

THE INTERNATIONAL
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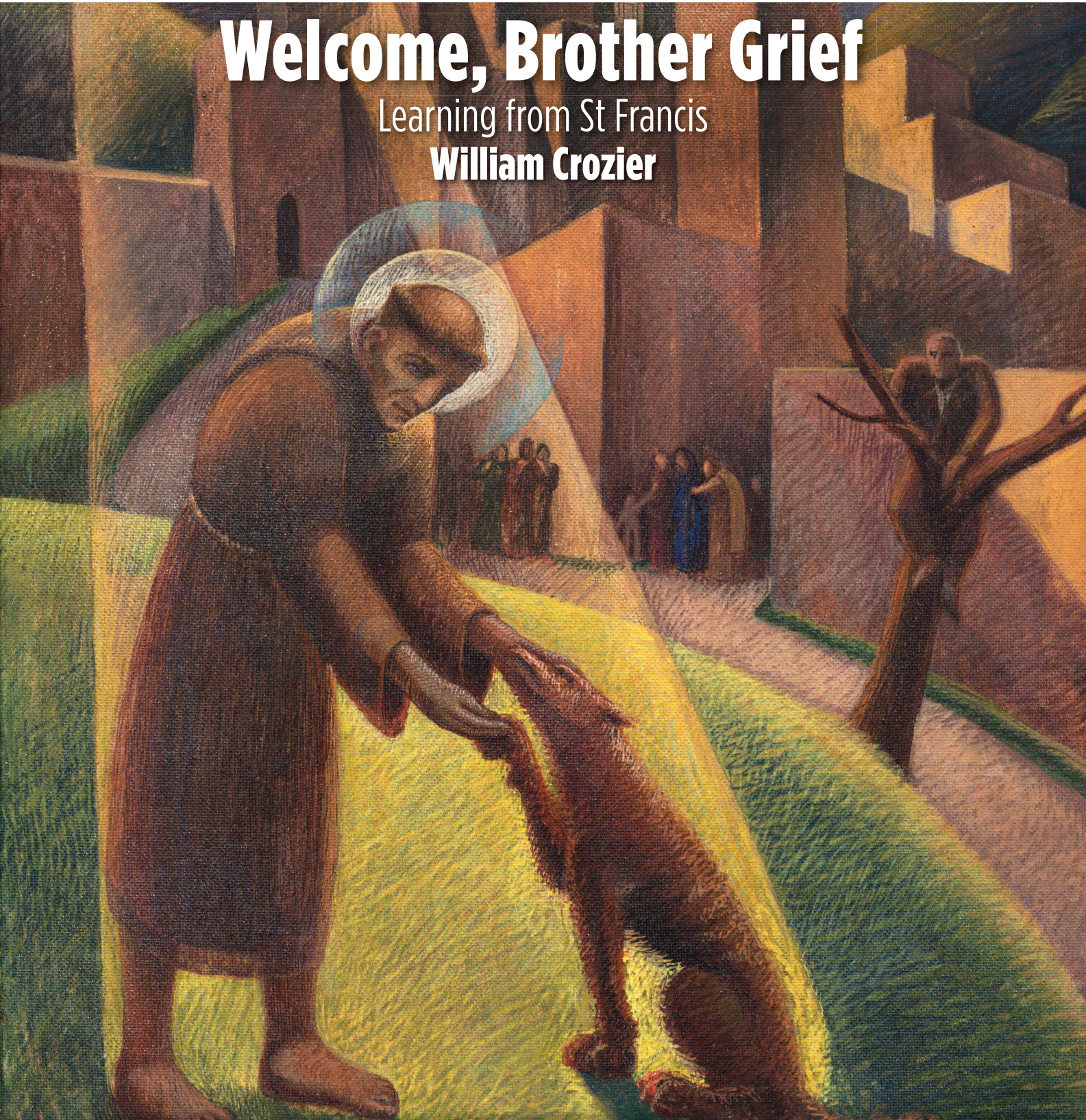
THE TABLET

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TRUMP'S PEACE DEAL

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

The oddity of the peace deal announced by President Trump on Monday is that neither of the warring parties – the Israeli government and the terrorist organisation Hamas – took part in any negotiations beforehand. The deal is in fact being imposed on both of them, primarily by the United States and also by a group of allies in the Middle East from Saudi Arabia to Turkey. Estimates of the chances of its success range from five per cent to 50, not much higher, because both parties have an interest in seeing it fail. For Benjamin Netanyahu these are politically dangerous times, as he is prime minister in an Israeli government that includes a number of far-right ministers who have put a sword of Damocles over his head. They are not getting what they want, and may cut the thread it hangs by. That could mean a general election, which he may well lose. Then he would face corruption charges.

