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It is not enough to say 'I am not a racist'

Stories of everyday discrimination in a London parish
Elizabeth Uwalaka and Richard Nesbitt



Margaret Hebblethwaite

Discovers the real
Mary of Magdala

Fiona Sampson

Beauty on the fault line
between Christianity and Islam

Julia Langdon

The Conservative Party:
are the wheels coming off?

Lucy Lethbridge

The antiquarians who
made the past live again

GOVERNMENT
COVID MESSAGING

FREEDOM COMES AT A PRICE

The British government has resoundingly fallen between two stools in devising its policy after the end of the current Covid lockdown next Monday. In trying to please both sides of the debate – libertarian on the one hand, safety first on the other – all it has achieved is confusion, and possibly a nasty bruise to its reputation as the public realises it has been let down. The Prime Minister has announced that in England legal restrictions, for instance enforcing the wearing of masks in crowded public spaces, should be replaced by voluntary advice, leaving it up to every individual whether they comply or not. This is not going to work.

Cases of Covid are rising exponentially. This is because a sufficiently large part of the population have not yet received the double vaccination necessary for reliable protection, leaving them vulnerable to what is still a nasty disease if not quite the killer it was. The National Health Service is again under great strain, coping with the rising number of cases that need hospital treatment. Many non-Covid conditions are going untreated again. This is a bad time to be diagnosed with cancer or to need a hip replacement.

The government advice only makes sense if the sole reason for wearing a mask and practising social distancing is to protect oneself from being infected by the breath of someone else. It could be argued, as the government seems to believe, that one should be free to decide whether or not to place oneself at risk. This is like saying that the only reason for laws against dangerous driving is to protect dangerous drivers

from injuring themselves. In fact the primary purpose of a face mask is to protect other people from being infected, if one has the disease oneself without being aware of it (or "bravely carrying on", as some people say they do with a bad cold). And no individual has the right to decide, alone, whether to put other people at risk of harm. There is no libertarian case for repealing the law against dangerous driving.

So Boris Johnson is asking the English public to act as if the law remains in force, because otherwise the risk is great, but meanwhile lifting legal restrictions, thereby signalling that the risk is small. Thus has "having your cake and eating it" – Johnson's favourite format for policymaking – become the driving force for a public health nightmare. Fewer people are dying with Covid, certainly, but tens of thousands every day are being advised to self-isolate – popularly known as "being pinged" because of the use of a smartphone app which utters a beep when activated – as they may have been exposed to someone with Covid.

It seems property owners are still entitled to apply their own rules, refusing entry, for instance, to anyone not wearing masks, and enforcing social distancing inside. Anyone who insists on entering without complying, unless they have valid health grounds for not doing so, could be accused of trespassing. So the best advice to churches, that have on the whole been scrupulous in following the lockdown rules, has to be to continue to act responsibly, as if nothing has changed – in the name of charity, justice and the common good.

FOOTBALL AND
NATIONHOOD

ENGLAND FINDS A MODERN IDENTITY

The England football team climbed to the very pinnacle of their sport in the course of their journey to Sunday's Euro 2020 Final against Italy. They played game after game with courage, skill and dignity, united by a spirit of "one for all and all for one" that had been fostered by their remarkable manager Gareth Southgate. A writer in *The Washington Post*, observing the English as they prepared for their match of the century, remarked: "England's success has revealed another story, one about a new kind of post-Brexit Englishness. The team has become a symbol of a diverse, multicultural nation, showcasing an Englishness that many are excited by."

There is nothing new in noting that the English have an identity problem. In 1962 another American, Dean Acheson, declared of the British what is especially true of the English, that "having lost an empire, they have not yet found a role". Successive waves of immigration from former colonial countries suggest the English had not so much lost an empire as seen it move next door. England has become a diverse multicultural nation where past immigration is turning into a moral blood transfusion of renewal and strength of character. The England football team, and other sports teams with the same national badge and diversity of skin colour, have come to symbolise it.

In part, the English problem is geographical and demographic. *Britannia est omnis divisa in partes tres*, as Caesar might have said. Of the three parts of the island of Great Britain, the population of the English capital alone is greater than the combined

populations of Wales and Scotland. But the Welsh and the Scots have a solid sense of identity, something the English have always been shy of. This may be because they have been ruled by a succession of monarchs who were Welsh, Scottish and German, which made it politic to emphasise Britishness rather than Englishness, as Professor Linda Colley explains in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. Too much talk of Englishness might spoil the party.

The American historian Paul Fussell wrote in *The Great War and Modern Memory* that irony entered the soul of the English in that war, a sense of not being completely sincere about patriotism, as taking it too seriously had cost too many lives. The famous Last Night of the Proms event at the Royal Albert Hall in London was not only great fun – and may it soon return! – but also a display of English patriotism tinged with self-satire. Even before the First World War, Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* brought the house down with the song "He is an Englishman" ("In spite of all temptations, to belong to other nations ..."). This willingness to engage in self-parody is typically English, and helps to explain why the concept of the "English nation" has long been slightly blurry.

It does not have clear borders, a legal definition or a distinct racial ethnicity – anybody living there may join it if they wish. The inclusive multiracial composition of the England football team, and the public reaction to them with emotions little short of love, is a sign that England itself is a work in progress – and heading in a good direction.



A banner is raised in Mumbai at the funeral of the Jesuit Fr Stan Swamy, who has died in hospital aged 84

COLUMNS



Melanie McDonagh's Notebook
‘Should I ever meet Cardinal Sarah, I hope he will let me kiss his ring’ / 5



Clifford Longley
‘Perhaps the Conservative Party needs to stop sending mixed messages’ / 15

REGULARS

Wild Faith	13
Word from the Cloisters	16
Puzzles	16
Letters	17
The Living Spirit	18

CONTENTS

17 JULY 2021 // VOL 275 NO. 9411

FEATURES

4 / Apostle to the Apostles

In 2016, Pope Francis elevated the memorial of St Mary Magdalene, traditionally observed on 22 July, to the status of a feast day / BY MARGARET HEBBLETHWAITE

6 / It is not enough to say ‘I am not a racist’

Last year a group of parishioners of Our Lady of Fátima in White City began to meet regularly on Zoom to talk about the reality of racism

8 / From the beautiful to the sublime

A poet and biographer recalls her visits to an ancient Balkan lake ringed by cave churches, monasteries and mosques / BY FIONA SAMPSON

10 / Is England drifting out of the blue?

The Conservative Party has a comfortable majority and appears well-established. Yet dissatisfaction and distaste for the leadership is growing / BY JULIA LANGDON

14 / ‘As long as I breathe, I hope’

On 30 July, the outstanding canon lawyer of the twentieth century, Ladislav Orsy SJ, celebrates his hundredth birthday / BY JAMES F. KEENAN

NEWS

25 / The Church in the World / News briefing

26 / Pope appeals for free universal healthcare

28 / View from Rome

29 / News from Britain and Ireland / News briefing

30 / Foreign Office lessons to spot religious persecution

ARTS / PAGE 19

Painting
Hans Feibusch
LAURA GASCOIGNE

Radio
Heart and Soul:
Doping, diving
and God
D.J. TAYLOR

Television
Wild China with
Ray Mears
LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Theatre
Last Easter
MARK LAWSON

BOOKS / PAGE 22

Lucy Lethbridge
Time's Witness:
History in the Age
of Romanticism
ROSEMARY HILL

Harry Cochrane
The Hero's Way:
Walking with
Garibaldi from
Rome to Ravenna
TIM PARKS

Rachel Kelly
The Comfort Book
MATT HAIG

Luke Bell
The First Day
of Spring
NANCY TUCKER

In 2016, Pope Francis elevated the memorial of St Mary Magdalene, traditionally observed on 22 July, to the status of a feast day. A cloud of confusion is finally being lifted from the woman who gets up before sunrise to visit the tomb of the Jesus, while the men are sleeping / **By MARGARET HEBBLETHWAITE**

Apostle to the Apostles

OVER THE last 30 years, there has been a plethora of books restoring the reputation of Mary of Magdala from repentant prostitute to leading woman disciple. She is always mentioned first among the women followers, and her title as the "Apostle to the Apostles" is founded firmly on the commission given her by the risen Jesus. But though this is now familiar ground among theologians, it has not seeped through to the broad range of Christian believers.

After my article in the 27 March issue, some *Tablet* readers wrote to me to say they had always thought the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary of Magdala. You can see why. After all, almost every painting of the anointing is titled "Mary Magdalene anoints Jesus". The pictures need to be renamed. John's Gospel says Jesus was anointed by Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, but for centuries Rome insisted that the two women were one and the same. Now at last, the Vatican has admitted its mistake, and this February it took another step to clarify that the two women were distinct.

Paul VI had already begun to correct the record in 1969, with new directions for Mary of Magdala's memorial on 22 July. She was no longer described as a "Penitent". The collect no longer said that, "her prayers moved thee to restore her brother Lazarus to life", but rather that, "your Son first entrusted to Mary Magdalene the joyful news of his Resurrection". And the Gospel was no longer Luke's account of a sinner anointing the feet of Jesus, but was changed to Mary's encounter with the risen Jesus.

Then, on 3 June 2016, the status of the day was raised by Pope Francis from a memorial to a feast on the same level as those of "the rest of the Apostles". The Church has a hierarchy of celebrations from memorials to feasts to solemnities. A new Preface was published for it, saying that Jesus "honoured her with the office of being an Apostle to the Apostles".

The correction was not made as a result of the modern books written by Lila Sebastiani, Susan Haskins, Carla Ricci, Esther de Boer, Sandra Schneiders, Holly Hearon, Jane Schaberg, Deirdre Good, Ann Graham Brock and Michael Haag; it was based on the work of the Bollandists, a Jesuit-based association that has been working since the seventeenth century on the lives of the saints, and which prepared the way for the post-conciliar reform of the Roman calendar.

The 2016 decree pointed out just three "certain" facts about Mary of Magdala. She



Mary of Magdala

was "part of the group of Jesus' disciples" (Luke 8:1-3, where she, Joanna, Susanna and many others went with Jesus through Galilee, together with the Twelve); "she accompanied him to the foot of the Cross" (in all the gospels); and she was the first Easter witness "in the garden where she met him at the tomb" (John 20; also Matthew 28:1,9). The decree acknowledged that, "especially since the time of Gregory the Great", the old interpretation had dominated the tradition of the Western Church in its theology, art and liturgical texts. But "with good reason" Mary of Magdala had been called "Apostle to the Apostles" by Thomas Aquinas and Rabanus Maurus, for she "becomes an evangelist" and "announces to the Apostles what in turn they will announce to the whole world".

WHAT THE decree of 2 February 2021 added to that was to give Mary of Bethany her own day in the calendar, so her name and that of Lazarus were added to the memorial of her sister Martha on 29 July, exactly one week after the feast of Mary of Magdala. Now that the two women officially have separate days, it becomes still more difficult to claim they are the same person.

But why should it matter? Why should anyone be offended if two of the three greatest women of the gospels (the third also called Mary, of course) are rolled into one super-woman? It is because the conflated figure was no superwoman, but was demeaned as the alleged sexual "sinner" of Luke 7, in the chapter

before Mary of Magdala is mentioned as being freed by Jesus from seven demons. Curiously, in no other gospel text is demonic possession interpreted as sexual depravity rather than illness. When Jesus sets free a woman from the bondage of Satan in another Lucan miracle (13:10-17), no one dreams of saying she is saved from a life of prostitution. There are no grounds for identifying Mary of Magdala with the so-called "sinner".

The confusion between the two Marys was facilitated by thinking that "Magdalene" was her name. Once it is realised that "Mary the Magdalene" (*never* without the article in the gospels) means "Mary of Magdala", just as "Jesus the Nazarene" means "Jesus of Nazareth", it becomes rather difficult to think that the same woman was both of Bethany (near Jerusalem in Judaea) and of Magdala (a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee).

This is not to say that the attempt has not been made. The Anglican scholar John Wenham hypothesised in 1984 that the "attractive, adventurous" but "moody" Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha, had left home to go to the "delectable" town of Magdala, but her little adventure, "at first so exciting and enjoyable, all turned sour on her" as she turned to prostitution. I doubt anyone would dare write that today. The myth that Mary of Magdala was a repentant prostitute is not only insulting to Mary, but insulting to prostitutes too. Who nowadays considers prostitutes to be lascivious women intent on leading men astray, to fleece them of their money and satisfy their own lustful desires? Do we not regard them as victims, whether of sex trafficking, pimps or poverty? The implication that they must repent is profoundly misogynistic.

If this old Mary Magdalene archetype seems exaggerated, listen to what Gregory the Great said, probably in 591, when he cemented the misidentification. "She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? ... It is clear, brothers, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts ... She had coveted with earthly eyes, but now through penitence these are consumed with tears. She displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears. She had spoken proud things with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord's feet, she now planted her mouth on the Redeemer's feet. For every delight, therefore, she had had in herself, she now immolated herself. She



turned the mass of her crimes to virtues, in order to serve God entirely in penance."

Let us leave aside that it was in fact Luke, rather than Mark, who said Mary had been freed of seven devils (which was then copied into the "longer ending" of Mark, not by the evangelist but by a different hand). By any account, Gregory's text is profoundly shocking. But this was the dominant ideology, and it persisted to the point that a millennium later, in 1520, the French scholar Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples was condemned for heresy when he dared to suggest that Mary of Magdala and Mary of Bethany were separate people and that neither was Luke's "sinner".

THE TWO Marys do, however, have some things in common – feet and tears – so it can be confusing. Mary, the sister of Martha, sits at Jesus' feet and listens to him (Luke 10:39), and she anoints his feet with oil (John 12:3). Mary of Magdala and her companions take hold of the feet of the risen Jesus (Matthew 28:9). Mary of Bethany's tears at the death of her brother move Jesus to weep with her (John 11:33). Mary of Magdala's tears at the tomb prompt him to reveal himself to her (John 20:15). Also in common is anointing oil, since Luke names Mary of Magdala as one of the women bringing spices and ointments to the tomb (Luke 23:56; 24:1,10). This is rather a relief for those of us who love religious art, for it means that we can keep the pictures that show her with her flask of anointing oil – her "logo", says Eamon Duffy – so long as we remember that this shows her preparing to go to the tomb, not to Simon's dinner party. And though she is traditionally shown unveiled, once considered a sign of being "forward", it is the veils on the other gospel women that I would rather see removed.

WHEN WE strip away the false interpretations, we can be more receptive to one of the most beautiful stories in the gospels, as Mary of Magdala gets up before sunrise to visit the tomb, while the men are sleeping. She finds the stone moved and the tomb empty, and runs to give the alarm, thinking the body has been stolen. No meek and weak woman, this, but an initiator, a runner and a proclaimer. Desperate with grief that not only has she lost her beloved teacher but even the relic of his dead body, Mary of Magdala returns in tears, and it is to her that Jesus wishes to show himself first. He could have appeared first to Peter, but instead he gives her the responsibility of bearing the news – a heavy responsibility considering that the men are not going to believe her (Luke 24:11). It is not just an act of compassion on his part, but an act of confidence, entrusting her with the most important message that has ever been given. She carries out her mission with the courage of overwhelming joy, and all of us who have received the news subsequently can trace back to her the trail of proclamation.

Margaret Hebblethwaite is writing a book about the women in the gospels.

Should I ever meet Cardinal Sarah, I hope he will let me kiss his ring



RIGHT NOW, England's answer to the national affliction that was the Euros final is to host an impassioned argument about "taking the knee", that is, the custom of the England team to express its collective solidarity with anyone affected by racism. What may have started as an emotional gesture by black sportsmen in the US against police brutality, especially after the killing of George Floyd, has turned into a non-negotiable act of political conformity in a very different culture, undertaken by politicians and police as well as sportsmen. The British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, expressed mild scepticism about the England team taking the knee at the beginning of the tournament; the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, dismissed taking the knee as "gesture politics". After the online abuse of the black or mixed raced footballers who missed penalty shots in the final, one of the players has said Ms Patel had "stoked the fire" by refusing to criticise fans who booed the England team for taking the knee.

As Catholics, we're particularly attuned to the significance of gestures; the entire liturgy is full of them. We take the knee every time we enter church – two knees if the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar. We beat our breasts – well, unobtrusively flex our wrists in the direction of our chest – when we are expressing contrition for sin. We kneel at the consecration. And there is indeed a scriptural basis to go further: "At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow", says St Paul; in fact, we just incline our heads if we're old school.

In fact, there's a case for more symbolic gestures, not fewer. We live too much inside our heads nowadays; using our bodies to convey deference or respect is far less widespread than it once was. I am very willing to curtsy to the Queen, though I should decline in the case of the Duchess of Cornwall (mind you, when she came to our office a couple of years ago, she didn't seem to mind the absence of curtsies). I am happy to kiss the rings of bishops though I notice that they have no such expectation; I should be perfectly happy to kiss the Pope's toe, as was once the approved form, if I didn't think the present Pope prefers to keep his toes to himself. We are not, after all, making an obeisance to an individual – the altar is another matter – but to an

individual with a particular office. There need be no loss of dignity in expressing respect, even deference, by a gesture. As G.K. Chesterton once observed: "A man is taller when he bows."

So why do I feel exasperation at the spectacle of footballers taking the knee and fury at the pundits who insist that not doing so is tantamount to racism. It's unlikely I would ever be in a position to take the knee, but I'd decline. For one thing, the pressure to conform brings out a rebellious impulse; I don't think I am racist – though my woke 14-year-old daughter is forever telling me that this is not enough – and I don't have to be contrite about other people's racism. I felt revulsion at the fate of George Floyd, like everyone else, but what do people in another continent have to do with it? I've got quite enough sins of my own to be contrite about without taking on board other people's. This *is* – literally – gesture politics; conformity to social pressure; cost-free tokenism.

