANKGIVING PRAYER

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin. Oh most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel fruitful in the splendour of haven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. Oh star of the sea, help me and show me, hear in you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary Mother of God, queen of heaven and earth, I humbly defeat you from the bottom of my heart, to succour in my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me, here in you are my mother. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have the course to be (3 times). Holy Mary I place this cause in your hands, (3 times). O Thank you for your mercy to me and mine. Amen. Say for 3 days and publication promised.

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Ordinary Form Liturgical Calendar

Sunday Year B, weekday cycle 1

| | |
|--|---|
| April: Month of the Holy Resurrection | Ps 65; Jn 6:35-40 |
| Third Sunday of Easter, Sunday, 18th April: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Ps 4; 1Jn 2:1-5; Lk 24:35-48 | Thursday, 22nd April: Acts 8:26-40; Ps 65; Jn 6:44-51 |
| Monday, 19th April: Acts 6:8-15, Ps 118; Jn 6:22-29 | Solemnity of Saint George, Martyr, Patron of England, Friday 23rd April: Apoc 12:10-12; Ps 125; Second Reading chosen from Common of Martyrs; Jn 15:18-21 or Jn 15:1-8 |
| Tuesday, 20th April: Acts 7:51-8:1; Ps 30; Jn 6:30-35 | Saturday, 24th April: Acts 9:31-42; Ps 115; Jn 6:60-69 |
| Wednesday, 21st April: Acts 8:1-8; | |

Extraordinary Form Calendar according to the Roman Missal of 1962 (Tridentine Rite)

| | |
|--|---|
| Sunday, 18th April: Second Sunday after Easter 1Pet 2:21-25; Jn 10:11-16 | Thursday, 22nd April: SS Soter & Calus popes & martyrs, 1Pet 5:1-4, 10-11; Mt 16:13-19 |
| Monday, 19th April: Feria Readings of Sunday repeated | Friday, 23rd April: St George martyr 2 Tim 2:8-3:12; Jn 15:1-7 |
| Tuesday, 20th April: Feria Readings of Sunday repeated | Saturday, 24th April: St Fidelis of Sigmaringen martyr Wis 5:1-5; Jn 15:1-7 |
| Wednesday, 21st April: St Anselm bishop, confessor & doctor 2 Tim 4:1-8; Mt 5:13-19 | Compiled by Gordon Dimon, Senior MC of the Latin Mass Society |

Why having determination is important in life

Mgr Vladimir Felzmann

The past 12 months have thrown the spotlight on the perseverance, indefatigability, tenacity and determination of the NHS and Care Home staff. Though March 2020 to April 2021 was tough to live, it taught us much through what we missed – and had taken for granted.

Determination calls for motivation, the drive behind the effort and accomplishments across those PIES – the Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual dimensions of our life. Without the determination to improve, all of the other mental factors – confidence, intensity, focus, and emotions are meaningless. I don't know about you, dear reader, but consciously I work on developing my virtues because I know that unconsciously they shape my life.

Douglas “Doug” Clayton Durdle, English retired professional wrestler, said: “Never give up, never give in, and when the upper hand is ours, may we have the ability to handle the win with the dignity that we absorbed the loss.”

“Persistence can change failure into extraordinary achievement,” stated Matt Biondi, an American swimmer and former world record-holder in five events, who competed in the Summer Olympic Games in 1984, 1988 and 1992, winning a total of eleven medals.

I am happy to admit that – before taking my morning shower – I use the vices of pride and vanity to fend off temptations to sloth and cowardice from the lower Vlad who whispers “why bother with these 83 push-ups or full-squats? You deserve a rest – and you're getting older”. Like Churchill, a Tory and Stalin, a communist, linked up against Hitler, my



enemy's enemy becomes my ally.

“Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there,” encouraged Vincent Edward “Bo” Jackson, American former professional baseball and football player. He is the only professional athlete in history to be named an All-Star in both baseball and American football.

Thomas Charles Lasorda, an American former Major League Baseball pitcher, coach, and manager, best known for his two decades managing the Los Angeles Dodgers, made it clear that: “The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination.”

I keep working on the physical not only to show I appreciate God's gift of my body, but also to stay fit, flexible, avoid obesity and – hopefully/ prayerfully do not end up in a wheelchair before its time. How about you dear reader?

I used to work on my intellect to pass exams and accrue qualifications. Now I keep studying not only to kick dementia down the road but to stay ahead of the accelerating curve of knowledge all around.

To keep my emotions fresh during the lockdowns and Boris' ‘Tiers’, I

used, among a few “recusant-priests” initiatives – emails, WhatsApps and Zooms to keep in touch, preserve friendships and exercise my spiritual and pastoral ministries.

To sustain my Spirituality – with its motivational power – I strive to keep an eye on the divine presence in everything and silently discuss with Jesus what I see and hear. Ever since I passed those first four-score years of life, this prayer dialogue has replaced many of my needs of saying prayers.

From her own life experiences, Billie Jean King, an American former World No. 1 professional tennis player who won 39 Grand Slam titles: 12 in singles, 16 in women's doubles, and 11 in mixed doubles, could say that “champions keep playing until they get it right.”

Theodore Samuel Williams (1918-2002), an American professional baseball player and manager who played his entire 19-year Major League Baseball career for the Boston Red Sox from 1939 to 1960. (His career was interrupted by military service during World War II and the Korean War) knew what he has talking about when he said: “Just keep going. Everybody gets better if they keep at it.”

Remember, you are captain of your ship. If you accept that your willpower is inadequate for the task, you might benefit from a personal trainer or Pilates classes – if you can afford them. If not, you might just need the help of a friend, a partner at your gym. To get my engineering degree, I teamed up with Doug. Mutually, we shamed each other into studying together the hours we had set ourselves. It worked.

Larry Joe Bird, and American for-



The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination
– Thomas Charles Lasorda

mer professional basketball player, coach and executive in the National Basketball Association, widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players of all time encouraged us to: “Push yourself again and again. Don't give an inch until the final buzzer sounds.”

Muhammad Ali – who needs no introduction – admitted: “I hated every minute of training, but I said, ‘Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’”

When at the offertory at Mass I say: “Fruit of the earth and work of

human hands” though I accept I cannot change my DNA, I know it is up to me how I shape my life: how I respond whatever life throws at me. When Covid came onto the UK scene, I was determined to put it to good use. ‘Staying at home’ not only ‘saved lives’, it gave me the opportunity to write – and finish – not only ‘my masterpiece’, *Life Squared - a handbook for life in an accelerating world* - but the 3rd volume of my memoirs, *A Journey to Eternity* - 3.

Joseph William Namath, quarterback in the American Football League and National Football League during the 1960s and 1970s, posed a good question: “If you aren't going all the way, why go at all?”

If you have a competitive character, use it as a motivator. Compete – if not against your friends – yourself. Aim to improve your PB, your Personal Best across those PIES of yours.

James Thomas Anthony Valvano (March 10th, 1946 – April 28th, 1993), was an American college basketball player, coach, and broadcaster – with an excellent coaching career with multiple schools. He once said: “Never give up! Failure and rejection are only the first step to succeeding.”

What would you, dear reader, like to have on your grave's headstone? In my will – though I plan to be cremated and the stone will be small and horizontal – I have asked to have just: “He kept trying” placed below my name and dates.

The targets of your determination need to be realistic. I don't know about you, but – until that stone – I am determined to age as gracefully as is possible. I keep on keeping on.

*In a couple of weeks,
we shall look at ‘courtesy’.*



Champions
keep playing
until they get
it right.

— Billie Jean King