Donald Trump has obliged Netanyahu to abandon any hope of annexing the West Bank, forced him to apologise to Qatar for an attack on Hamas within its sovereign territory, allowed an offer of amnesty to Hamas members who lay down their arms, reversed the attempt to force Gaza's Palestinians into exile, accepted a role for a reformed Palestinian Authority, agreed to humanitarian aid being brought into Gaza by UN agencies, and accepted the eventual withdrawal of the Israel Defence Forces from Gaza. This is a colossal climbdown, and cannot remotely be reconciled with the belligerent speech he made to the UN General Assembly just a few days earlier. It is not easily squared, either, with the tone of the disparaging remarks Trump uttered in response to the spate of announcements by various governments, including the United Kingdom, of the formal recognition of

Palestinian statehood. Many of Netanyahu's previous demands were designed to make Palestinian state recognition and a two-state solution impossible. Now it has become a little bit more credible.

This is where Tony Blair comes in. The complex road-to-peace document Trump unveiled has many marks of his involvement, and the intention is that he will have a leading role. He has been active in the Middle East peace process for several years. Despite his reputation being damaged by his support for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, his main qualification for the job is his determined pursuit of peace in Northern Ireland. The goal there, as now in the Middle East, was to persuade opposing parties that they had to compromise, and not to let the best be the enemy of the good.

The process will be managed by a "Board of Peace", with Trump himself as its chairman, and if and when Blair's powers of persuasion fail, the US President can step in with financial pressure. When it is at war with its enemies, Israel is only a viable state with US support; at peace with its neighbours and with the Palestinians, however, it could stand on its own feet. Indeed it could become a good neighbour to all the Arab states surrounding it. And the demographic logic behind the two-state solution would begin to assert itself. Israel, Gaza and the West Bank have between them roughly equal numbers of Arabs and Jews, about seven million each. If Israel is to remain a democratic Jewish homeland, a Jewish-majority state, the Palestinians would need to have their own homeland where they are a majority too. That is the significance of the plan to reform the Palestinian Authority and let it run Gaza as well as the West Bank. Far-right Zionist dreams of a Greater Israel, "from the river to the sea", are over.

DIGITAL ID

SCAPEGOATING MIGRANTS SERVES NO ONE

Making Britain a less attractive place to live is never going to solve the small boats crisis – the never-ending flow of people crossing the English Channel in order to seek asylum. This was the basic flaw in the previous government's "hostile environment" policy, which was intended to persuade undocumented migrants to go home. It is also the flaw in what has been given as the main reason for introducing electronic identity cards, namely, to make it more difficult for undocumented migrants to support themselves by working. It is already against the law to employ someone who has no legal right to be in the United Kingdom, and electronic identity checks will make this easier to enforce. That is not to say that there is not a case for the introduction of digital ID – but deterring asylum seekers should have no part in it.

The government's argument is based on the belief – more accurately, the myth – that the dominant driving force behind the daily rate of Channel crossings is the "pull factor", the desire to enjoy the benefits of living in Britain, rather than the "push" factor, the desire to escape from living in an oppressive regime. It ignores the many perils that refugees have already

endured: the dangers of escaping from the country in which they were persecuted; a long and risky journey often under the control of ruthless people smugglers who have charged them a lot of money; and culminating in a voyage across the open sea in an overcrowded rubber dinghy. If these hazards were not sufficient discouragement, it is hard to see how not having ready access to electronic identification on arrival will significantly alter their calculations.

The digital ID scheme would also foster a suspicion that anyone who is not obviously British, by language or accent, may be in Britain illegally, and therefore not entitled to work, rent somewhere to live, visit a hospital or doctor's surgery, obtain a driver's licence or apply for welfare benefits. As a result of not being allowed to work, asylum seekers waiting for their cases to be decided have to be fed and housed at public expense, with all the local resentment that can cause.

More than 100 charities involved in refugee welfare have warned the new home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, that "targeting refugees ... only serves as a dangerous smokescreen to scapegoat the most vulnerable, and distract from the very real dangers to our society". They are entirely right.