It's in the Church and in my parish that I have a genuine community with people of other ethnicities; I feel an absurd sense of uplift when a nice elderly man from the West Indies calls me "sister" (well, pre-Covid) at the sign of peace; the most rigorous Catholics of my acquaintance are Africans who make me look wet. By comparison with this genuine mutual human solidarity, the rows about gesture politics look piffing. Incidentally if I should ever have the good fortune to meet the admirable Cardinal Sarah, I hope he will let me kiss his ring.

TALKING OF political gestures, a member of the Church of England synod has written to the bishops to ask them to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the Synod of Oxford next year with an act of repentance for anti-Semitism. It was this Synod which implemented the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council respecting Jews, including debarring them from public office and forcing them to wear distinctive dress. How to put this nicely? Look, the Fourth Lateran council was a Catholic affair. The CofE doesn't have anything to apologise for. They can get off their knees – if only to get back onto them in prayer.

Melanie McDonagh is a writer and journalist.



It is not enough to say 'I am not a racist'



Last year a group of parishioners of Our Lady of Fátima in White City – which, despite its name, is a vibrant multicultural community in one of west London's largest social housing estates – began to meet regularly on Zoom. They talked together about the reality of racism in the wider society – and also in their own community. These testimonies

illustrate the everyday reality of racism within an ordinary Catholic parish in inner London

I AM A "cradle Catholic", born into the thick of racist and discriminatory practices in west London. Our family used to live in a dilapidated house in Notting Hill, where we were subjected to racist attacks from "Teddy boys" and National Front arsonists. In the early-1970s we were relocated to a flat on the White City Estate.

As a teacher, I was reminded by colleagues that my "face doesn't fit" when it came to promotion to positions of leadership. I found myself fighting to progress professionally, in spite of years of success and experience, overlooked by younger, white, inexperienced males, to the point that the fight broke me. I was left unsupported and abandoned, forced by the white male leader in the school to sign a non-disclosure agreement and quietly leave my post. I found an echo of my personal experience in some of these testimonies from parishioners, which show how unconscious biases serve to reinforce the gulf of disadvantage, so that people of colour – black people – do not progress. Over time, the silence cements an acceptance of things just being OK that way, just because they are.

The parishioners' testimonies are very personal, and are anonymised as a form of protection for the writers. For many readers, across our parish community and beyond – perhaps across the United Kingdom – these reflections will open up a whole landscape of painful and traumatic experience of which they had simply not been aware. We hope that these reflections lead all who read them to their own personal reflection about the reality of racism in their own lives. As one of the parishioners says, it is not enough to say "I

am not a racist". We can't just be passive in this; we must actively work together to uproot all forms of racism from our communities and from society. Now is an ideal time for change.

Elizabeth Uwalaka

AS A PARISH priest, I feel very passionately that we should always have the courage and integrity to bring into our shared community conversations the "difficult issues" which surround us in our world today – this makes our faith real and not something comfortable and cosy.

Watching the "Being Black and Catholic" videos which are posted on the Westminster Diocese website, in which four young black Catholics talk very honestly about their experiences of racism in their lives, including within the Church, helped me to understand that racism is not an "out there" problem. Racism is absolutely inside the Church as well.

Our Sunday evening Zoom calls began following the killing of George Floyd and the resulting wave of anti-racism protests last year. The depth of trust and sharing at these meetings, often of very painful and raw experiences, was very profound and moving.

**Fr Richard Nesbitt, Parish Priest,
Our Lady of Fátima, White City**

'I THINK EVERY black person living in the UK sooner or later in their lives will have 'the conversation' in which their parents/family will explain to them that simply because of the colour of their skin, some things will be more difficult for them in life, and that they will experience racism in different forms.

My family originally came from Jamaica and I remember as a young girl having a conversation with my grandmother in the kitchen while we were preparing supper together. She was cooking rice and she explained to me that you always have to wash the rice before you cook it, but I replied that I was sure you didn't need to do that. I remember how she looked me very seriously in the eye and then explained that her grandmother had been a slave, working on a rice plantation. All of the good-quality rice was exported abroad to countries like England while the dirty, poor-quality rice was left for the slaves who had to wash it to make sure that it was safe to eat. I also remember when she explained why our family lived in a very simple house up in the hills – because that was safer than living closer to the seashore when the slave traders would come ashore to abduct people and take them away as slaves. I have never forgotten what my grandmother taught me."

'I THINK THE main problem is that the majority of people just don't get it. I believe that to really understand someone's suffering, you have to experience something of their pain. And I am not sure that many white people ever truly 'get' racism and understand what it feels like to be discriminated against simply because it is not part of the daily reality of their lives. They don't experience, as we do, the horrendous racial abuse, bullying, violence, harassment, discrimination, racial profiling and much, much more – all because of the colour of our skin. When we try to discuss these subjects, our perspectives are repeatedly ignored or, worse, even gaslighted. We're told it's not a major issue and we should get over it. We're told not to 'play the race card'."

'I HAVE BEEN a member of Our Lady of Fátima Church for 25 years and, sadly, I have had many hurtful experiences of racism during this time. When stained-glass windows were installed a few years ago, for me it was really exciting to see for the first time black faces featured in the public artwork inside our church. Then I heard several white parishioners openly commenting about how disgusted they were with the images in the windows, which, according to them, looked like a 'bunch of refugees'. It made me wonder, how do refugees look? And isn't the best place to find comfort if you are a refugee in the house of God?

"One really horrible memory is a telephone

call I received from one of the parishioners to ask why the church toilet was dirty and when did we next plan to do the cleaning. I politely advised the individual that anyone can clean the toilet. Up until last year, I used to clean the presbytery with my children and two other parishioners. Several individuals on different occasions addressed me in a condescending way, saying that I should go and clean their homes, too. This could have been a joke, but it came from people I had never had a conversation with before and I did not take it as a joke. As a black person, you hear these comments differently than if you are a white person.

"When I first joined the church in 1995, individuals would often just move from a seat if you went to sit next to them. This is no longer happening. I am happy to say. However, it has been replaced by equally unacceptable and demeaning discriminatory behaviour that is so subtle that it can easily be overlooked. For instance, some individuals feel it is their duty to give us orders, akin to a master/servant mentality. We are made to feel like we cannot do anything right. Some individuals think it is their God-given right to tell us what to do and how to do it. I have overheard people in the church choir being taught how to pronounce English words and there was an occasion when we were referred to as 'uncivilised' because we were taking pictures at the altar after a First Holy Communion celebration."

"DURING SPECIAL occasions such as Easter and Christmas, I've found the reading ministry dominated by white readers and have questioned why we often don't get to see the diversity of our wider reading group at these times. It gives the message that there are people who decide that one group of people is better than another and therefore restrict others from having the opportunity to read at Mass. If there are people who perhaps need more support or training to be better readers, that's understandable – however, the white readers selected were often of mixed reading ability so it was confusing to see why these decisions were being made. As a reader, I do think that it's an honour to be part of the ministry and that we should humbly and dutifully wait to be assigned to fulfil that duty. At the same time, I do think it's important to speak up or to question so as to help understand why decisions are being made and always ensure they are made for the right reasons. People may think the point of who reads at Mass is a small one but it's not – it's about representation, it's about role-modelling, it's about inspiring others, it's about reliability, diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity – for all these reasons, it's important to have a racial mix and cross-representation."

"THERE'S A good mix of parishioners helping out in the church. However, I question whether we have enough visibility of black leaders within the parish. Sad to say, the roles I've often seen black parishioners fill have been in positions of servitude. By that, I specif-

ically mean cleaning and tea-giving – roles that are generally looked down upon or seen as of service and have in society, historically, been held by those in less affluent circumstances. I know we're all here to serve in imitation of Christ himself – but it feels as if we as a parish are holding outdated stereotypical and racist perspectives that don't serve us and do more harm than good. It's heart-breaking to know of all the talent that exists within the parish and not see this tapped into.

"When it comes to the charitable causes within the parish, such as Mary's Meals or Cafod Fast Day, we have a number of white parishioners who speak up on behalf of 'poor black people'. It feels like a 'white saviour complex' being played out on the sanctuary, painting a misleading or perhaps unbalanced picture of reality. The underlying message has felt like without white support leading the way, making a difference would not be possible. As a person of African heritage, I also feel frustrated that a more balanced view of our continent is not given."

"I WAS BROUGHT up by my aunts, my mother's big sisters – lovely, caring and prayerful ladies who transmitted to me the gift of faith. And I promised them to keep my faith when I left them to come to Europe. As a young Catholic girl, it was my duty to go to church every Sunday and be part of the Church. But the first time I went to church here in England, during the time for the sign of peace, people were pretending not to see me or spending more time with people they knew so as not to greet me. That was the first time, and the next Sunday was the same thing. When I saw this, I was really wondering if I would continue to go to church, but since I had promised my aunts to keep my faith alive, thanks be to God I didn't fail them and I have grown in my journey of faith. I felt really sad at the beginning and it was a big challenge to my faith."



www.ourladyoffatima.org.uk

These testimonies and reflections are taken from a booklet produced by the Parish of Our Lady of Fátima, "Rooting Out Racism from Our Parish". There is a link to the complete text booklet on the parish website:

Parish priest Fr Richard Nesbitt writes: "The group identified several changes that would help uproot different forms of racism from the life of every parish. They included: make sure leadership roles within the parish reflect the racial profile of the parish; make sure that different racial groups are equally represented in parish ministries such

"BEING A CHILD whose parents immigrated here in the 1960s, I had obviously heard their stories of racism. Having been born here in the UK and being considerably younger, I expected life for me to be different. Initially I would dismiss things as not possibly being racist incidents, especially as I was in a Catholic environment. I had a real fear of stating anything as being racist, because I did not want to be labelled as 'using the race card'."

"Within the parish I can recall experiencing newer members of the congregation who were maybe visiting or had just moved to the area, seemingly not wanting to sit near me or my family or shake hands when making the sign of peace. This resulted in me constantly wondering how visitors or newer congregation members will feel about my presence and about me being too physically near to them."

"As racism has become a huge discussion point everywhere, and of course in the Church, I have realised that I avoid people I don't recognise because I don't want to go through the whole awkwardness of seeing their faces when they realise I am sitting on their bench or am directly in front or behind them during the sign of peace. The sad thing for me is also that when they do shake my hand, I often convince myself they only did it because they had no choice, and not because they wanted to."

"Our parish and school community is widely multicultural, and the parish has done many things to appreciate and highlight the many different cultures we have. I think we have the community to champion being pioneers to end racism within the Catholic Church. I think we have the potential to inspire other parishes to start doing something to address the topic and also to offer support and guidance to them. It's important that we don't stop trying to bring these issues forward and that we never stop trying. After all, the only thing that can be achieved from doing nothing ... is nothing."

as readers and eucharistic ministers; bring in a greater diversity of religious imagery in the church so that it is not a sea of white-skinned depictions of Jesus, Mary and the saints;

make sure there is a diversity of musical styles in our Masses which reflects our multicultural community.

I am sure that the experiences of racism in our parish are echoed in many other communities – there is nothing extraordinary about the parish of Our Lady of Fátima. What perhaps is different is that we have at least begun to have the conversation about the reality of racism in our midst and how we can make the journey together to bring healing and change. If you would like to contact us with your own responses to what you read here or in our booklet, please visit:

parish.rcdow.org.uk/whitcity/

In the second of a series in which writers reflect on a place that is special to them, a poet and biographer recalls her visits to an ancient Balkan lake ringed by cave churches, monasteries and mosques / **By FIONA SAMPSON**

From the beautiful to the sublime

PHOTO: ALAMY ROBERT HARDING



SOMETIMES heat itself feels like a benison. On a dazzling September afternoon, the light comes as sheer off Lake Ohrid as a bray of shawms and trumpets. I grew up on the rainy west Welsh coast, and it doesn't matter how many times I return to south-east Europe, every time I find myself blinking in the flood of light, ready for some kind of transformation – or at least to freckle up a little.

In Wales, water's often at the heart of places the culture understands as letting in the spirit. But such "living water" – poets I translate tell me the Hebrew means, literally, "running water" – can be chilly and bracing, hidden between rocks or under rain-soaked foliage.

The chrim is something shivering and bright. St Issui's Spring, St Non's Well, Nanteos (Nightingale Stream), where a relic believed to be the Grail cup was kept for many years. In Ceredigion, yew trees bleed eucharistic resin, remote churchyards are still circular as they were at first Celtic foundation and a cuckoo calls on the high slopes of the "green desert" of the Elenydd. There's something private and

Lake Ohrid from the parapet of the Monastery of St Naum. Inset, Fiona Sampson

modest, coked out even, about this kind of spirituality.

Lake Ohrid, which lies on the border of North Macedonia and Albania, couldn't be more different. Apart from anything, it's enormously overt, its unmissable 358 square kilometres roughly the same size as Lake Garda. It's also deep – at its maximum to

288 metres – a legacy of tectonic formation. In fact, Ohrid/Ohrit lies in the middle of a chain of tectonic lakes, stretching from the even larger Skadar/Shkodër on the Montenegrin-Albanian border down to Orestiada/Kastoria in northern Greece. These doubled-up names are a reminder of how

contested this Balkan region remains. Still, Lake Ohrid is a Unesco World Heritage Site, and much of its shoreline now falls under various National Park and international nature reserve rubrics. Gradually, in the years since the wars that broke up the former Yugoslavia and since the end of Communism in Albania, a handful of lakeside towns have

once again become regional resorts; but by Western standards this is modest, low-rise development. So far, the swimmers and promenaders, the festivalgoers and holidaymakers drinking coffee on terraces and eating Ohrid carp, manage to make relatively little environmental impact.

Instead, the lake offers up its photogenic self pretty much wherever you stand: in Albania, which owns roughly one-third of Ohrit; in the Albanian-speaking, primarily Muslim district of western North Macedonia; or in the Macedonian-speaking, primarily Orthodox Christian region to the east of the little town of Struga, where the freezing River Drim rushes unexpectedly out of the lake. Blue headlands roll down into water whose own blue shifts from aquamarine on summer dawns, to the violet of autumnal evenings. The sandy soil of the foreshore lies mostly at the foot of deciduous forests. In the fishing villages vegetation has disappeared from working beaches, but elsewhere the water pools around reed beds rich with birdlife. There are storks and eagles. In summer, when I swim off Kališta or Radožda, the water is sluggish and warm, and eels slip between my toes. They used to come from the Sargasso Sea to spawn.

The legacy of Western European Romanticism, aligning the Beautiful with the Sublime, probably underlies some of the feeling Lake Ohrid gives me. But it's mixed with longing, the kind French poet Yves Bonnefoy admitted feeling for Armenian churches in his *The Arrière-pays*. Still, while Bonnefoy's was an Armenia of the mind, I'm a frequent visitor who was for years deeply involved with things Macedonian. So the sequential fall of headlands into the lake, guiding the eye onwards like the perspective wings in a proscenium stage, seems to me to echo the famous nineteenth-century Macedonian poem, "T'ga za Jug", or "Longing for the South".

The poem was written by Konstantin Miladinov who, with his brother Dimitar, was born and educated by the lake. Both became culture-founding writers, educators, ethnographers and advocates for their national language: both died in prison. But "T'ga za Jug" – composed not in prison but while Konstantin was pursuing advanced studies at Moscow University – speaks more widely to the experience of all those forced to leave the impoverished south to seek a better life in the chilly north. It's an anthem of longing dispossession in our inequitable world. That it was written in Struga dialect is part of its force:

It's dark here, dark surrounds me,
Darkness covers the earth
...
Give me wings to put on



And I'll fly to our own shores
Return to our own places,
To Ohrid and to Struga
Where the sunrise warms the soul
And sun brightens in the wooded
mountains ...

But the lake has its own extraordinary resonances. Settlement here goes back to Neolithic times. The water's ringed by religious sites: medieval cave churches, Orthodox Christian monasteries, Muslim Tekke and mosques. At the north end of the lake, high on a headland above the half-timbered Ottoman streets of Ohrid town, the basilica foundations at Plaošnik are marked with Romano-Christian graffiti; down at Lin in Albania, on the western shore, are the remains of a sixth-century Christian basilica with vivid mosaics.

Back across the Macedonian border at Radožda, a couple of miles up the coast, the thirteenth-century cave church dedicated to Archangel Michael seems simultaneously imperishable and fragile. A small breath of air inside the body of the rock, it has rounded, irregular walls covered with fading frescoes. These figures – the Archangel with his spear, the Last Supper – seem to infuse the rock or to emerge from it, the relationship between the two no longer one of image to surface. In candlelight, their messages appear to continually approach and recede.

"I leave the church with my fingers burning /God, don't let them burn out," wrote the friend who first brought me here, the poet Svetlana Hristova-Jocic. Until her death, she lived alone by the shore in the last house before the border. As we drank coffee together there, her vine-clad terrace was sunny and strung with red peppers. But it was a dangerous place for a woman to stay.

THE INTERNATIONAL fault line between Christianity and Islam that pierces the Balkans runs right through Ohrid Lake: a line as straight as the wake cut by one of the many smugglers' speedboats. Guns, drugs and women have long been trafficked across its blue waters.

Yet Hristova-Jocic saw the lake itself as both her protection and a source of meaning.

PHOTO: ALAMY, AGADINE VAN ZANDERBORG



Fresco (detail) in the cave church at Radožda

In "Blue Angelus", translated by Zoran Ancevski, she writes:

I hold my fingers in a lake.