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Battle for the soul of France

The trial and imprisonment of former president Nicolas Sarkozy will be seized on by billionaire media magnate Vincent Bolloré to bolster his crusade against those he claims are the enemies of France's Catholic heritage / **By PATRICK MARNHAM**

WHILE FRANCE's political parties undermine each other's attempts to form a government that could guide France out of crisis – a crisis caused, many believe, by the vanity and incompetence of the republic's president, Emmanuel Macron – the country's "social contract" is slowly falling to pieces.

In a recent interview, former prime minister Alain Juppé, now a member of the Conseil Constitutionnel (supreme court), lamented the "appalling reputation of France's politicians ... which has led to the rise of populism". He was speaking days before his onetime colleague, ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy, was sentenced to five years imprisonment for *association des malfaiteurs* – a criminal conspiracy to solicit funding from Colonel Gaddafi's Libyan regime during Sarkozy's successful presidential election campaign in 2007. On leaving the courtroom last week, Sarkozy described his conviction as "an injustice and a scandal". He appeared to be genuinely indignant, despite the fact that this is his third criminal conviction. His previous offences include bribing a judge, a conviction that was based on police tape recordings of his telephone conversations when, as minister of the interior, he was responsible for both prisons and the police.

The latest sentence has been welcomed by his political opponents on the grounds that it was long overdue, that it strengthens the principle of equality before the law and reminds politicians that they have a duty of "probity". But it has been followed by a wave of protest from the right and from many of the ex-president's admirers. His supporters were particularly shocked since, in a very unusual ruling – normally only used for professional criminals who are likely to go on the run – the former president will be locked up while his appeal is pending. In humiliating Sarkozy, a man who once "embodied" France, his supporters argue that a biased judge has not just used the sentence as an opportunity to destroy a political opponent, she has also flouted Montesquieu's doctrine of the separation of powers which forms part of the French republic's constitution.

ALTHOUGH the executive, legislative and judicial powers are supposed to act independently, it has been clear for many years – at least since the Mitterrand era of the 1980s –



ALAMY/AP, THIBAUT CAMUS; ALAMY/ABACA, RAPHAEL LAFARGUE



Vincent Bolloré, above, the Catholic billionaire who warns against the 'Great Replacement', and left, Nicolas Sarkozy, indignant after his trial

that many of France's political battles are routinely fought out in the criminal courts, with the party in power instigating the prosecution of its predecessor. Public prosecutors are appointed and supervised by the minister of justice, who also influences the careers of the country's judges. Following the Sarkozy case there have been claims that the judge in question, Nathalie Gavarino, should never have been nominated for this case since she was known to be hostile to the former president.

The imprisonment of a former president takes the alleged use of the criminal law as a political weapon to new heights, and has reawakened the unending dispute about the nature of the "real" France and heated disagreements about the legends and myths that together form its *patrimoine*. Beyond the courts and the National Assembly an increas-

ingly bitter struggle for control of the nation's identity, effectively for the soul of France, is taking place. The conflict is fought in the arts and media, it engages supporters of the populist hard-right, and it has led to the invention of a new word, *la bollorisation*, in honour of the billionaire industrialist Vincent Bolloré.

Bolloré, a Breton, made his \$10 billion fortune in corporate raiding and trade with African governments, but in recent years he has become increasingly involved in domestic politics. A devout Catholic, he is saddened by the fact that France no longer resembles the country he knew as a child. He subscribes to the hard-right *le grand remplacement* theory, popularised by the French writer and critic Renaud Camus and embraced by many Maga Republicans in the US, who argue that Europe and America's white populations are being replaced by Muslim immigrants and the end result will be the extinction of Christianity.

Bolloré has acquired his political influence by building up France's largest media empire. This now includes CNews – France's equivalent of Fox News – the radio station Europe 1, and the *Journal du Dimanche*, France's only

national Sunday newspaper, as well as the television channel Canal+, which is a major investor in the French cinema industry. He also owns the largest publishing group in France, Hachette, which contains many of the most successful imprints – such as Fayard, Albin Michel, Stock, Grasset and Plon. Hachette also bought Time Warner Book Group, and in the United Kingdom its imprints include Little Brown, Hodder, Virago and Basic Books.