[...]

A blue angel starts up.

He turns over one hundred
and seventy-seven pages of water.

I gather the Word, gilded.

Her house stood a mere 40 kilometres from that other contested border, with Greece. In the ninth century another pair of brothers, theologian saints Cyril and Methodius, left Thessaloniki in what is now Greek Macedonia, to work as Byzantine Christian missionaries in Moravia. This adventure into the Slav world required them to develop the first Slav alphabet: something more complex than the quasi-runic strokes (*cherty i rezy*), according to these ninth-century modernisers) thought already to have been in use. The Cyrillic alphabet is named for Cyril; but he's actually credited with devising the Glagolitic alphabet that preceded it. However, Sts Cyril and Methodius' students Sts Klement and Naum continued this double mission of proselytising and of orthography. Expelled from Great Moravia in 886, Klement moved to the lake's north shore. Here he raised the Plaošnik basil-

ica in which he's buried, and founded the Ohrid Literary School: where Naum succeeded him after two decades leading the Literary School of Pliska-Preslav. It was by these two literary schools that the Cyrillic alphabet was developed.

SO THE MONASTERY Sveti (Saint) Naum founded in 905 at the other end of the lake doesn't only contain his own shrine. It's in some senses a shrine to the origins of Cyrillic, too. Not that you feel this when you're there. There's no historiography; only a profound sense of the human here-and-now. St Naum is a patron of mental illness.

Whenever I visit the monastery that bears his name, there are people clustering at Naum's spring, collecting the water in plastic drinking bottles and little glass vials. Up on the terrace, where families pose for photos, you can see right across the lake: a wide expanse of water and – even on stormy days, when the water turns grey and choppy – of light reflected off that water. It is gilded, as Svetlana Hristova-Jocic saw; as she also saw how we can picture, in the parallel lines of its ripples, the deep history of writing and theology it contains.

But when it's my turn to stand at the parapet, what I chiefly see is blue space, and in it the undiminished possibility of transformation. The frescoed and gilded basilica, and the wide-angled wings of the monastery complex, are beautiful and smartly maintained. Balkan culture remains relatively un-hung-up on personal space, and inside the church itself there's a cheerful, muted jostling among the visitors. It seems repeated by the icons that crowd the walls and iconostasis. But step into the dark chapel of the shrine itself and you find yourself stepping in deeper in all sorts of ways. You wait your turn to place an offering, kneel, turn your ear to the stone of the tomb and hear the saint breathe. What is this breathing? Is it, perhaps, the lake water itself?

Fiona Sampson's latest book is *Two-Way Mirror: The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (Profile Books £20; Tablet price £18). She is emeritus professor, School of Humanities, University of Roehampton.



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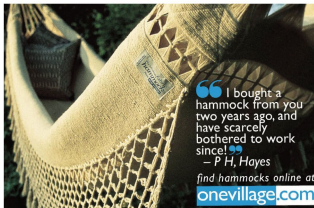
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The Conservative Party has a comfortable majority and appears well-established in previously solid Labour heartlands. Yet dissatisfaction and distaste for the leadership is growing / **By JULIA LANGDON**

Is England drifting out of the blue?

SOMETHING VERY strange is happening in Conservative politics in the course of this curious summer. There is a sense of political movement, of a shift somewhere, that things are somehow perceptibly changing; there is a fluctuation in the political weather. Is it deep underground or is it something in the wind? Scientists apparently find it difficult to substantiate the link between the strange behaviour of animals and a subsequent earthquake and yet the anecdotal evidence has been recorded since all the animals fled the city of Helike in ancient Greece before it disappeared on a winter's night in 373 B.C.

The anecdotal evidence in this case comes partly from the two most recent parliamen-

tary by-elections in England and, perhaps more tellingly, from what is going on just beneath the surface of our national consciousness in local government. And, of course, there is what might be characterised as the strange behaviour of Dominic Cummings, out of sight, but most definitely not unnoticed, nor unheard – particularly not by the Prime Minister.

Professor Sir John Curtice, whose all-knowing wisdom is such that I am developing a fantasy in which he could single-handedly stage a virtual by-election without actually bothering the voters, will be on to this in a flash. Correction: I've just checked him on Twitter and he is on to it already. The Conservatives are losing support

from voters "who are no longer quite sure about the direction of the Conservative Party under Boris Johnson", he observed. And that was weeks ago, after the Chesham and Amersham by-election when, out of the blue, so to speak, the Conservatives managed to lose an ultra-safe seat in the heart of the cushioned comforts of Buckinghamshire and the professor drew what seemed an obvious conclusion.

Yet what is taking place is more profound than that unexpected result. The Tory loss of such a seat was, of course, subject to imme-



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PHOTO: ALAMY/PA

Lib Dem leader Sir Ed Davey welcomes new MP Sarah Green to the Commons, after her by-election victory over the Tories

diate analysis and was blamed on two unpopular issues of public policy: the course of the HS2 railway line through the back gardens of Buckinghamshire and the decision to introduce less tortuous planning procedures and thus encourage more house-building in what were once the rural pastures of our green and pleasant countryside.

In reality, however, a Tory MP who was in the constituency on the day of the by-election forecast in the morning that there would be a Liberal Democrat landslide, and for quite different reasons. His view was that nine out of ten people who had previously declared an intention to vote Conservative were now proposing to vote Liberal Democrat because of the amorality within the Government. That was the reason also given later by the surprised new MP, Sarah Green. She felt there was a many-layered dissatisfaction with the Tories, which was best summed up by the phrase "It's just not cricket", which she heard repeatedly. "It's this idea that this is not a Conservative Party they associate themselves with," she said.

More telling, in its way, was the Conservatives' failure then to take the seat of Batley and Spen from Labour, another brick in the northern Red Wall that had been widely expected to be dislodged with some ease – not least because of the split Labour vote and the peculiarities of the faith vote exploited by the intervention of George Galloway and expertly spelled out on these pages last week by my esteemed colleague, Paul Routledge. It does seem also likely that Matt Hancock's behaviour was relevant – not, importantly, because of his personal morals but because he demonstrated his failure to adhere to the rules of Mrs Do-as-you-would-be-done-by.

One evident difference between the two constituencies is the social demographic, but, as recent research emerging from the work conducted by Dr Frank Luntz for the Centre for Policy Studies has shown, this is increas-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Christopher Lamb



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

ingly irrelevant in the UK. People who are going to vote Conservative will do so for the same reasons wherever they live. The breakdown in traditional political party divisions is more cultural than economic. The former Tory leader William Hague has recently been making the same point: Tory voters want to see economic competence, good public services, tough rules on crime and immigration, support for local communities and (as he wrote recently in his *Times* column) more focus on economic inequality. He mentioned Brexit, too. But how different is all of that from what Labour or Liberal Democrat voters want as well?

Let us look beneath the surface. Unnoticed by most – except, undoubtedly, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, as it occurred within his Esher and Walton constituency – was a by-election for Elmbridge Borough Council in Surrey, which took place on the same day as Labour's narrow-squeak victory in Batley and Spen. The seat at issue was in the Cobham and Downside ward, the safest Conservative area of his parliamentary constituency and which has been such for 60 years, and it was won with a resounding victory by the Liberal Democrat candidate, by 890 votes to 778. Mr Raab's constituency has been subject to the attention of the Boundary Commissioners, who have proposed its division for the next election, and he will have just cause for anxiety about the loss of his safest seat even in a council by-election.

THERE WERE further straws in the wind in the May local elections in England. Yes, the incumbent Conservatives did well, increasing the number of councils they control and the overall total of councillors, but why did they lose seats in East Sussex to the Green Party? Why did they lose eight seats in West Sussex – five of them to Labour in Worthing? "The Prime Minister takes the South for granted at his peril," a Conservative Party analyst told me this week. "All over the South, the party's MPs are increasingly nervous."

This may seem irrelevant, given the Conservatives' continuing popularity in the opinion polls. There are many causes for anxiety: about the maintenance of the Union, about what is happening in Northern Ireland, about the unforeseen short-term implications of Brexit – the shortage of lorry drivers, for example – and the known unknowns (copyright: the late Donald Rumsfeld) about future trade. But the apparent Teflon-tough political invincibility of Boris Johnson has continued to hold. The sages of psephology have reported with general astonishment throughout the last two years of his leadership that it doesn't seem to matter what Johnson says or does; nothing sticks to him.

"Where is the rage?" one leading Labour politician bemoaned privately the other day. "Where is the cold fury? We have corruption.

We have nepotism. We have irresponsible clowning. Why don't we have an articulate expression of rage in response? Why isn't anyone striking back against this?" The answer seems to be that the rules of normal politics have been suspended for these two years, because of Brexit and the pandemic, and there has been no meaningful parliamentary opposition to the Conservatives because neither the Labour Party nor the Liberal Democrats has been able to produce a leader with sufficient political charisma to lay a finger on the Prime Minister's implacable supremacy.

IS IT NOT, PERHAPS, from within the Conservative Party itself that the sense of a need for change is emerging? There is certainly disquiet within the party at Westminster. One example of that is the victory of Sir Graham Brady in a challenge to his chairmanship of the backbench 1922 Committee. He defeated Heather Wheeler, the MP for South Derbyshire, who stood against him in what was seen as an attempt by Number 10 to dislodge him as an inconvenient tenant of his influential post, in which he has openly asserted the need for backbenchers to show their independence. Brady has been particularly critical of the restrictions imposed on the populace by the pandemic, reflecting a widely-held view within the party.

Tory MPs have been anxious to slough off this encumbrance to "normality", as is now being endorsed by Johnson, despite the concerns of some scientists and sections of the public about next week's so-called "Freedom Day" coinciding with an alarming spike in coronavirus cases. By the same token, there is resentment among Tory MPs about the reluctance of the Speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, to lift some of the rules that have restricted

parliamentary activity. He is felt to have been unduly cautious. "Parliament is in danger of falling apart," one backbencher told me. It is not widely recognised that because the pandemic rules allow an MP who is not personally attending parliament to give his or her vote by proxy to a colleague, the government Whips Office have hoovered

up these proxies. In consequence, the Chief Whip, Mark Spencer, has 152 votes in his pocket should the going get rough.

The signs are that it may well do so. Johnson has few friends in politics and fewer still these days in the press. As one of his former besties, Dominic Cummings, categorises him, so tellingly, as an out-of-control shopping trolley careering across the aisles of a supermarket, even the *Times*' leader-writer has observed that his cavalier approach to rules, and reluctance to take either decisions or responsibility, is now cutting into public opinion. Perhaps the wheels may soon come off.

Julia Langdon is *The Tablet*'s lobby correspondent.

Force of nature

BY AUSTEN IVEREIGH

In this full thrust of summer on our little farm, you'll want me to wax about the gushing hedgerows, the meadow grasses spurting skywards, the thrumming of insects, that sort of thing. Yet for all the beauty of it, what really strikes me is the sheer power of the thing.

Maybe because of our frosty May, when seeds failed to germinate and waves of slugs pounded seedlings, the vehemence of the growth in June has quite bowled us over. The veg garden looks like the Amazon, full of vast curling things, and the grasses in the fields are racing to reproduce themselves. The chickens, turbocharged by mealworm and the long daylight, lay eggs at full

throttle. You can't keep up. It's as Jesus says in Mark 4 about a man sowing seed which sprouts and grows while he sleeps, "he knows not how". We can say *what* happens, describe it scientifically; but *how* the heck? And then when it's fruiting, "at once he sends out the sickle, because the harvest is come". You can't hang around.

We think of the tempo of nature as slow, and of ourselves as fast. But is that right? By the time we finally got the big polytunnel up, the potted tomatoes were demanding *Lebensraum*; before we knew it, the hedgerow we planted in March was engulfed in grass and nettles; and of course the irrigation system –

interconnected 1,000-litre tanks harvesting barn-roof rain, plus a submersible pump extracting from our 18-foot well – was installed too late for the two-week dry patch, and we lost the odd tree sapling.

Now everything demands water and nutrients, and the long days mean you never stop, endlessly distracted by urgent tasks. And in the midst of it all, we had the ewes shorn, lost one to arthritis and acquired two boy lambs, Bruce and Barack. Now we have bags of Ryeland wool to put round the veg beds (deters slugs, feeds

the soil) and mulch the trees.

St Irenaeus said that creatures can't see or describe God "in his own nature and in all his greatness", yet through his Word, through Creation, you can see "there is one God the Father, who holds all things together and gives them their being". You get to glimpse the interplay of elements that, as Pope Francis learned from Romano Guardini, are counterposed, yet never in contradiction. Yet for all its awesomeness, its urgency, this sovereignty is unarmed, vulnerable: it invites us to sow, tend and harvest, to protect our vegetables with wool from our sheep's backs. Ecological conversion means learning from it, respecting it, being amazed and even exhausted by it – yet fed and revived by it. Did I mention the strawberries?



■ Papal biographer Austen Ivereigh moved with his wife and dogs to a small farm near Hereford with old barns and some acres, full of talk of regeneration. He blames *Laudato Si'*.

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On 30 July, the outstanding canon lawyer of the twentieth century, Ladislav Orsy SJ, celebrates his hundredth birthday. His influence on several generations of Catholic theologians has been profound / By JAMES F. KEENAN

‘As long as I breathe, I hope’

AN ENCOUNTER with “Les”, as he is known, is always electrifying. You feel charged by his energy, his buoyancy. He’s engaging, welcoming, witty; he delights in irony; he’s affirming, consoling, a natural storyteller; and he’s always upbeat, hardly pausing to catch his breath as he skips from one humorous insight to another.

You would never guess the struggles Orsy has faced, nor the pain and anxiety he has borne, nor the matter-of-fact way that he understands the Catholic Church, with all its (what shall we call them?) contradictions. The man who invites us – perhaps more compellingly than any other living Catholic theologian – always to be open to the Spirit is someone who has himself walked with the Spirit his entire life.

I am one of many former students whose lives – and understanding of their ministry – have been transformed by Orsy’s personality and teaching. The canon lawyer Sharon Euart RSM told me that Les shared with her his motto – *dum spiro, spero* – which he translates as “As long as I breathe, I hope.” “When I think of Fr Orsy or talk with him or visit him,” Euart says, “even as he nears 100 years of life, this hope is evident in his expression and in the joy with which he looks towards boundless new horizons of God’s love for all people and Creation.”

This hope is rooted in a sometimes difficult past. Reflecting on her time with him at the



Ladislav Orsy: ‘an extraordinary life’

Catholic University of America, the theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson CSJ told me: “We used to go for walks in the National Arboretum in D.C. A large pond had a contingent of ducks and geese. He never failed to comment on how you would never see this in Hungary: ‘During the war, – people would catch and eat them.’ It shocked me into realising the deprivation he had experi-

enced.” As his current superior, Thomas McCoog SJ, put it to me, this “trustful openness, a placing of himself in God’s hands” that we all see in Les has been shaped by the adventures of an extraordinary life, his decision to become a Jesuit priest, his escape from Hungary and the subsequent journey through Europe and finally on to the United States.

Ladislav M. Orsy was born in Pusztacsanak, Hungary, in 1921 but raised in the ancient city of Székesfehérvár, where Hungary’s first kings were crowned and buried. He entered the Society of Jesus at 22; a few months later, Soviet troops arrived at the college where he was studying. After the war ended, he studied in Rome. As Hungary fell under Soviet control, he studied theology in Leuven, Belgium; took a doctorate in canon law from the Gregorian and then an MA in jurisprudence from Oxford. He went on to teach at the Gregorian, at Fordham, and at the Catholic University of America; he was giving courses at Georgetown well into his nineties.

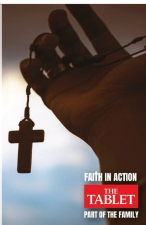
ORSY WAS teaching in Rome during the Second Vatican Council, and became widely known in 1968 with the publication of *Open to the Spirit: Religious Life After Vatican II*, a tour de force. His reflections on the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, the very pathways by which men and women bind themselves to religious congregations, liberated a generation of priests and Religious, transforming our understanding of our commitments. By “consecrated virginity”, a Religious “could enter into the absolute value of God’s friendship”, he explained; real poverty “lies in giving myself away”; obedience is not the virtue of individual persons, but of the whole community, which as such subjects itself to God’s will. Each community exists to serve its mission; its superiors’ authority derives from the community’s understanding of what it is called to do; so

‘I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Matthew 25:36

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the structural governance of religious orders could hardly be in the hands of one person only. "To enlist the wisdom of members may require great skill, but it is indispensable for good government," Orsy wrote. His insight that the community rather than the individual is the place where the will of God can best be discerned was a revelation to many priests and Religious.

IN ORSY'S later writings, the Spirit not only inspires but also partners. While many think of the Spirit as so disembodied that the idea of friendship with the Spirit is too intangible to make sense, Orsy thinks otherwise. In his celebrated lecture, "In the Service of the Holy Spirit: The Ecclesial Vocation of the Canon Lawyer," he says the Spirit "does not want mere service, he wants the intelligent and free cooperation of his creatures. He does it in many and various ways; one of them is by demanding their help in building structures and setting norms for the community of his people, the community which is the unfolding Kingdom of God." In its clarity and simplicity here is the ecclesial vocation of canon lawyers: "to be partners of the Spirit in building structures and setting norms for the unfolding kingdom of God." He refers to this "partnership" with the Spirit nine times.

And by partnering with the Spirit, we become more like the Spirit. At 93, Orsy wrote on the divine dignity of the human person, continually referring to the agency of the Spirit, who moves, teaches, leads and partners, and who "cannot be extinguished". Orsy adds, in a phrase that his own life embodies: "The energies of the Spirit are explosive by nature; impeded in one direction, they find another."

ANOTHER OF his students, Michael Hilbert SJ, who went on to become dean of the Gregorian University's canon law faculty, reminded me that our beloved teacher always emphasised the ecclesiological context in which canon law is situated. Orsy may be the originator of the old joke: "Canon law is like a bedpan – normally kept out of sight but always immediately available when needed." Hilbert told me that whenever he needed advice about his life or career, he would turn first to Les. Like Johnson, Euart and Hilbert, I too have often privately sought Fr Orsy's counsel when facing a fork in the road. I have never left these encounters without feeling wiser and more hopeful. He partnered with all of us in our struggles and our modest triumphs.

Sharon Euart captures what it has been like to have had the Spirit's partner as our teacher. She told me of a recent visit, where Les had shared an informal history of how the word "collegiality" had eventually found its way into the documents of the council. "I was mesmerised listening to him, wanting to absorb all he was saying."

James F. Keenan SJ is a moral theologian, bioethicist, and the Canisius Professor of Theology at Boston College.

Perhaps the Conservative Party needs to stop sending mixed messages



What a pity England's great achievement at Wembley in the Euro 2020 final was marred by racist abuse. The match

was decided by the poker game of a penalty shoot-out. Three England players, who happened to be Black, failed to score. Only two Italians failed similarly, so that was it.

But that outcome and the response to it has a silver lining. Opinion-formers from Right to Left were unanimous in their condemnation of the racism directed at those three young men. The Prime Minister called it "appalling" and the Home Secretary said she was "disgusted". What is notable, however, is that the game had begun with England and Italy players all "taking the knee", which has become a universal symbol of anti-racism. And the Conservative Party has been trying desperately to politicise such gestures by labelling them "woke". There are votes to be had, it had decided, in being "anti-woke". Perhaps it needs to stop sending mixed messages.

The concept of "woke" began life in the US, where it described the life-changing experience of waking up – i.e. having one's consciousness raised – to the all-pervading presence of systemic racism and discrimination in the lives of Black people. But woke has now become a term of abuse used by mainly white right-wing commentators and politicians in Britain to refer to what used to be sneered at as "political correctness gone mad".

There is allegedly a "culture war" going on in Britain – again an idea imported uncritically from the United States – between the promoters of an alleged woke ideology, and those who oppose it. It is fairly transparent that ministers and party spokesmen have been briefed to spot woke issues in the news, however trivial, and make remarks on the record including words like "absurd", "ridiculous" and "ludicrous".

The Black Lives Matter movement is a number-one target. Anyone who feels that opposing racism is worth making a spectacle of themselves by kneeling – "taking the knee" – can expect to be jeered at as an example of woke. There was jeering at Wembley, too, though drowned out by cheering. Some of what goes on under the right-wing anti-woke umbrella is as close to racism as public figures dare to be. They don't actually say "Black lives don't matter" but they point

to various extreme manifestations of the BLM phenomenon in the States, such as the call to "defund the police" or to "overthrow capitalism", to discredit it.

This indignation is synthetic and dishonest. It ignores the fact that such calls make no sense in Britain, where the principal gripe about police budgets from the Left is that they have been cut too much. As for overthrowing capitalism, that is what Jeremy Corbyn was for – and that ship has sailed. A subset of this anti-woke feeling is the spurious accusation that much of the broadcast media, especially the BBC, is in the grip of woke. The anti-woke movement even has its own new television station called GB News, designed to correct the alleged imbalances and biases not just of the BBC but also Sky, Channel 4 and ITV.

If you are an American, it is clearly to your advantage to be White rather than Black, a fact which is expressed by the term "White privilege". But such tools of analysis do not help us much in the UK. There are certainly sections of the British population which are "under-privileged". The usual marker for under-privilege is low family income. The majority are White, for the simple reason that they live in a mainly White society – White under-privilege, indeed. It is undeniable, however, that prejudice and discrimination against non-White people still exists. If opposing it means taking the knee then I would do so myself.

Andrew Neil, chairman of GB News, presented the station's manifesto on its opening night. His thesis seemed to be that there was a woke "elite" in Britain who fed the public the news they wanted it to see instead of the news that actually existed – "the news that mattered to you", as he put it. That was what GB News would now provide. But this was what the broadcasters at BBC, Sky, Channel 4 and ITV deliver every day. They are among the shining lights of British, indeed world, broadcasting. Indeed, they set the standard by which GB News will be judged.

The BBC's attempts to avoid bias sometimes even verge on the excessive. It makes mistakes; so do we all. GB News has made several already. But if that – and worse, Fox News in the US – is what the Right want to replace it with, then God help us. Maybe it is time we woke up to that.



'How marvellously human'

YOU CAN hear the tenderness and yearning, as well as the pain and grief, in Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's voice as she narrates her most recent book, *Notes on Grief* (Fourth Estate). Her beloved father, a university professor, died in June last year, and "for the rest of my life," she says, "I will live with hands outstretched for things that are no longer there."

This February her mother, the first female registrar of the University of Nigeria, died. "How does a heart break twice?" Adichie wrote. "To still be immersed in grief, barely breathing again, and then to be plunged callously back into a sorrow you cannot even articulate." It was in this state of emotional upheaval that Adichie turned to read Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. "It felt like a gift which, until I received it, I did not know I needed," she writes in a remarkable newspaper article published last week in *L'Osservatore Romano*.

The Nigerian writer, born in Enugu in 1977, whose novels include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, was a zealous youthful apologist, insisting on arguing about



transubstantiation with her Protestant school friends. "As a teenager, I wore my Catholic identity like a favorite dress, joyfully and reverently." But over the years, "my pious passion withered." As so often, it was an accumulation of little things. A gentle and devout couple banned from communion by her parish priest because their daughter had married an Anglican; poor people refused burials because they owed money to the church; the preoccupation of too many Nigerian priests and bishops with money. "I have seen church doors locked to prevent people from leaving during

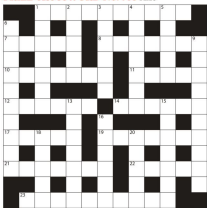
fundraisings. I have watched a priest announce his account details to a funeral congregation and then prance about the altar, phone in hand, waiting for alerts from the bank to appear on his phone screen."

NOW, "driven by grief's hunger", Adichie has begun again to regularly attend Sunday Mass. This "slow return" came from conversations with a priest and a bishop, which had shown her the truth of some words of Pope Francis: "We can choose to cultivate kindness. Those who do so become stars shining in the midst of darkness." And Pope Francis' invitation to "dream" has sparked the novelist's own imagination. "I imagine a change in the Church's relentless prioritizing of law over love," she writes. "I imagine a Church filled with respect for clergy but free of that ever-present cowering air. I imagine a Church where the yarden is not mean-faced and does not bang joylessly on the pews, where children are not treated harshly, where the priest does not smack a Mass server at the altar during Mass. A place that might be described with these words, which Pope Francis uses in reference to people who care in concrete ways about others: 'How marvellously human.'"

Notes on Grief by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie is available from Audible Audiobooks.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 765 Axe



Across

- 1 Premier holy site is desecrated within, where all gods are believed (10)
- 7 Sophisticated name in the end is not used for pope (5)
- 8 Services 7 Across, for one, gets right into, having senior backing (7)
- 10 One who's beatified is one adored at heart (7)
- 11 CIA infamously detained South African patriarch (5)
- 12 English friars contracted for Texan capital? (6)
- 14 Tom's English; goddess is Greek (6)
- 17 One hit religion (5)

- 19 Gold wretched Haran pocketed in exchange for the threshers (7)
 - 21 Extra time needed for some versions of morning service? (7)
 - 22 Paul's missionary, American bird, is the trail blazer (5)
 - 23 Pain artist to compromise in a place named in honour of Herod's dad (10)
- Down**
- 1 Roman name of tavern – Latin one to you and me – venerated Maltese bishop (7)
 - 2 Pope's looking over ocean property (5)
 - 3 Anglican stole tenor from composer (6)
 - 4 Issue of Esau's over the little money poem raised (7)

- 5 Bachelor suppressed by female is "a worthless fellow", Samuel says (5)
- 6 Upside turn? Aspirin's needed for something one can't stomach in Rome (10)
- 9 Piece of land in South Dakota army's got under bread for the masses (6,4)
- 13 Ones protecting 17 Across' turbulent sect? (7)
- 15 Benefice's income's put up with Indian money on top (7)
- 16 From a tree surrounded by sheep, sounds like the usurper (6)
- 18 Tongue – the first among languages – ancient to Italian nomads (5)
- 20 Mass stand, a naval type following the French Revolution (5)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 17 July, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Jesus, Christian Art and Catholicism – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

■ We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.

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SUDOKU | Hard

	5	7	4				6	
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8					7	5	1	

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 26 June puzzle

5	6	9	2	7	1	4	8	3
7	8	1	3	4	6	9	5	2
2	3	4	5	9	8	1	6	7
6	9	2	8	1	3	5	7	4
8	7	5	6	2	4	3	9	1
4	1	3	9	5	7	6	2	8
3	2	6	1	8	5	7	4	9
1	4	8	7	6	9	2	3	5
9	5	7	4	3	2	8	1	6

Solution to the 26 June crossword No. 762

Across: 7 Chateaus; 8 Alhaz; 9 Medina; 10 Alharah; 11 Berachah; 13 Galat; 15 Dinaht; 17 Baladad; 19 Gishpa; 21 Azareh; 23 Arba; 24 Ahinadab.
Down: 1 Phoebe; 2 Levi; 3 Beraiah; 4 Asia; 5 Ramayana; 6 Gadara; 12 Amashra; 14 Galatia; 16 Isidro; 18 Arelas; 20 Arad; 22 Agag.

LETTERS

• THE EDITOR OF THE TABLET •

✉ 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY • letters@thetablet.co.uk

All correspondence, including email, must give a full postal address and contact telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

Ulster legacy

● Thank you for your leading article ("There must be truth about the Troubles", 10 July) concerning British soldiers' behaviour. As an officer who commanded soldiers on the streets of Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, I would like to confirm that any misbehaviour or illegal conduct by British service personnel should be dealt with immediately in the appropriate court, military or civilian.

Please now follow up with an article as to why the many hundreds of terrorists, both loyalist and republican, who committed appalling atrocities, are not being pursued with equal vigour?

(MAJOR, RTD) JEREMY OLIVER
GODALMING, SURREY

Null and void

● Sara Maitland (Column, 10 July) comments on the weirdness of the annulment process. During the pontificate of Paul VI I attended a seminar on marriage run by the then Mgr Vincent Nichols. I was the only woman among some very pastoral priests. The difficulty of obtaining evidence for an annulment was stressed.

The question was if a priest was dealing with a divorcee who had remarried but to whom the official process of annulment was nigh on impossible, could that priest, on hearing the facts of the case, which, if put before a tribunal would call the first marriage null, allow that remarried Catholic to receive Communion? Mgr Nichols said yes. The joy coming from those priests was obvious and moving. Alas, John Paul II reversed this liberty and the choice for such couples to live as brother and sister or go without the Eucharist was re-enforced.

Is this something the future Synod might urgently discuss?
ELIZABETH PRICE
LINTON, KENT

Called to serve

● Your photograph on page three (Contents, 3 July) showed

♦ TOPIC OF THE WEEK ♦

The meanings of the Eucharist

MUCHAS I applaud Timothy Macnaught's aspiration for a rethinking of the doctrine on the Eucharist (Letters, 3 July). I feel that a more realistic goal would be that the Church abandon its insistence that adherence to the theory of transubstantiation necessitates the exclusion of those who do not subscribe to it.

In "One Bread One Body" (1998), our bishops tried to justify the ban on eucharistic sharing on the grounds that "there can be ... no full unity in the Eucharist without a shared understanding of all that the Eucharist contains and signifies". But why? There is no indication that those present at the Last Supper had a shared understanding, or any understanding at all, of what Christ was doing. And considering the number of occasions recorded in the Gospels when Christ's followers missed the point, and had to have things spelled out to them, the likelihood is that there was no shared understanding at the Last Supper.

Implicit in the sentence quoted above is the extraordinary assumption that all that the Eucharist signifies has been discovered, that this many-faceted mystery has been comprehensively explained, and there are no more insights to be gained.

BERNARD WHELAN
BEESTON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

SUSAN ROLLINS (Letters, 10 July) has hit the nail on the head. In Catholic tradition the Mass was the re-presentation of the sacrificial death-and-resurrection of Jesus. Time was collapsed; and in the final doxology of the prayers of consecration Jesus became our sacrifice to the Father.

This was always the true liturgical high point of the Eucharist, and Holy Communion followed from it. Moreover, the priest stood at the head of his congregation leading us through these sacred mysteries, all of us facing the same way.

Now, the priest faces us on the "wrong" side of the altar. This has been disastrous, leading to a reduction of the Mass to the commemoration of the Last Supper. It has also promoted a resurgent clericalism ("we" are on one side, "they" on the other), and it places an emphasis on the person of the priest at the expense of his office.

Such was neither the spirit nor the letter of Vatican II. Unity is fractured, and people have simply walked away. And if you read *Sacrosanctum Concilium* you will not find authorisation for the priest facing his congregation. Cardinal Robert Sarah is proven correct.

JOHN PICTON
EVESHAM, WORCESTERSHIRE

JESUS DID not say "this symbolises my body", nor did he say "this has changed into my body". He said simply "this is my body", and we should take that as it stands without elaboration.

The word "transubstantiation", which emerged after the Church discovered the philosophy of Aristotle with its concepts of "substance" and "accident", is an attempt to describe a process which is beyond our conception. We should simply accept that "this is my body", without attempting to interpret it further.

ALAN PAVELIN
CHISLEHURST, KENT

four priests ordained at Westminster Cathedral. In contrast, the Anglican Bishop of Leeds ordained 23 priests at Ripon Cathedral and the Anglican Bishop of St Asaph, a small diocese in North Wales, ordained nine priests. Thirty-two priests in just two dioceses comprising married men and, hold your breath, women!

The Anglican Church recognises that many outside the celibate ranks are called to serve. Our hierarchy, buried in an out-of-date world of absolute power, refuse to acknowledge

that there is a problem. Their solution is to close churches rather than face the obvious. Will they even consider married priests and women priests? No, and they are so locked into retaining power that the thought of recruiting the laity to Services of Word and Holy Communion and thereby saving churches sends them into panic. In Wrexham diocese alone there are 22 churches under threat of closure.

When are the hierarchy going to wake up to the obvious and involve the laity, married men

and women, in all aspects of church life? We need priests, and we need them now.

JOHN LEWIS
DEGANWY, CONWY

Reporting abuse

● Sarah Sheils (Letters, 26 June) states that "legislation ... made it a duty for teachers or anyone working in a school to report any abuse ... to the police or child protection authorities".

This is a common misconception. Relatedly the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Home Office confirmed the non-existence of such law on 21 July 2016 when it published its consultation "Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse and Neglect".

Mandatory reporting (MR) law requires those working in Regulated Activities to report known and suspected child abuse on reasonable grounds. Some form of MR exists in the majority of jurisdictions on all four continents. It is inconceivable it will not be the primary recommendation in the final report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. At present, an employee working in any Regulated Activity who makes a discretionary safeguarding referral is a whistleblower who has to go rogue to do the right thing.

MR legislation improves the number and quality of referrals to the local authority or the police. It supports good personnel who want to do the right thing and provides immunity from prosecution should a referral made in good faith then not be made out in law. Well-designed MR is a key component of safeguarding.

TOM PERRY

FOUNDER, MANDATE NOW

Laloux remembered

● Just to set the record straight, Fernand Laloux's artificial leg was not the result of war service

(Letters, 10 July) but of a stroke in 1963. One leg was amputated above the knee. Fernand was still able to play the organ better than many two-legged players. The lumps on his head had been caused by the insertion of a metal plate during an operation in the 1950s. Removal of the plate left a rectangular scar.

In many ways Fernand Laloux was my musical "godfather". I was the only one of his Wimbledon College students to obtain an S-level in music, and he organised my first organist position as assistant to Guy Weitz at Farm Street when I was still only 16. On Fernand's death seven years later, I was named his musical executor and took over the directing of his chamber choir, the Bee Singers.

It is worth recalling that Fernand composed the official Roman Catholic contribution to the post-war Festival of Britain. A performance of his setting of *The Dream of Gerontius* was performed at the Royal Festival Hall in 1951, half a century after the premiere of Elgar's setting in Birmingham. Unlike Elgar, who only set extracts from Newman's poem, Laloux set the entire text.

PAUL INWOOD

HAVANT, HAMPSHIRE

End of an era

● Joyce's portrait of Cardinal Cullen in *Ulysses* came to mind when I read of his second burial

in the vaults of the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin (News Briefing, 3 July), and although it was not meant as a compliment it did catch a sense of the huge intellectual gifts which God gave to him as a linguist and a theologian who most famously worked on drafting the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The disturbance of his rest marked the final chapter in the story of the great Dublin diocesan seminary at Clonliffe, where he had been buried in 1878. It also marks the passing of the great institutional Church which he helped build and presided over in the nineteenth century with its epic parochial and religious structures.

There certainly was a death here, but also a birth of a new way of being Church which will be radically different from the old and which will be painful in its coming.

(VERY REV) PETER O'REILLY
DUBLIN

Think again

● Melanie McDonagh

(Notebook, 3 July) says that maybe religious people are less likely to be depressed because "God does answer prayers". I worked in the chaplaincy department of Europe's largest acute hospital for over a decade. If any of our chaplains had even hinted at the kind of thinking that lies behind that sentence,

they would have been out on their ear.