La bollorisation is the process whereby those who work for Bolloré in France are required to support his extreme right-wing opinions, and if they do not do so they tend to be replaced. Last year, after he had gained control of Fayard, the company announced plans to publish a memoir by Jordan Bardella, the youthful president of the hard-right Rassemblement National (RN), formerly the National Front. When Fayard's editorial director objected she was fired and several of her best-known authors departed in solidarity. There were calls for a boycott of Bardella's book, and an extensive publicity campaign in 100 railway stations was cancelled following union protests. This proved to be a mistake. Boosted by the publicity, *Ce Que Je Cherche* ("The Things I Seek") sold more than 300,000 copies. Since then Hachette has published Éric Zemmour, leader of Reconquête (Reconquest), a small political party some way to the right of the RN.

BOLLORE is now aiming to acquire the daily newspaper *Le Parisien*, which is owned by his friend Bernard Arnault, the head of luxury conglomerate LVMH and France's richest billionaire, also a practising Catholic. The two have done business before. Bolloré agreed to sell *Paris Match* to Arnault last year, remarking that "one does not disappoint a man who weighs in at \$170 billion". Following the current rumours about the sale of *Le Parisien*, many of its 400 journalists petitioned Arnault not to sell the title to Bolloré.

In recent weeks, Bolloré's assault on France's cultural establishment has switched to broadcasting, with CNews and Europe 1 attacking the public service broadcaster Radio France alleging left-wing bias. The allegation has been partly justified by the publication of a stolen tape recording of a conversation in which two Radio France journalists promised to "do the necessary on Rachida Dati" – in other words to undermine the Macronist culture minister's forthcoming campaign to become mayor of Paris.

Bolloré and his allies believe the only way to save France's national identity is to ensure that the next president of the republic, who will be elected in 2027, represents an alliance between the RN and the traditional conservatives of the Republican party. They intend to make immigration the major issue in the election and their demand for an immediate referendum on the subject has already

attracted 1.5 million signatures. Among those supporting this crusade are two more devout Catholics, the billionaire entrepreneur Pierre-Édouard Stérin (estimated wealth \$1.5 billion), a tax exile living in Belgium, and the former minister Philippe de Villiers, who has long campaigned against the official memory of the French Revolution as a liberating experience.

Vicomte de Villiers comes from the Vendée, a region where the revolutionary armies of the 1790s massacred many thousands of Catholic royalists. He has funded books and a film challenging the official glorification of the Revolution, and created Puy du Fou, a theme park almost as popular as Disneyland which mounts spectacles that present a romantic and heroic version of France's pre-Revolutionary history.

According to his opponents, Bolloré's Catholicism is the most sinister aspect of his political activities. He has donated €100 million to the Foyer Jean Bosco, a former nursing home of the Little Sisters of the Poor near his own palatial home in the exclusive 16th arrondissement, now converted into a comfortable residence where 180 Catholic students follow a semi-monastic regime. A picture has been painted of an increasingly eccentric and reclusive mystic

who spends much of his time talking about his hopes of salvation and shuns glamorous receptions in town in order to attend evening Mass – in Latin – during the week. That Bolloré shares his faith with Arnault is regarded as even more concerning, although the latter has always appeared to be far more interested in the bottom line than in "re-Christianising" France.

Bolloré has been quick to exploit the Sarkozy case. His publications have seized on the fact that the former president was acquitted on three of the four charges he faced due to lack of evidence and was convicted of criminal conspiracy despite the fact that the judge agreed with the defence that the document on which the prosecution case rested was a forgery. Sarkozy was nonetheless found guilty because, in the judge's opinion, "he must have been aware" of an illegal plot to obtain Libyan money. For Bolloré, the unfortunate Sarkozy will now play the role of a useful martyr, and his trial and imprisonment will be used to bolster the case for the patriotic Right. Last Sunday the *Journal du Dimanche* carried a sympathetic four-page interview with the former president, and an editorial compared him to the fictional "Count of Monte Cristo" – a good man banished and imprisoned on the evidence of a forgery.

Patrick Marnham is a biographer, reporter and screenwriter.