Melanie should spend a moment imagining how her words will be read by the mother who has lost a child, by the soldier waking up to discover he's lost three limbs, by the father living with a son's psychosis. Depression is not a weakness. Depression is not a failure in faith. Experiencing depression does not mean that God is failing to answer your prayers. It doesn't mean that you haven't prayed well enough.

It just means you're not very well at the moment. Like a broken arm, depression can be fixed with the right treatment and the right support.

EMMA FOX WILSON
BIRMINGHAM

What bishops cost

● I was surprised to read that every bishop in the Church of England costs £120,000 per year in maintaining their houses and paying their expenses and stipends. I wonder what the similar expenditure is for Catholic bishops. All parishes and dioceses must submit annual accounts, but these are rarely made public.

The generous women and men in the pews should have public scrutiny of all diocesan expenses, including the costs of our bishops.

(FR) TOM GRUFFERY
ALVERSTOKE, HAMPSHIRE

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

The mystery of God's love is not that our pain is taken away, but that God first wants to share that pain with us. Out of this divine solidarity comes new life. Jesus' being moved in the centre of his being by human pain is indeed a movement toward new life. God is our God, the God of the living. In the divine word of God, life is always born again... The truly good news is that God is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, a God of revenge, but a God who is moved by our pains and participates in the fullness of the human struggle.

HENRI NOUWEN

FROM COMPASSION: A REFLECTION ON
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (DARTON, LONGMAN &
TODD, 2008)

We are his joy, his reward, his glory, his crown. For his soul's health a man is sometimes left on his own; but his sin is not always the cause. Bliss is lasting; pain is passing... It is not God's will that we should linger over pain, but that we should pass over it quickly to find joy that lasts and never ends. It is God's will that we should rejoice with him in our salvation, and that we should be cheered and strengthened by it. He wants our soul to delight in its salvation, through his grace.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

FROM ENFOLDED IN LOVE, EDITED BY
ROBERT LLEWELYN (DARTON, LONGMAN &
TODD, 2004)



What is a religion worth which costs you nothing? What is a sense of God worth which would be at your disposal, capable of being comfortably elicited when and where you please? It is far, far more God who must hold us, than we who must hold Him. And we get trained in these darknesses into that sense of our impotence without which the very presence of God becomes a snare.

FRIEDRICH VON HUGEL

FROM LETTERS FROM BARON VON HUGEL TO
A NIECE, EDITED BY GWENDOLEN GREENE
(J.M. DENT & SONS, 1928)

CALENDAR

Sunday 18 July:
Sixteenth Sunday of the Year (Year B)
Sunday 19 July:
Feast of the Most Holy Trinity
Tuesday 20 July:
Feast of St Apollinaris, Bishop and Martyr
Wednesday 21 July:
Feast of St Lawrence of Brindisi, Priest and Doctor
Thursday 22 July:
St Mary Magdalene
Friday 23 July:
St Bridget of Sweden, Patron of Europe
Saturday 24 July:
Feast of St Shabel Makhlef, Priest
Sunday 25 July:
Seventeenth Sunday of the Year

For the Extraordinary Form calendar
go to www.ifs.org.uk

Puccini's **TURANDOT** from the New York Met, free on July 18 for 23 hours • **THE BERNINA EXPRESS: A TRAIN THROUGH THE ALPS**, Arte documentary

Portable Sculpture, group exhibition, **HENRY MOORE INSTITUTE** • All links at WWW.TINYURL.COM/TABLETDIGITALARTS

Luminous vision

How did a German expressionist come to paint murals across a swathe of London churches? By **Laura Gascoigne**

PHOTOS: WILSON/OWHME, JAN PETERSON/CEZ



In urgent need of restoration: Hans Feibusch's *Crucifixion* at St John's Waterloo in central London

AMONG THE lesser-known pictures by war photographer Robert Capa is a shot of a priest in a chasuble conducting a service in front of an altar. The wall behind is pockmarked, but the priest seems so calm and composed that it's a while before you notice the east window has blown out and the church has no roof.

The church in Capa's picture, hit by a fire-bomb in December 1940, is St John's Waterloo in London: today, a mural of *The Crucifixion* fills the place of the window. Commissioned for the building's rededication as the church of the Festival of Britain in 1951, the mural is one of more than 30 by the same artist decorating the walls of many rebuilt Anglican churches after the war. His name? Hans Feibusch: a German expressionist artist, born Jewish.

If you haven't heard of him, it's because you don't belong to one of the parishes lucky enough to enjoy the benefits of his labours. Never quite fitting the "Modern British" label, Feibusch has been half-forgotten by his adoptive country. But that may be about to change thanks to a restoration campaign by St John's, which has put this neglected artist back under the spotlight. Half the £50,000 cost of conserving Feibusch's flaking *Crucifixion* and smaller *Adoration of the Shepherds* (detail, overleaf) altarpiece has been raised.

How, then, did a German Jewish artist come to be responsible for visually interpreting the Christian story to some 30 congregations of English Anglicans? Thanks to Hitler, is the answer. In 1933, the 35-year-old Feibusch was at a meeting of his local Frankfurt Art Association when a man in Nazi uniform walked in, pointed to all the Jewish members and told them they'd never work again. Feibusch took the hint and left for London. Four years later his work was included in the Nazis' notorious Degenerate Art Exhibition; refused a German passport, he was granted British citizenship. There was no going back.

In England, where German expressionism had not caught on, Feibusch initially earned his living from illustration, but in 1937 a photograph in *The Times* of a *Footwashing* mural he had painted for the New Methodist Hall in Colliers Wood was spotted by influential art historian Kenneth Clark, who tipped off the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell. A champion of contemporary art in churches, Bell got Feibusch his first church commission for a Nativity mural at St Wilfrid's, Brighton, in 1940. Ten years later, the commission for St

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

RADIO

Going for gold

The divine right to cheat at sports

D.J. TAYLOR

Heart and Soul: Doping, diving and God

BBC WORLD SERVICE

THIS ABSORBING documentary (10 July), nicely timed for the advent of the Tokyo Olympics, began with a clip of the American sprinter Justin Gatlin being interviewed in the aftermath of his defeat by Usain Bolt in the 2015 World Athletics Championships. Gatlin is a committed Christian who sinks to his knees in prayer after every victory. He is also notorious for having been suspended from the sport twice for taking performance-enhancing drugs.

Pausing only to remind us of the ninth commandment ("Thou shalt not bear false witness"), presenter Robert Beckford hastened on to *Doping, diving and God's* real scoop. This was a sit-down with the Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson, whose emphatic victory in the 100 metres at the 1988 Olympic Games was followed by a positive drugs test and the immediate removal of his medal. Like Gatlin, the Jamaican-born Johnson was a man of



Man of faith: Justin Gatlin

PHOTO: ALAMY, MARIANO GARCIA

faith with a deeply devout mother who insisted on regular attendance at church.

So how had Johnson's training routine come to involve the wolfing of steroid pills, Beckford (politely) enquired. It was the coach's decision, Johnson equably returned, taken on the grounds that everyone else in professional athletics was doing it. And did his faith offer any impediment? Johnson admitted this "deal with the devil" had been kept from his mother, who would have been outraged had she known that he had sinned, but "everyone is a sinner" and would be dealt with accordingly by God.

Could you combine high-end sporting activity with religious belief, given the constant injunctions to hoodwink referees and "take one for the team" (i.e. deliberately commit a

foul to deny the other side advantage)? The Revd Richard Leadbeater, a Birmingham clergyman who had once been on the books at Wolverhampton Wanderers, thought not. In fact, the strain of keeping it clean on the pitch had caused him to lose his competitive edge and quit the game in his early twenties.

Former Premiership star Linvoy Primus, representing "Faith & Football", disagreed: if the sportsperson remembered he or she was honouring God, it should be possible to harmonise the contending demands of fair play and the will to win. Subsequently Beckford homed in on some of his culprits' attempts to justify themselves: Johnson spoke of athletes being "slaves of the sport"; disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong peddled a highly unconvincing line about the very large amount of money his activities had made for cycle manufacturers.

Would we in the end arrive in a sporting landscape where drug-taking would have to be sanctioned simply to give everyone a chance? If there was anything missing from this lively half-hour, it was the high-powered professional sportsman's relationship with God. After all, if you believe that God has singled you out for success, then it is surely possible to imagine that the end is more important than the means to achieve it. This adage worked for medieval tyrants; it is probably enough for Justin Gatlin.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

John's led to a long and productive collaboration with the architect Thomas Ford, the war damage surveyor for the Diocese of Southwark tasked with rebuilding bombed-out churches. Murals were a quick-fix alternative to stained glass. And that is how a German-Jewish expressionist came to revitalise a great Catholic tradition on the walls of Protestant churches in post-war Britain.

IT WAS FEIBUSCH's striking *Baptism of Christ* (1951) in the baptistry of Chichester Cathedral that first made me wonder why I'd never heard of him. Since seeing it I've made up for lost time with a mini-pilgrimage to three other London churches hosting his murals. I started with St Alban the Martyr in Holborn where his largest and most dazzling single work fills the sanctuary wall: a complex multi-figure composition in glowing colour powering upwards from the static figure of the standing saint at its foot to the dynamic *Trinity in Glory* (1966) above. Four years before he finished it, Feibusch had been baptised into the Church of England. Among the witnesses to the glory, he included portraits of the church's incumbent priest, Fr Priest by name, and his controversial nineteenth-century predecessor Alexander Mackenzie, known as "the martyr of St Alban's" after his campaign to lift the spirits of local slum-dwellers with Anglo-Catholic ritual led to repeated prosecutions under the Church Discipline Act.

While on a Rome scholarship in his twenties,

Feibusch had been filled with admiration for the Early Renaissance frescoes of Masaccio and Piero della Francesca, but his elongated figures and dynamic compositions owe more to the hero of German expressionism, El Greco. In Feibusch's view, troubled times demanded grand statements. In his 1947 book on *Mural Painting*, he warned the Church against "talking baby language" to post-war congregations. "The men who came home from the war, and the rest of us, have seen too much horror and evil ... Only the most profound, tragic, moving, sublime vision can redeem us."

There's a sense of war-weariness even in the Risen Christ in Feibusch's *Resurrection* (1958) triptych at the Ford-designed Church of St James, Merton; he emerges like a sleepwalker, arms hanging at his sides and head slightly tilted as if disorientated by the transition from here to eternity – no rising from the tomb in triumph à la Piero della Francesca.

When I praise the freshness of his interpretation to churchwarden Simon Emdin, he agrees but confesses that, left to him, the wall would be blank: "Anything that is a bit of decoration seems to me a distraction from the incomprehensible wholeness of God." Fair point, but Feibusch has an answer to it: "Some say, man should pray in an empty church, without pictures," he writes in *Mural Painting*. "But modern people come into church with

the impressions of the outside world and all its images, posters, slogans still quivering in their mind. Their beliefs are shadowy and elusive; they sit and cannot focus their attention on their prayers. But if there are paintings and sculpture around them, their minds can fix on these, quieten gradually and make their ascent into the world of which the pictures are only the shadow." The Revd Herbert

Aparanga, vicar of All Saints Shooters Hill

– also designed by Ford – would agree. "It's a graphic story of the Ascension," he says of the dramatic Feibusch mural facing his congregation every Sunday. "If you read what the Bible says and see it portrayed in front of you, it gives an encouragement to investigate more."

Feibusch, who died aged 99 in 1998, never lost faith in the graphic power of storytelling. But in his nineties he experienced difficulty with Christian doctrine and went "freelance," as he put it. "During a very long life," he wrote in 1995, "the feeling of Divine impenetrability has gradually overcome thoughts of Divine Justice in our sense. Fate is what I see in life, and her dark power ruling over us." In late old age, his past cast a long shadow: he was haunted by memories of the huge black forests of Russia where he had served as a military topographer in the First World War. Had the shadows closed in sooner, his luminous vision might never have lit up so many English church walls.

PHOTO: HELEN MURRAY



Last Easter (left to right): Naana Agyei-Ampadu, Jodie Jacobs and Peter Caulfield

THEATRE

The sense of an ending

Timely revival with death centre-stage

MARK LAWSON

Last Easter
ORANGE TREE THEATRE, LONDON

ACATHOLIC, a Jew, and a Buddhist go into the hospital room of a friend dying with cancer. It sounds like the set-up for a joke but the punchline in Bryony Lavery's play *Last Easter* is one that hits us all – what beliefs or rituals might help at the end?

First staged in 2004, the play was due to be revived last year in the season of its title, until theatres closed. This production is out of calendar sync, but has extra resonance in a society more aware of mortality than since the Second World War.

Catholicism is represented by Gary "Gash" O'Brien (Peter Caulfield), in conflict with church teaching as a gay man (something the writer might have explored more), but still believing. When his friend June (Naana Agyei-Ampadu) receives a palliative diagnosis, she contemplates a trip to Amsterdam; Lavery's play dates from the period when the Netherlands not Switzerland was the go-to place for euthanasia (Ian McEwan's 1998 novel on the subject is titled *Amsterdam*).

With more hopeful intent, Gash gets June to Lourdes under the cover of a mates' jaunt to France with Leah (Jodie Jacobs), who skips the gang on Friday nights for Shabbas, and Joy (Ellie Piercy), who has lately begun to study Buddha.

Lavery is a structurally bold dramatist: in *Frozen* (1998), her most-revived work, a paedophile serial killer insinuatingly addresses the audience directly. *Last Easter* is also bold in its storytelling, the performers speaking

to us in both interactive soliloquies and internal monologues, between dialogue sequences that have a complex time structure, giving the title a double meaning.

There's a lovely scene at the grotto when the three friends recite, in counterpoint, the Lord's Prayer, Hebrew recitations for the sick, and a Sanskrit mantra. In a programme interview, Lavery confesses to finding religion "endlessly fascinating and baffling and annoying", but, having made an impressive 2018 adaptation of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, is alert to the psychological allure and dramatic power of miracles and afterlife.

What at first seems a clearly atheistic play becomes more ambiguous, especially in a surprise ending. The three characters note that Catholicism, Judaism, and Buddhism all oppose assisted dying, and Lavery acknowledges – through June, the only non-believer among the four – the challenges of facing death and placing a value on life without the theological and moral frameworks of faith.

With the psychological complexity that marks her writing, Lavery is clearly exploring the variety of human defence mechanisms, one of which may be religion, but which also include work, drinking, smoking, and – most intriguingly, in the case of Gash – joking. He is a walking old jokes' home, with a gag for every situation, including such classics as the one about the agnostic insomniac dyslexic, who "lies awake at night wondering if there's a Dog". But his constant high humour is a shield for low spirits.

Each character's survival and distraction mechanisms – comedy, culture, stimulants, denial – are precisely delineated by actors who also show the limitations of each approach.

Timuke Craig's neat and fluid production runs until 7 August and is also (a welcome post-pandemic trend) offering tickets for livestreamed performances on 22 and 23 July. (Be ready for strong language and mild irreverence.)

TELEVISION

No questions asked

A not-very-adventurous TV journey

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Wild China with Ray Mears

ITV

THE BBC ran a documentary series some years ago called *Wild China*: now ITV has gone one further and added Ray Mears (inset) to the formula. Will the engaging Mears, a bushcraft expert who looks like an old-fashioned bank manager, be showing us how to track a North China leopard along the Great Wall? Alas not: he sits in a sheltered spot, watching night-vision footage of the leopards on a handy laptop.

This was disappointing. TV viewers have expectations of top-class sumptuousness when it comes to wildlife programmes, and this more resembled a provincial tourist information film of yesteryear, or an extended slot on *Countryside*. The first episode (13 July) took Mears to



Beijing, a city of 21 million people. There he cycled around in the frosty winter sunshine, not a high-rise block or a pollution fug or even a motor vehicle in sight. All is lakes, parks and the curving traditional roofs of the old hutongs. They've reintroduced (with the help of the Duke of Bedford at Woburn) the city's population of red deer, previously extinct in China. Two hundred million trees have been planted in the city to help counteract the effects of pollution. A raptor rescue centre saves long-eared owls and releases them back into the wild.

Mears went for a stamp along the Great Wall, marvelling at the vast reforestation programme that is taking place on the surrounding mountains (stripped bare in the 1950s) and talked leopards with a Chinese conservationist planning to reintroduce the animals to Beijing. The idea of leopards roaming the thronging streets of the capital sounds a bit alarming – but Mears doesn't ask questions, preferring instead to marvel at how Beijing is "at the forefront of conservation" with its "havens for wildlife".

It is of course very cheering to see signs of returning animal populations and greening anywhere in the world – but there is something so uninvestigative, unquestioning and bland about Mears' not very adventurous adventures that it prompted me to look up the company that produced *Wild China*. It turned out to be the China Intercontinental Communication Center. This fact doesn't detract from the successes of the long-eared owl sanctuary or the leopard reintroduction programme, but it should probably be taken into consideration all the same.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

LUCY LETHBRIDGE is The Tablet's television critic • CHRIS NANCOLLAS is a retired GP and writer • HARRY COCHRANE is a journalist and translator living in Florence

RACHEL KELLY is a writer and mental-health campaigner • LUKE BELL OSB is a monk of Quarr Abbey

Out of the ordinary

Antiquarians have long created history from the bric-a-brac of everyday life

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Time's Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism

ROSEMARY HILL
(ALLEN LANE, 416 PP, £25)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50 • TEL 020 7799 4064

JONATHAN Oldbuck, the antiquary at the centre of Sir Walter Scott's third Waverley novel, is a celibate obsessive, a squabbler, collector and enthusiast, a scholar of Pictish languages and a keen archaeologist. Scott wrote *The Antiquary* in 1816, shortly after he returned from visiting the battlefield of Waterloo bearing all sorts of Napoleonic souvenirs he'd picked up there. In the character of Oldbuck, Scott created someone whose interests were very much his own – a fossicker in the relics of the material past. But Oldbuck, like the storyteller Scott, also represented a new way of looking at history, of imagining it into being in a spirit that lay beyond the written word. The antiquaries lifted the curtain of the grand narrative of classical historical study and dug about for the human details, for the stuff, the bric-a-brac, of everyday life, not only of sacred sites and battlefields, but of clothes, food and language.

As Rosemary Hill's fascinating, richly-peopled and illustrated study of antiquarianism demonstrates, although the antiquarians have often been caricatured as oddballs, the poor relations of 'real' historians, roaming the country with their drawing boards and measuring apparatus, obsessed by obscure details, we owe to them the idea that we learn of the past not only through kings, philosophers and generals but through the study of plebeians like ourselves. It is due to the labours of the antiquaries that we have learned to regard the relics of history (particularly those from before the Reformation, and Hill begins with William Camden and John Stow, writing in the years after the dissolution of the monasteries) as worth preserving and conserving – in fact of the whole modern notion of heritage. They are the ancestors not only of academic scholarship but of amateur enthusiasms, of the local history society, of church-crawlers, brass-rubbers and metal detectorists.

It was the antiquarian interest in locality and topography, for example, which brought us the county guide. It was the antiquarian Thomas Rickman who first categorised the



Charles Sobieski-Stuart, eccentric, antiquarian, and self-proclaimed Stuart pretender to the British throne

periods of Gothic architecture. And it was the antiquarian draughtsman Charles Stothard who was the first to make accurate copies from the Bayeux Tapestry.

AS HILL describes, the apotheosis of Romantic antiquarianism, in the years after the French Revolution, was explicitly a reaction against the Enlightenment and the primacy of reason. For the antiquarian, real historical understanding came from feeling as well as facts. And the pleasant, elegiac melancholy that emerged from contemplating the relics of the past, Wordsworth's "old, unhappy, far-off things", inspired in turn the picturesque aesthetic with its carefully placed ruins and tumbledown cottages. No wonder the antiquarian is so often pictured in the nineteenth century as a kind of alchemist or magician, dreaming of the past and sitting in his cell surrounded by fragments and curiosities. Raeburn's portrait of Walter Scott places him explicitly in this tradition, depicting him sitting in his study at Abbotsford, the very exemplar of the antiquarian interior, heaped with historic fragments (the sporn of Rob Roy among them): Hill describes the room as "representing his imagination in material form".

Hill (author of a major, prize-winning biography of Pugin) is particularly interesting on the centrality of Catholicism in antiquarianism and John Lingard, the priest-historian, and John Gage (later Rokewood), the eccentric Suffolk recusant, feature prominently. There is a splendid sketch reproduced here showing Gage taking advantage in 1838 of the Eastern

Counties Railway to transport his latest stash of historical curios home to Hengrave Hall. Hill is excellent on the links between antiquarianism and nineteenth-century Tractarianism, illustrating how, among other things, Catholicism was viewed as somehow indistinguishably part of the whole rook-racked image of an ancient past, both threatening and enchanting. She quotes Cardinal Newman in his autobiography recalling a childhood memory: "An old-fashioned house of gloomy appearance with an iron gate and yews, and the report ... that Roman Catholics lived there".

ANTIQUARIANS were not all eccentric (in fact they cover a very wide spectrum) but the brothers John and Charles Allen were defiantly dotty. The Allens converted to Catholicism, changed their name to Sobieski Stuart and said they were the heirs of Bonnie Prince Charlie and therefore the rightful claimants to Queen Victoria's throne. Not only did they have a surprising number of supporters, they sparked the craze for tartan which swept the country with the publication in 1842 of their *Vestiarium Scoticum*, a study of the costume of the Scottish clans which was not definitively proved to be a fake until 1980.

Time's Witness is a dense, rewarding read, sometimes difficult to follow as it has so much in it, but as crammed with characters, stories and fascinating, surprising, mysterious stuff as an antiquarian's imagination. And it also has an antiquarian empathy for people of the past – both like and unlike ourselves.

SPEED READING



CHRIS NANCOLLAS

prescribes books by doctors

Dr Quin: Medicine Man (Biteback, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is the eclectic autobiography of Scottish physician John Quin. The title is a riff on an old TV show and sets the tone for the rest of the book, where the author laces his reminiscences with a wide range of contemporary cultural references. Aside from the usual tales of medical triumphs and disasters, Quin's acute powers of observation vividly convey the hinterland of the modern general hospital. Quite swears, this is a medical memoir for the *Trainspotting* generation.

Speaking of swearing, **Why The F*ck Can't I Change?** (Thread Publishing, £13.99; *Tablet* price £12.59), by neuroscientist Dr Gabija Toleikyte, is one of the better self-help books on how to change one's life. She describes the interaction of the three levels of the brain – the primitive lizard brain, the mammal brain and the sophisticated human brain – and how effecting change needs to acknowledge and understand all three elements. Liberally sprinkled with exercises designed to help us understand our motivations, this is both a theoretical and practical guide to changing our circumstances, especially for those who are struggling with work/life balance.

The Rag and Bone Shop (Allen Lane, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is psychiatrist Veronica O'Keane's guide to "how we make memories and how they make us". Firmly grounded in neuroscience, the author takes us through the various areas of the brain where memories are created and stored. The book is illustrated throughout with patient stories, and she is particularly good at describing how memory is disordered in disease and psychiatric illness. With a wide range of cultural references, this is a fluent and informative read. Highly recommended.

Incredible journeys

HARRY COCHRANE

The Hero's Way: Walking with Garibaldi from Rome to Ravenna
TIM PARKS

(HARVILL SECKER, 384 PP, £20)

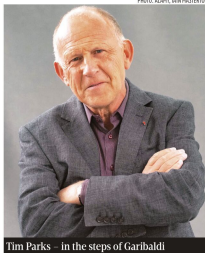
TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £18 • TEL 020 7799 4064

IN THE SUMMER of 2019, Tim Parks and his partner, Eleonora, quit their day jobs and walked the 250 miles from Roma to Romagna, in Italy's north-east. They were tracing Giuseppe Garibaldi and his 4,000 volunteers, pursued by French and Austrians after the fall of the short-lived Roman Republic in July 1849. Of course, their hardships do not quite compare. Parks and his companion did not heft a cannon, nor did they sleep outside; nor was Eleonora seven months pregnant, like Garibaldi's wife, Anita. But they win the reader's respect nonetheless. Park's prose reflects the hot sun overhead, the hard stone underfoot; it spares none of the senses, and it makes for sympathetic reading.

And Parks did travel with a library on his back, albeit in his laptop's hard drive. He and Eleonora followed the directions of Garibaldi's main biographers, some of whom marched with the man himself. Parks' favourite source is Garibaldi's aide-de-camp Gustav Hoffstetter, a Bavarian officer who volunteered for the *garibaldini*: "Rarely, reading his account, have I wished so much to live in a different time and another man's shoes." For Parks, the alliance stands for an ideal of international cooperation in the name of unity and self-determination. French and Polish also numbered heavily among Garibaldi's men.

MANY READERS will know something of Garibaldi's Risorgimento heroics of 1860, when he commandeered two ships from Genoa with the fabled "Thousand" volunteers, landed in Sicily and surged up to Rome, paving the way for the Kingdom of Italy, which was born the following year. This was the third act in Garibaldi's scarcely believable career; *The Hero's Way* chronicles the second, which arguably achieved little more than leading the Austrians a merry dance around the peninsula. Nonetheless, the reader gasps at Garibaldi's charisma and intelligence, his composure under fire, his inspirational ways with people and his genius for misdirecting his enemies. But our admiration extends to all his followers, who voluntarily trudged through the summer heat, with not only the Austrian forces but the entire Church ranged against them. We may well suspect brigandage, and Parks is eager to clarify that the *garibaldini* paid their way. Though opposed to capital punishment, he tells us, Garibaldi executed thieves in the ranks.

The Hero's Way is at least as much a work of history as a footslogger's logbook: in a pure



Tim Parks – in the steps of Garibaldi

form, either would have been monotonous. Parks expertly enfold his journey with Garibaldi's, hovering up "the detail that will spin and catch the light", much of it probably unchanged since the Risorgimento. Though a sucker for heroism, he never omits the less glamorous things: his and Eleonora's abluational needs, how Garibaldi was forever "calculating how quickly bread could be baked" for his troops.

The pace and the pathos intensify on the home stretch of *The Hero's Way*, when the Austrians start to close the gap and their General Konstantin d'Aspre emerges as one of the book's villains (another is the Euphorio Matteo Salvini, Italy's recent deputy prime minister; not that Parks himself shows any great love for the EU). It also provides a gritty insight into modern central Italy, which "combines the chic and the cemetery", plus a heavy dose of inertia and apathy. Parks despairs at the Italian woman who "do[es]n't mind surrendering 'sovereignty' to Germany", whether or not such a surrender is real or imagined. But the addendum, written in the throes of the pandemic, also identifies cause for hope: "In a flash the revisionists have disappeared. Suddenly it's clear to everyone that Italy is a nation and that we are in this together. Covid-19 has revealed that the Risorgimento patriots didn't die for nothing."

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RECENTLY *The Eternal Season: Ghosts of Summers Past, Present and Future* / STEPHEN RUTT / ELLIOTT AND THOMPSON, £4.99;
PU BLISHED *TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.49* / Is the season traditionally full of warmth and plenty becoming deranged by a changed and changing climate?

PHOTO: ALAMY, KEITH PHOTOS

The messy miracle

RACHEL KELLY

The Comfort Book

MATT HAIG

(CANONGATE, 272 PP, £9.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.29 • TEL 020 7799 4064

IREAD *The Comfort Book* in one sitting from the first page to the last. Which is probably not the best way to peruse 250-plus large-print pages of anecdotes, snippets, ideas, recipes, aphorisms, lists of quotes and thoughts, all loosely connected by themes of hope, comfort and connection.

This is a commonplace book, and as such has no obvious beginning, middle or end, and no narrative arc. Oddly, it is divided into four parts, none of which is titled or easily differentiated by subject matter.

But Matt Haig (pictured), the novelist and mental-health advocate who has written movingly about his own experience of severe depression in *Reasons to Stay Alive*, makes a virtue of what might otherwise seem sloppy. The book's structure – or lack of it – deliberately reflects what he calls “the messy miracle of being alive”.

I assume this rationale also explains the pockets of repetition, such as the line “Nothing is stronger than a small hope that doesn’t give up”, which often pops up, sometimes alone

on an empty page, sometimes repeated five or six times. Other ideas are touched on more than once: our need to embrace uncertainty, for example, or the notion that many of our clearest lessons are learned when we are at our lowest.

Haig invites us to dip in and out of the book. Approached like this, with pauses in between to ponder what we have just read, we can reflect on his lessons in a way that does them justice.

This slower, more intermittent style of reading suits the book. Many of its reflections are beautifully expressed, profound and worthy of thought. Here is his answer to what he describes as the hardest question he has ever been asked: “How do I stay alive for other people if I have no one?” The answer, Haig says, is that you “stay alive for other versions of you. For the people you will meet, yes, sure, but also for the people you will be.”

Nature is another source of inspiration for Haig. Take the purple saxifrage. A delicate-looking flower with purple petals, it thrives in harsh, rocky climates. “The flowers survive by clustering together,” Haig writes, “low to the ground, offering each other shelter against the hardest conditions on earth.” Haig’s example from nature suggests a human conclusion: we can flourish, even through tough

times, with the support of others around us. Haig’s virtue as a writer is his clarity of expression and clarity of thought. This means that what might otherwise be platitudinous is rescued by his own “sharp pencil and a sharper mind”.

The phrase is Haig’s and was penned about the journalist Nellie Bly. Her *Ten Days in a Mad-House* transformed the way patients were treated in mental asylums at the end of the nineteenth century in America.

Haig’s sharp pen is evident throughout this book, particularly in its longer chapters on characters such as Bly. His powers as a novelist mean that he can tell a tale with wit and verve. I loved the stories of people like Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, who wrote about the need for a scientific understanding of homosexuality. Haig champions

him as an example of someone who was ready to stand up and be their own person at whatever cost. Or the tale of Juliane Koepeke, who was stranded in the middle of the Amazon after a plane crash, and survived. Or the American philosophy graduate Steven Callahan, who found himself, seven days into a voyage from Cornwall to Antigua, adrift in the Atlantic for 76 days. As I closed the book, these were the stories that stayed with me. I would have liked even more.



Raw truths

LUKE BELL

The First Day of Spring

NANCY TUCKER

(HUTCHINSON, 400 PP, £12.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69 • TEL 020 7799 4064

THIS IS the story of an eight-year-old child who is a killer. His psychology is razor-sharp: it is Dostoevsky set in a primary school. The observed detail of the novel (a debut) screams the powerlessness of an utterly neglected girl to whom murder gives the feeling of being “basically God”. Converging narratives of child and adult explore the roots and bitter fruits of the killing. When her father is away in prison, Chrissie is told he is dead; when he comes back, she assumes that being dead is not for ever. Her single treasure is a marble he gives her. Her one consolation is a friend. This friendship

is vital to the woman Chrissie is to become after her name is changed to Julia. Embracing as children, she and her friend become “one girl”; embracing in adulthood, they become “one woman”.

The climactic and critical scene in the child’s narrative comes when she doesn’t want to be hidden any more, she just wants her friend. Hearing her the terrible truth begins the transition from Chrissie who nourishes herself through being the milk monitor to Julia who nourishes her child

The climactic and critical scene in the child’s narrative comes when she doesn’t want to be hidden any more

through breast-feeding; from a girl with a rotten tooth who fatally inflicts her huge pain on another to a mother who is concerned about the (non-existent) pain of her daughter who has lost a tooth. This tooth for tooth transformation begins with tears from one who never cries and a gift from one who has practically nothing. Feeling “like a book being cracked at the spine”, she lets the tears fall down her cheeks and rolls her marble, her “best thing”, across the floor to her friend,

who then goes to tell her own mother what has happened. The final picture of this narrative is a direct echo of the end of Dostoevsky’s novel *The Idiot*, whose eponymous hero her friend in a way resembles. She is a Christian (who later prays for her) and so intellectually challenged that she cannot tell the time.

The culmination of the adult narrative follows a visit to this friend. Terrified that she will have her own child taken away from her and concerned about her ability as a mother, the

heroine hears that her social worker is impressed with her mothering. Once again she feels “like a book being cracked at the spine” and cries “in a quiet leaking flow”. Her fears have been false; she learns that there is, hitherto unknown to her, “another story, one with goodies as well as baddies, one where you could turn into a goody even after you have been the baddest baddy”. This, of course, is the greatest story ever told. Here, without platitudes or pretence and in all its rawness, it is given a heart-piercing rendition.



NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

The Archdiocese of **Toronto** has posted a "Background for Catholics: Residential Schools", following the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at the sites of former schools, saying the Catholic Church "must atone for our involvement in this dark history" but also highlighting the failures of federal government policy and inaccuracy of the term "mass graves". "The failure to establish and enforce adequate standards, coupled with the failure to adequately fund the schools, resulted in unnecessarily high death rates at residential schools," says the report. It underlines that the story "unfolded over more than a century" and, "it is likely that the remains of teachers and their own children, nuns, and priests will also be found in school-related cemeteries".

Prayers for migrants urged

Italy's bishops asked parishes throughout the country to add a special prayer for migrants to their liturgies last Sunday. The date was chosen to fall on the Feast of St Benedict. The bishops said that this year so far, nearly 38,000 migrants and refugees have arrived in Europe and more than 600 men, women and children have drowned in the Mediterranean.

As unrest grows and brutal crackdowns increase in Africa's last absolute monarchy of **Eswatini**, formerly Swaziland, Bishop José Luis Ponce de León of Manzini warned on 2 July that "fighting fire with fire will bring our country to ashes". He said: "An all-inclusive and open dialogue ... is the only possible way forward." He supported a Council of Swaziland Churches statement which criticised the government's "wrong prioritisation" in expenditure and the "upsurge of law enforcement agencies' brutality against the people". King Mswati III's grip on power and resources has underwritten a lavish lifestyle, while six out of 10 citizens live in poverty. On 4 July, Pope Francis called for "dialogue, reconciliation and a peaceful settlement". Last week, the Inter-Regional Association



■ The funeral of Fr Stan Swamy (pictured) took place in Mumbai on 6 July. It was streamed online and viewed worldwide, and prompted calls to

end political incarceration and hopes that his name would eventually be cleared. He was jailed last October, on terrorism charges, and died in hospital on 5

of Bishops of Southern Africa condemned "the extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate arrests, abductions and torture".

The Catholic bishops' conference of the **Philippines** has elected Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Calookan as its new president, starting in December. Vice president of the conference since 2017, the 62-year-old is a prominent critic of President Rodrigo Duterte's violent war on illegal drugs.

Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, **Illinois**, advocated denying Communion to pro-choice politicians in the weekly journal *First Things*. His arguments came after the US bishops' conference authorised the doctrine committee to draft a document on the Eucharist, although its scope is in doubt, most especially regarding the issue of politicians who disagree with fundamental Church teachings.

Miami Archbishop Thomas Gerard Wenski visited the collapsed 12-storey building in Miami last week where more than 100 people are still unaccounted for. He was accompanied by Boston Archbishop Cardinal Sean O'Malley and a local priest, Fr Juan Sosa. They prayed at an informal Wall of Remembrance. Archbishop Wenski said he was struck by the fact that the victims came from "so many different religious and cultural backgrounds".