For Bolloré, the unfortunate former president will now play the role of a useful martyr for the patriotic Right



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Over the coming weeks we will discover if the nine Supreme Court justices – seven raised as Catholics – will try to curb President Trump’s aggressive assertion of executive power / By MICHAEL MCGOUGH

Supreme challenge

ON 6 OCTOBER the United States Supreme Court will hear the first oral arguments of its 2025–26 term, after a hiatus in which the justices delivered significant victories for Donald Trump’s administration. They included a ruling allowing the president to – for now – remove a member of the supposedly independent Federal Trade Commission and another staying a lower-court judge’s order preventing immigration officers from considering apparent ethnicity among other factors in deciding whether to stop someone on suspicion of being in the country illegally.

Trump’s aggressive assertion of executive power will be tested when the court fully considers the extent of his power to remove officials he has taken a dislike to – potentially overruling a landmark 1935 decision – and ponders whether he exceeded his authority in using emergency powers to impose extensive tariffs on trading partners. The court could also address the merits of Trump’s executive order targeting birthright citizenship, which grants US nationality to children born in the country whatever the legal status of their parents. In addition, the nine justices will address cases emerging from the culture wars Trump has stoked. They will review a Colorado law banning “conversion therapy” for minors who may identify as gay or transgender and consider whether statutes limiting the participation of transgender athletes in girls’ and women’s sports violate the Constitution or civil rights law.

The court will consider the arguments made by the advocates for the parties involved in all these cases, but that won’t be the only advice it will receive. Various interest groups also file so-called *amicus curiae* – “friend of the court” – briefs setting out their views. Among them is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The conference has filed *amicus* briefs in both the “conversion therapy” case, *Chiles vs Salazar*, which will be argued on 7 October, and two cases involving transgender athletes, *Little vs Hecox* and *West Virginia vs B.P.J.*, to be argued later in the term. In *Chiles vs Salazar* the USCCB, joined by the Colorado Catholic Conference and the Catholic University of America, is siding with Kaley Chiles, a licensed mental-health counsellor and committed Christian who has challenged Colorado’s ban on “conversion therapy”. The brief refers to the Church’s support for the view that “bodily manhood and womanhood are intrinsic

elements of human nature, aligned toward each other, and that people should act in accordance with this natural alignment”. It also argues that the case “addresses a timeless and a nearly universal human experience: seeking counsel from a trusted advisor to discern right from wrong in confusing or complex situations”. It adds: “If the freedom of speech guaranteed by the 1st Amendment protects anything, it surely must protect the right to seek and provide advice on these critical questions of human existence.”

In its brief in *Little vs Hecox* and *West Virginia vs B.P.J.*, the US bishops’ conference aligns with two states – Idaho and West Virginia – that enacted laws barring transgender athletes from women’s and girls’ sports. In that brief, the conference issues a warning: requiring Catholic schools to allow “males to compete *as girls and women* on female-only athletic teams” might force them to decline to participate in programmes such as the federal school lunch programme.

THESE FORMAL attempts to influence the court’s judgments have proliferated in recent years, but the bishops have long paid attention to the courts. Susanna De Stradis, an assistant history professor at Mississippi State University, notes that the legal office of the precursor of the USCCB advised local bishops and religious orders when they were involved in litigation. Sometimes, she adds, either the provenance of such legal support “was kept covered” or the bishops made sure they were joined in their efforts by non-Catholic organisations to forestall any public perception that “Catholic interests” were being pitted against the law of the land.

Dennis Wieboldt, a doctoral student at the University of Notre Dame, told me that an “explosion in involvement of Catholic legal activity” followed the Supreme Court’s 1947 decision in *Everson vs Board of Education*, which upheld the reimbursement by a public-school board of the costs of transportation for students at parochial schools. But as it did so, the court said that the 1st Amendment’s prohibition of an “establishment of religion” applied to the states and it endorsed Thomas Jefferson’s metaphor of a “wall of separation” between Church and State. That development

created an environment for more litigation around church-state issues, and the *amicus* brief became an important instrument for the bishops in defending the Church’s position, and not just in cases involving religious liberty or abortion. The conference’s briefs have addressed immigration (an issue on which some bishops have challenged Trump’s aggressive crackdown), homelessness, assisted suicide, the death penalty, gun control and labour relations.

Often the court has ruled as the bishops’ conference had hoped. In 2022, the justices overruled the *Roe vs Wade* decision that in 1973 had ruled that women had a right under the Constitution to have an abortion prior to the point of the viability of the foetus. Last term, the court issued rulings in two important cases in which the conference had filed *amicus* briefs. In *United States vs Skrametti*, the court essentially upheld a Tennessee law prohibiting certain medical treatments for transgender minors. In *Mahmoud vs Taylor* the justices ruled for parents who sought to have their children excluded from lessons utilising “LGBTQ+-inclusive” storybooks.