On 5 July **Nicaraguan** police arrested six more political opponents and members of opposition movements. Those detained include Lesther Alemán and Max Jerez, former student leaders, and presidential contender Medardo Mairena. Alemán is a member of the Citizens for Freedom party. The week before being detained he had said he planned to run for president. Six presidential hopefuls have now been detained, mostly accused of "treason". Candidates must register by 2 August for the 7 November elections. Daniel Ortega has been president since 2007 and is seeking another term in office. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Managua wrote that, "as Christians we ask that the will of citizens ... and the human rights of all Nicaraguans be respected".

A prominent **Mexican** Indigenous leader in the southern state of Chiapas was killed on 5 July. Simón Pedro Pérez López was a catechist of the Parish of Santa Catarina, in Pantelhó, Chiapas and a former president of the Las Abejas organisation that fights for the rights of the Tzotzil people, whose communities face sporadic attacks from paramilitary groups. A statement signed by Bishop Rodrigo Aguilar Martínez of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas said that violent acts against the Tzotzil and

July, aged 84, suffering from Parkinson's disease and Covid. He devoted his life to helping remote tribal peoples. Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, issued a statement praising Fr Stan's "commitment to the poor indigenous people and their struggles". He added: "We were eagerly waiting for the case to be taken up and the truth to come out." Myanmar Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, called Fr Stan "the latest saint of modern India's poor [who] has shown a damning light on the injustice that is becoming a norm in the world".

other Indigenous peoples "are an open wound for the diocese, aggravated by countless testimonies of abuse, injustice and impunity, forced displacement, murder, political murder, theft of land and vehicles".

Icon on peace pilgrimage

An Icon of the Holy Family has begun its pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Lebanon to stimulate prayers for peace and reconciliation. It was blessed last month by Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa of Jerusalem in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignace Youssif III Younan is bringing the icon, inlaid with relics from the basilica, to Lebanon after a visit to the Holy Land. Then it will be taken to other countries, including Iraq, Syria and Egypt, to arrive in Rome in December.

Compiled by **James Roberts** and **Ellen Teague**.

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“He is the latest saint of modern India’s poor [who] has shone a damning light on the injustice that is becoming a norm in the world.”

Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon, Myanmar, in a statement on the day of the funeral of Fr Stan Swamy (see page 25)

ROME / ‘Good service, accessible to everyone’ is precious

Pope appeals from hospital for free universal healthcare

CHRISTOPHER LAMB

POPE FRANCIS, stepping out on to the balcony in Rome’s Gemelli Hospital on Sunday, appeared in public for the first time since undergoing colon surgery and made an appeal for free universal healthcare.

Francis addressed the crowd from the tenth floor of the hospital exactly seven days after being admitted for a three-hour operation. During the midday Angelus prayer, the 84-year-old Pope was accompanied by children who are patients at the hospital and some staff, and told everyone that he was happy to be able to keep the regular Sunday appointment. He stressed that, in the final judgement, Christians will be asked about what they did for the sick: “In these days of being hospitalised, I have experienced once again how important good health-



Pope Francis waves from the hospital balcony

care is, accessible to all, as it is in Italy and in other countries. Free healthcare that assures good service, accessible to everyone. This precious benefit must not be lost. It needs to be kept!”

This was the first Sunday Angelus that the Pope has led from the Gemelli Hospital. Pope John Paul II did so on several

occasions during his pontificate. The Vatican has said that Pope Francis’ recovery is proceeding normally.

Speaking off the cuff at the Gemelli, Francis said that sometimes in the Church a “healthcare institution, due to poor management, does not do well economically, and the first thought that comes to mind is to sell it”. He added, however, that, “the vocation, in the Church, is not to have money; it is to offer service, and service is always free given. Do not forget this: to save free institutions.”

In 2018, several wealthy donors from the Papal Foundation sought to block a \$25-million loan request from the Holy See to help the Istituto Dermatologico dell’Immacolata (IDI) Hospital in Rome. The hospital is owned and managed by the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Conception, but the Vatican has long been involved with the Institute and has sought to help its work in treating dermatological conditions.

After the 2008 global financial crash, the hospital declared bankruptcy and became embroiled in scandal when a former chief executive was accused of money laundering and fraud. Looking at ways of trying to prevent the collapse of the IDI, the

Vatican turned to the United States-based Papal Foundation for help. However, several members of the foundation, who must donate \$1 million to join, felt that giving money to a scandal-plagued hospital would be throwing donations into a black hole. The grant was eventually given.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading for 11 July, the Pope focused on a line from Mark 6:13, which explains that Jesus’ disciples “anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them”.

Francis said: “This ‘oil’ also makes us think of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which gives comfort to spirit and body. But this ‘oil’ is also listening, the closeness, the care, the tenderness of those who take care of the sick person: it is like a caress that makes you feel better, soothes your pain and cheers you up. All of us, everyone, sooner or later, we all need this ‘anointing’ of closeness and tenderness, and we can all give it to someone else, with a visit, a phone call, a hand outstretched to someone who needs help.”

The Pope added that he would like to “express my appreciation and my encouragement to the doctors and all the healthcare workers and staff of this and of other hospitals. They work so hard!”

LEBANON

Rai outlines Francis’ road map for national recovery

CHURCH LEADERS in Lebanon are planning a summit with Muslim leaders about the nation’s future – part of a “road map” given to them by Pope Francis – Cardinal Béchara Boutros Rai has revealed, writes Catherine Pepinster.

The leaders were offered a series of measures making up the road map during their day of prayer with the Pope in the Vatican on 1 July, held as Lebanon endures economic and political turmoil. The proposals have already led the cardinal, who is head of the Maronite Church and Patriarch of Antioch, to hold meetings with the country’s President Michel Aoun and its

apostolic nuncio, Maltese Archbishop Joseph Spiteri.

Cardinal Rai revealed the plans during a webinar on the future of Christianity and the wider region, organised by Fellowship and Aid to the Christians of the East (Pace).

It was the first time Cardinal Rai had spoken to Catholic bishops and laity in England and Wales and to the Maronite diaspora in the UK. The cardinal, who led the delegation to Rome of leaders of the Maronite, Melchite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Syrian Orthodox Churches, said that the Pope’s meeting with them was “a prophetic gesture” and that

“he traced for us a programme that we can follow together”, which he said was vital for Lebanon in its current crisis. In conversation with Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, patron of Pace, he said the biggest challenge facing Lebanon was political.

“We have been without a government for 10 months. There is no decision-making process and this is why there is social and economic chaos. Our universities, schools and hospitals are all going through a huge crisis and we are losing our best doctors, engineers, professors and graduates,” he said, referring to those emigrating from Lebanon. The country is also reeling from the explosion that devastated the capital, Beirut, last year, and from Covid-19 infections.

Cardinal Rai listed other issues raised by the Pope: political lead-

ers should not follow their own personal interests – “he was really on target there”, said Cardinal Rai; encourage a focus on young people; maintain dialogue with non-Christians; and urge that women be more involved in decision-making processes.

Cardinal Rai also spoke at the webinar of a need for an international summit to discuss Lebanon’s plight. A major concern for Church leaders is the growing imbalance in Lebanon’s population. Christians and Muslims have been equally involved in government since it gained independence from the French in 1943. But influxes of Palestinian and, more recently, of Syrian refugees have led to Muslims now making up two-thirds of its six million population, which is likely to shift the political balance.

FRANCE / Messages giving instructions on killing intercepted by French intelligence

Fr Hamel murderers linked to Islamists based in Syria

TOM HENEGHAN / in Paris

NEW revelations by French intelligence show that the 2016 murder of Fr Jacques Hamel during Mass in Rouen was minutely planned and guided by French Islamist masterminds living in an area of Syria then controlled by the radical Islamic State (IS) movement.

Communications intercepted by French intelligence, as revealed by the Catholic weekly *La Vie*, showed how IS jihadists advised local militants to attack a church rather than a synagogue because "the Jews ... tend to use this to manipulate public opinion".

The evidence rules out the "lone wolf" theory first advanced due to an initial lack of proof of outside influence on the two assailants.

Pope Francis has waived the five-year wait to quickly open a cause for the beatification of Fr Hamel, who was 85 years old, as a martyr for the faith. Many Muslim friends have volunteered to testify on his behalf.

"Just take a knife, go into a church, commit a slaughter, even if you only cut off two or three heads," one of the Syria-



Fr Jacques Hamel

based Islamists said over the encrypted social media platform Telegram when one plotter asked what to do.

"Do something crazy that will resonate in their hearts. Hit public opinion, make them tremble and make things change. Actually, that's what attacks like this are for," the message said on 19 July 2016, a week before the murder.

The two men accused of slitting Fr Hamel's throat at the altar, 19-year-olds Adel Kermiche and Abdel Malik Petitjean, were shot dead at St-Étienne-du-Rouvray Church in a Rouen suburb by police alerted

by terrified Massgoers. Rachid Kassim, the probable mastermind behind the attack, is believed to have been killed in 2017 somewhere in the IS-controlled area in Syria and Iraq.

Four accused of being local accomplices will be tried in Paris early next year. The messages were intercepted by the anti-terrorism unit of the General Directorate for Internal Security, the French counter-espionage agency.

Before the attack, Kassim advised Petitjean to make a video swearing allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to be shown after the attack. "Say you're going to intensify your attacks, like France," Kassim said, referring to French bombing of IS areas. "You can send me a short video through Facebook."

Once he received the video, Kassim told Petitjean it would be posted as soon as the murder was completed. "I can't wait to see the whole world react to your act," especially on all-news television stations, he said.

"The *Ummah* [community] of Allah has lions in its ranks ... ready to defend its religion."

ROME / HAITI

Haitians urged to end feuding after assassination of President Moïse

POPE FRANCIS has called on feuding Haitian parties to end the spiral of violence in which the country has been plunged, wrote *Martha Pskowski* and *James Roberts*.

Speaking on Sunday from the Gemelli Hospital where he is recovering from a colon operation, just days after the assassination of Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse on 7 July, the Pope said: "I join the heartfelt appeal of the country's bishops to depose arms, choose life, choose to live together fraternally in the common interest of all and in the interest of Haiti."

Expressing his closeness to "the beloved people of Haiti", he called for an end to "the spiral of violence and that the nation may resume

its journey towards a future of peace and harmony".

Haitian leaders are collaborating with both Colombia and US authorities to investigate the assassination of Mr Moïse at his home in the hills above the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph has requested the deployment of UN and US troops to protect key infrastructure as the leaders try to prepare the way for elections. However, Ariel Henry, whom Mr Moïse named as prime minister the day before he was killed, says he is the rightful prime minister.

At least 19 suspects have been arrested, including 17 Colombians

and two Haitian-Americans. Three suspects were killed, and police and military are searching for another six. According to news reports, the detained Colombians said that they were hired by a Miami security firm.

Meanwhile in Miami's Little Haiti, Fr Reginald Jean-Mary of the Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church invited congregations to pray for the recovery of First Lady Martine Moïse, who was shot several times in the attack that killed her husband and is being treated at a hospital in Florida. Fr Jean-Mary and Mr Moïse were born in the same town in Haiti and knew one another.

In Haiti, Fr Antonio Menegon, a Camillian missionary, told Fides news agency that "for more than two years the island of Haiti has been in the hands of criminal gangs who destabilise the country with unprecedented ferocity".

UNITED STATES

Bishop removes priest who said no Catholic could be a Democrat

BISHOP William Callahan of La Crosse, Wisconsin, has removed controversial Fr James Altman as pastor of St James the Less Church, restricted his public ministry and instructed him to take a 30-day retreat on account of his recent divisive actions and statements. Fr Altman repeated a previous pledge to appeal his case to Rome, writes *Michael Sean Winters*.

Fr Altman first achieved notoriety last year when a video of one of his sermons, in which he preached that no Catholic could be a Democrat, went viral. Bishop Callahan reportedly began a series of private discussions with Fr Altman but the priest seemed to enjoy his new-found notoriety and made a series of more provocative statements.

Fr Altman openly violated public health protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic and raised moral doubts about the vaccines because the research that produced them utilised stem-cell lines derived from an aborted foetus. He called liberals "left-wing fascist Nazis" and he frequently attacked the ministry of outreach to the gay community by Fr James Martin SJ.

The priest received support from more extreme right-wing groups such as Church Militant and LifeSiteNews. In an interview with the latter, Fr Altman called Bishop Callahan's action "evil", adding: "It's diabolical [that] I can't celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass publicly".

Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, previously expressed support for the priest, tweeting: "Fr James Altman is in trouble for speaking the truth. He inspires many to keep the faith during these dark days. Let us pray for him."

Bishop Strickland has also questioned the morality of Covid jabs because their development relied on foetal stem cells, despite assurance from both the US bishops' conference and the Vatican that it is morally acceptable to take the vaccine.

Former nuncio Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò also voiced support for Fr Altman. Fr Altman raised \$640,000 (£462,000) in the days immediately following his suspension, via two internet crowdfunding pages.

SOUTH SUDAN

Church leaders label country's first 10 years a 'wasted decade'

AS THE WORLD'S newest nation marked its tenth Independence Anniversary on 9 July, South Sudan's church leaders issued a joint statement which declared the last 10 years a "wasted decade", write *Fredrick Nzeili* and *Francis Njuguna*. The years have been blighted by civil war, disease and widespread hunger.

UN statistics indicate that at least 8 million in a population of 11 million are in need of aid, with acute food shortages affecting more than 5 million South Sudanese. More than 1.6 million are internally displaced, and 2.2 million are refugees. "It must not be another lost decade. It is an opportunity to rescue our people from imposed destitution," said a South Sudan Council of Churches statement signed by Archbishop Stephen Ameyu of Juba. Catholic Bishop Barani Eduardo Hilboro Kussala of Tombura-Yambio diocese in West Equatorial State has appealed for humanitarian assistance, following a clash between Azande and Balanda communities in the diocese. Pope Francis, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Church of Scotland Moderator Jim Wallace in a goodwill message, urged politicians to strive for the "full fruits" of independence.

FRANCE

Monsengwo dies in Paris

CARDINAL Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, an influential founding member of Pope Francis' Council of Cardinals, died on Sunday in Versailles near Paris aged 81, writes *Tom Heneghan*.

The former Archbishop of Kinshasa, who fought openly for peace, dialogue and human rights, was a frequent critic of successive authoritarian regimes in his Democratic Republic of Congo. Grieving Catholics flocked to the Notre-Dame du Congo Cathedral in Kinshasa. The Catholic Church is one of the few national institutions in DRC, but represents only 40 per cent of the population. The French bishops' conference hailed the late cardinal as "a man of... determination and courage [who] denounced, without concession, the excesses and political compromises he witnessed".

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb



THE VOICE was a little weaker than normal, and he kept his remarks brief. Seven days after his colon surgery, Pope Francis reappeared in public for the first time when he led the Angelus prayer from the balcony of his tenth-floor room at Rome's Gemelli Hospital. Standing alongside him were children, patients and hospital staff, while a crowd gathered at the entrance to the clinic clapped and cheered. The scenes brought to life the image of a field hospital church which Francis has so often talked about.

The episode of the Pope undergoing surgery has inevitably led to questions being asked about how long the Francis pontificate has left to run, and what shape it is now going to take. Although he stood for the prayers on the balcony, photos later emerged of the Pope being pushed around the hospital in a wheelchair, a reminder that his health is fragile and his recovery will take time.

Francis, who will be 85 in December, works at an intense pace that would exhaust most people. Up at dawn, he regularly packs in four or five meetings each morning, alongside twice-weekly public audiences and a myriad of pastoral and diplomatic commitments. His visits abroad always follow a hectic timetable.

The Pope could decide that it's time to slow down. This would have to be done with care. Any hint that the Pope was not functioning at full capacity would create a power vacuum that senior figures unfavourable to the direction of this pontificate might try to step into. While the Pope was in hospital, Cardinal Robert Sarah, the former liturgy prefect who has often been at odds with Francis, sent out a series of tweets praising *Summorum Pontificum*, Benedict XVI's 2007 ruling relaxing restrictions on the celebration of Mass in the Old Rite. Sarah's intervention came amid speculation that updated guidelines on the use of the pre-Vatican II Missal are in the offing. He would not be the only cardinal jockeying for influence if Francis was to wind down too abruptly.

Francis might decide to focus more intensely on his core priorities. These include the synodal reform process – likely to be his lasting legacy – the reform of the Roman Curia, announcing appointments to some key dioceses and dicasteries (including a new prefect at the Congregation for Bishops), and initiatives to protect the environment (the Scottish bishops said this week they are expecting the Pope in Glasgow for the COP26 summit in November).

Soon after he was elected, the Pope said he thought he would probably last three or four years. This soon changed. He now believes he needs to serve for long enough to ensure

that his reforms are irreversible. Francis may adjust his lifestyle, but he still has his eye on the job in hand.

THE 1,000-ROOM Palazzo Doria Pamphilj contains one of the largest private art collections in Rome, housing works by Titian and Caravaggio and the masterpiece by Diego Velázquez, *Portrait of Innocent X*. It is also the home of the Anglican Centre in Rome, and of its director, Archbishop Ian Ernest, who also acts as the Archbishop of Canterbury's representative to the Holy See.

The Doria Pamphilj family have generously housed the centre since it was founded in 1966. In pre-pandemic times, it was a meeting point for Catholic and Anglican leaders, and hosted regular events and informal dialogue. But the last few months have been the toughest time yet for the centre, and it has launched an urgent appeal for funds. Income has fallen from €400,000 (£341,700) to an estimated €168,100 for 2021. The annual budget has been cut to €276,800 from €435,000.

The chair of the appeal, the Revd Dr Jamie Hawkey, told me that the response to the appeal has been good so far. He pointed to the warm relationship between the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Pope Francis, along with Archbishop Ernest's work with the Holy See on promoting peace in South Sudan and responding to the pandemic.

"The centre's role is essential, not just for cooperation, but in keeping our eyes focused on the goal of unity," he explained. "Without it, our dialogue – and the dialogue's reception – would be immeasurably poorer."

Next year, the Anglican primates will meet in Rome for the first time: a sign of the eccumenical progress made over recent decades.

IN THE END, football didn't come home but went to Rome. Italy's victory over England in the Euro 2020 final sparked an outpouring of joy and celebration across the country. In Rome, fireworks were set off and supporters jumped into the fountains in Piazza Navona. Even the normally reserved Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, who had travelled to Wembley, was seen cheering when Italy scored to make it 1-1. The Vatican said that Pope Francis, a keen football supporter, shared in the joy of Italy's victory – and Argentina's. The Pope's home country had beaten the host nation Brazil in the final of the Copa América the day before the Euro final. Francis' message also had something for England fans like me. He praised the "sporting ability" to "accept any result, even defeat", and to "always put oneself on the line, fighting without giving up, with hope and trust".

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND



Lord Paul Boateng (pictured), incoming chair of the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission, told the Church of England's **General Synod** this week: "Racism is a gaping wound in the body of Christ's Church. Our mandate as a commission is not only to bind but to heal." Lord Boateng, whose appointment was announced at the Synod last Friday, will continue the work of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce. Elsewhere at Synod, which took place on Zoom, the Archbishop of York said that the shortage of clergy was a "limiting factor" for church growth.

Views on Church canvassed

Catholics in the largest Irish diocese have until next weekend to give their views on the needs and future direction of the Church in **Dublin**. In April, Archbishop Dermot Farrell set up a taskforce to begin an assessment of the needs of the people of the Archdiocese of

Dublin as it emerges from Covid-19 and "to work to support parish communities to undertake a radical renewal, looking to the future with creativity". Those who wish to take part in the consultation can do so via the Dublin diocesan website. The taskforce will report back later in the summer.

Bishops Tom Deenihan and Brendan Kelly, of the Irish Bishops' Council for Education, told the *Sunday Independent* that they support the rights of parents to enrol children in a school whose ethos reflects their views. The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 prevents Catholic primary schools from giving preference to baptised Catholics when they are oversubscribed, and allows parents to request that the patronage of their local school be divested by the local bishop to a different patron. The bishops called for a memorandum of understanding to give priority to parents who wish to ensure a specifically Catholic education for their children when schools are oversubscribed.

Elderly people are the "intensive prayer units" of the Church, Bishop David Oakley, chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life, has said ahead of the **World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly** on 25 July. Bishop

Oakley said that older Catholics play a vital part in the life of the Church through their intercession, even if they are unable to get to Mass.

Next weekend's National Justice and Peace Network annual conference will be one of the first large face-to-face Catholic gatherings in England since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. Most of the speakers, such as Bishop John Arnold of Salford, Lorna Gold and Andy Atkins, will be there live, along with the chair, Christine Allen of Cafod, and around 180 participants. The focus of the 23-25 July gathering will be action for **environmental justice**.

Parishioner's death fall

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Glasgow Trust has been fined £13,400 after a parishioner fell 50 feet to his death from a loft inside a church building. Christopher Duffy, 81, died five years ago at Sacred Heart Church in Cumbernauld, Lanarkshire. A volunteer keyholder with responsibility for opening the church ahead of morning services, he was found dead on the floor of the church, with a cracked ceiling tile beside him. It is unknown why he entered the loft, but it is thought he tried to inspect construction work. The trustees admitted breaching health and safety laws at Airdrie Sheriff Court.

English Martyrs' Church in Wallasey, **Merseyside**, has been awarded £504,500 by the Lottery Heritage Fund Grant. The money will be used for building works and heritage projects at the Grade II* listed building, which was designed by the noted Liverpool architect Francis Xavier Velarde.



Sarah Teather (pictured), director of the Jesuit Refugee Service UK, has apologised for voting against the legalisation of same-sex marriage as a Liberal Democrat minister in 2013. "I was wrong then and I am delighted now that gay people have the right to be married," she said, adding: "I tied myself up in ridiculous intellectual knots trying to find a way to navigate Catholic teaching on marriage and my liberal instincts and campaigning history on gay rights."

Compiled by **Liz Dodd**.

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PERSON IN
THE NEWS



Frank Skinner, ahead of the Euro 2020 Final: "I went to church this morning – I prayed for the Italian fans, that they might cope with the grief and disappointment the way we had to for 55 years."

FREEDOM OF BELIEF / Government aims to enhance understanding of different religions

Foreign Office trains staff to spot religious persecution

ABIGAIL FRYMANN ROUCH

THE FOREIGN, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is updating its training programme on religions to ensure its staff are better equipped to recognise religious persecution.

The new materials are being written by academics at the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, at the University of Birmingham. A government spokesperson said last month that the Cadbury Centre is "consulting with a wide range of external stakeholders, including those that work specifically on Christian persecution" in response to a parliamentary question brought by DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson.

The materials are being devised in response to a recommendation in the Bishop of Truro's 2019 independent review of FCO support for persecuted Christians.

Recommendation 11 of 22 calls for "general and contextual training in religious literacy and belief dynamics", using an existing but underused "FoRB [Freedom of



Religion or Belief) toolkit", and "mandatory religious diversity and literacy e-training" for all staff. The government has repeatedly pledged to implement all the recommendations, and its special envoy on FoRB, Fiona Bruce MP, said in a webinar last week it has fulfilled, or is fulfilling, 18 of them.

The new materials respond to the calls for two strata of religious

literacy training in the recommendation. Mrs Bruce added: "We will shortly be launching a training unit on Religion for International Engagement, targeted within the FCDO for officials in relevant posts, and accessible further across government departments." The work is ongoing, with further modules to be added in due course.

The Cadbury Centre said: "[Our] team on this project is led by Professor Francis Davis [director of policy at the centre] and is drawing on our interdisciplinary skills and global reach."

While it did not comment on the contents of the course, academics at the centre have previously expressed reservations about the way they believe anglophone governments focus religious literacy training on creeds, and prefer to look at religious communities in terms of

politics, anthropology and their social contribution. Professor Davis has previously written about the wide-ranging ways in which religious communities around the world have transformed social relations and public policy, with a focus on the democratising impact of African Catholic bishops and the economic contributions made by Catholic religious orders, as well as the transformative philanthropy of Jews and Muslims.

The various stakeholders in the project include the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), and Humanists UK. ACN said that it had supplied the academics with case studies of Christian persecution.

There are concerns that the new course should not be seen as a single solution to the government's understanding of religion but as part of ongoing learning about the way faith can shape behaviour.

Previous training courses in religious literacy have been written by the London School of Economics and the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. In 2017, a former government adviser and practising Anglican, Major General Tim Cross, now retired, criticised the materials for giving only an intellectual understanding of the role of religion in geopolitics. The new training materials are not being made public. *The Tablet* contacted the FCDO for comment but received no reply.

■ Courses in religious literacy were introduced for senior officials at the then-FCO after an embarrassing internal memo was leaked ahead of Benedict XVI's visit to Britain in 2010. The memo contained suggestions for the papal itinerary that included opening an abortion ward and launching papal-branded condoms.

Aid budget should not be 'faith-blind', says bishop

THE BISHOP who critiqued the then-Foreign Office's support for persecuted Christians has stressed the need for all 22 of his recommendations to be put into practice, writes Abigail Frymann Rouch.

Philip Mounstephen, the Bishop of Truro, was speaking at a webinar to mark the second anniversary of his independent review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO support for persecuted Christians, which was commissioned by the then-Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt.

During his remarks, Bishop Mounstephen repeatedly stressed the need for all 22 of the review's recommendations to be implemented by next summer, as the government has promised.

The Tablet understands that there are concerns about the government's commitment, although a government spokesperson has insisted that it is confident that it will meet its target.

At last Thursday's webinar, Bishop Mounstephen noted steps the government has taken to

engage with Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). He welcomed a decision by the UK government to host an international ministerial conference on FoRB in London next year, and a decision by the government in early 2020 to become a founder member of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance when it was set up in February 2020.

Fiona Bruce MP, the government's special envoy on FoRB – a role created in response to the review – outlined other steps the government has taken. She said that FoRB "was included in the recent integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy, and is a key part of the Foreign Secretary's Force for Good agenda". She added that

last month FoRB was mentioned in the G7 leaders' communiqué for the first time.

However, Coptic Archbishop Angelos of London criticised the government's cuts to the foreign aid budget. He said aid given to the most vulnerable "empowers them ... against those who persecute them".

Meanwhile, Bishop Mounstephen restated his criticism of the government's long-held mantra that aid should be distributed on the basis of "need not creed ... Because that mantra fails to recognise how creed, or indeed not having a creed, creates very significant need. Being faith-blind means we can simply be blind to injustice, and that is not good enough."

LECTIONARY / Amri recommends RNJB for its 'accessible, user-friendly and memorable' text

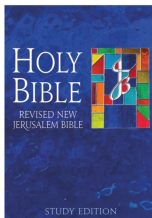
Church leaders endorse 'more inclusive' Bible translation

SARAH MAC DONALD

THE EXECUTIVE of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (Amri) has recommended that the Irish episcopal conference use the Revised New Jerusalem Bible (RNJB) for the new lectionary.

The association, which represents 150 religious organisations, missionary societies and apostolic groups in Ireland, with almost 7,000 members, paid tribute to the bishops' willingness to consult widely over the issue. *The Tablet* understands the Irish bishops are considering the RNJB.

In its submission to the consultation, Amri said: "As hearers of the Word, we allow the Scriptures to influence and nourish us. It is therefore



important to us that we have a reliable and inclusive language text which is both attractive, accessible, user-friendly and memorable."

The group warned that a lectionary translation using

archaic expressions and exclusionary language would be a barrier for all, but especially for those for whom English is not their first language.

Amri also sets out a number of comparisons between the English Standard Version (ESV), the Catholic Edition of which is to be used in the new lectionary in England and Wales and Scotland, and the RNJB in its submission, to stress its concerns.

It criticised the ESV translation of the Deuterocanonical books as "a very light redaction of the old RSV of many years ago. There are one or two adjustments per chapter; in other words, this is not a new translation at all but a rather lazy reprint. The same may be said generally of the ESV. It is, in effect, the RSV with 'and'

taken out and not much else. English, as it is spoken, has moved on."

David Rose, secretary general of Amri, said that Amri's executive and staff consulted with a Scripture scholar and then came to its conclusion. "The random sample comparisons between both versions in our submission, for example on the Letters of St Paul, illustrate the point that the Revised New Jerusalem Bible is probably a more accurate translation and definitely more inclusive in its use of language."

He added that the "existing reality is recognising the equality of women and Amri as a church leadership body tries to reflect this in the Church where possible. So we advocate the use of language that is inclusive of women rather than excluding."

Pope's trip to Scotland confirmed

POPE FRANCIS has confirmed to the Bishops' Conference of Scotland that he will visit the country during the COP26 Conference in Glasgow in November, after weeks of speculation, writes *Liz Dodd*.

The confirmation was given in response to a message from the Scottish bishops wishing him a speedy recovery after recent surgery.

Benedict XVI visited Scotland in 2010. This week the bishops' conference welcomed the prospect of a meeting with

Pope Francis when he is in Glasgow.

A spokesperson for the Bishops' Conference of Scotland said: "Having written to the Holy Father to assure him of a warm welcome, should he attend the conference, they are delighted to hear that he does hope to attend and would be glad to meet with them in Glasgow."

The spokesperson added: "The Pope will be in Scotland for a very short time, most of which will be spent participat-

ing in the COP26 Conference. While many pastoral, ecumenical and interfaith gatherings would be desirable while he is with us, time constraints sadly mean such a full programme will not be possible."

Catholic campaigning groups will also be present. Members of the Young Christian Climate Network are walking to the summit from Cornwall as part of a 1,000-mile relay pilgrimage to demand action on the climate emergency.

■ **CATHOLIC** Social Action Network (CSAN) has strongly criticised the government's plans to end the £20 a week uplift to Universal Credit in October, writes *Ellen Teague*.

"We are appalled that the government has decided to end the uplift with no coherent strategy to address rising poverty," said Clive

Chapman of CSAN. "Many households on low incomes are struggling with rising costs and insecure jobs," he said, "and cutting social protection for them is a callous policy, ignoring experience."

Ben Gilchrist of Caritas Shrewsbury told *The Tablet* this week: "We are extremely concerned that the government is making

the wrong choice to cut support for people already facing great insecurity and, instead, we urge them to keep this vital lifeline and give families the stability they need"

Mr Gilchrist reported that a wide coalition of charities has asked supporters to write to their MPs about the issue.

Niall Cooper, director of the ecumenical social justice charity Church Action on Poverty, said: "It is essential that the prime minister reconsiders his decision." The government's own research has shown that working-age benefits are too low to prevent thousands of families being swept into poverty, he added.



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12:30| 17:30
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Saturdays: 08:00| 18:00 (Saturday Vigil)
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Versatile Verdejo

N.O'PHILE

THE LATE Donald Rumsfeld's famous (and famously convoluted) *obiter dictum* about "known unknowns" referred to history, but it could have referred just as aptly to wine and the pleasure of endless new discoveries. A personal recent discovery is Verdejo, Spain's fourth most widely planted white wine grape, found mainly in the region of Castile and León in north-west Spain, around three notable cities: Valladolid, home of the Royal English College; Segovia; and Ávila, home of the first female Doctor of the Church, St Teresa. The town of Rueda gives its name to the *denominación*, a designation dating only from 1980, when Verdejo was rescued from primitive, bulk production methods by massive investment from the great Rioja house, Marqués de Riscal.

Verdejo (not to be confused with the Portuguese grape, Verdelho, also one of the four major varieties of Madeira) is sometimes blended with a small proportion of Sauvignon Blanc, and for good reason: Sauvignon has many of Verdejo's characteristics. But, though equally citrusy, Verdejo is fuller-bodied, smoother and more aromatic than Sauvignon, with notes of honey, fennel and pine nuts. It enjoys an altogether more easy-going, less formal character.

It has been suggested that Verdejo originated in North Africa, coming to Castile as early as the eleventh century during the reign of King Alfonso VI. In



The best Verdejo is cultivated in high-altitude vineyards, in well-drained, chalky soils

the sixteenth century, it was known as Vidonia, and was central to the huge expansion of winemaking after Spain became part of the Habsburg Empire, a growth concentrated in the region south-west of Valladolid. Until the nineteenth century, Verdejo was used to produce heavy, Madeira-like fortified wines, but after phylloxera destroyed two-thirds of the vines, replanting took place from louse-resistant New World vines, giving rise to lighter, leaner wine.

Verdejo comes in differing styles: lean and minerally, which tend to be the most popular and most common, and full-bodied and smoky, achieved by oak fermentation and ageing. The best

Verdejo is cultivated in high-altitude vineyards, in well-drained, chalky soils. The climate in Rueda is not the hottest in Spain, but 2,400 feet above sea level it can swing widely between -1°C in winter to upwards of 30°C even in September. To counter its tendency to oxidise, the grapes are harvested at night, so that they arrive in the cellars at their coolest.

One of Verdejo's great pluses is its versatility. It is happy on its own but also marvellously marriageable: a perfect aperitif, but equally delicious with both salads or shellfish and strongly spiced chicken dishes. And while it is usually drunk young, it can age for as long as six years. "Rueda Verdejo" is 100 per cent Verdejo, whereas "Rueda", *simpliciter*, is generally a blend. But for Verdejo to appear on the label, it must contain at least 85 per cent of the grape.

Though rarely absent from wine lists in Spanish restaurants, and despite sales having risen by 42 per cent in the last two years, Verdejo is still not easily accessible. Waitrose has a fine specimen, the prizewinning Beronia Rueda Verdejo 2019 (£8.99), made from two different harvests and vinified separately in the same vineyard. Pale yellow and greenish, with intense herbaceous aromas, it is classic Verdejo, reinforcing the view that this quintessential summer quaff deserves to be better-known and more widely available.

N.O'Phile is The Tablet's wine writer. He is also a senior Catholic priest.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

THE CROSSROADS lies in the quietest of nooks. A four-ways fingerpost rises high above the little-used junction and its wildflower-filled verges, but not as high as the skylarks that lift from the cornfields all around. I often come here. For me it's a symbol of tranquillity. Imagine my shock when I found out that this haven is known as Gibbet Hill. Where the delightful signpost stands, a scaffold once rose, bearing a cage in which thieves were confined until they starved to death. Catholics who had risen in the Tudor rebellion of the



Pilgrimage of Grace were also starved here.

Of course, the breeze travelling down the empty road, ruffling the yarrow and tufted vetch, bears no memory of this. Nor do the

skylarks. A plant growing near the fatal gallows seems more in tune with this bloody past – tall spikes of dark blue wolf's bane. In his "Ode on Melancholy", John Keats advised the sorrowful to avoid this beautiful but deadly flower. Yet, despite the wolf's bane and the history of Gibbet Hill, I still come here. In fact, the story ends well. The last time the gibbet was used, villagers felt so sorry for the caged horse thief that they secretly fed him, then petitioned successfully for him to be freed. And the gallows were dismantled.

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28