Amicus briefs typically declare an organisation’s interest in a case. In its brief in the conversion therapy case, the conference says: “The USCCB advocates and promotes the pastoral teaching of the US Catholic Bishops in such diverse areas of the Nation’s life as the free expression of ideas, fair employment and equal opportunity for the underprivileged, immigration, protection of the rights of parents and children, the sanctity of life, religious liberty, and the importance of education.”

They typically cite previous court decisions and legal principles. But the conference is also willing to invoke spiritual authorities. Its brief in *Chiles vs Salazar* cites, among other sources, the late Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.

A spokesperson for the conference told me: “Decisions regarding participation in *amicus* briefs are made by the Office of the General Counsel, in consultation with Conference leadership as appropriate.” Mark E. Chopko, who was general counsel for the conference from 1987 to 2007, explained that he and his colleagues would look at the cases scheduled to come before the Supreme Court and identify those in which the bishops might have an interest. The cases they decided to become involved in unsurprisingly aligned with the conference’s priorities in its larger public advocacy: support for

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‘All the justices, especially the seven raised as Catholics, will take seriously the amicus briefs filed by the bishops’



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Sunday

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religious liberty and traditional marriage, compassion for migrants and opposition to capital punishment.

From a secular perspective, these preferences might seem to combine left-wing and right-wing positions. But as Richard W. Garnett, an expert at the University of Notre Dame Law School on church-state law put it: "It would not be accurate to code the USCCB's *amicus* brief as being uniformly (or even mainly) 'conservative' or 'liberal' as those terms are used."

Do interventions by the bishops (or other groups) make any difference? Allison Orr Larsen, a professor at William & Mary Law School in Virginia, told me: "It's hard to say whether any particular brief influences a justice's decision or gets them from yes to no. But we do know that they are using the briefs and they're citing them in their opinions. Using the brief as part of their rationale is enough to show influence for me even if you can't prove that an *amicus* brief can actually change the vote." Of course, a brief can influence the court even if it isn't cited in a decision.

Ira C. Lupu, an emeritus professor of law at George Washington University, says: "All of the justices, especially the seven who were raised as Catholics, will take very seriously the *amicus* briefs filed by USCCB. These briefs will carry special weight in cases that directly affect the functioning of the Church in matters of religious education and delivery of social services." Lupu offered two examples: *Our Lady of Guadalupe School vs Morrissey-Berru* (2020), where the court held that some teachers at Catholic schools may not sue for employment discrimination, and *Fulton vs City of Philadelphia* (2021), a decision favouring a Catholic social-services agency that wouldn't certify same-sex couples as foster parents.

NOT EVERY expert believes the briefs receive deferential treatment from Catholic justices. "I don't think there's any sense beyond speculation that Catholic justices are automatically drawn to take their views from the Catholic bishops' briefs," De Stradis told me. Chopko recalled that while he was general counsel there were at least three Catholics on the court and "we aimed at writing a brief that would help the court decide the case, not pointing to 'This is what the Church teaches and this is what you should do'."

The Church clearly cares about how the nine Supreme Court justices, Catholic and non-Catholic, will rule. Although it has published guidance for voters ("Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship"), the conference doesn't endorse candidates for elective office. That the bishops can seem more opinionated in advising the Supreme Court than in preaching to voters may speak to a larger reality about US politics: that the Supreme Court, at least on some matters, is the most powerful branch of government.

Michael McGough, the former senior editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times, is a journalist in Washington DC.

I managed not to tumble down the stairs and put my boot through a glowing oil painting



I PUT MY specs on to look at some etchings by Walter Sickert in that friendly gallery Piano Nobile, round the corner from St Francis, Pottery Lane in west London, and found myself negotiating a staircase as though I were wearing diver's boots. It's funny how spectacles change one's gait, just as it's hard to cross the road if deafened by a loud noise like a pneumatic drill. Anyway I managed not to tumble down the stairs and put my boot through a glowing oil painting of two Venetian women with hair like haystacks.

I think they were *La Giuseppina* and *Carolina dell'Acqua*. The latter got her nickname from a fear of water, a liability in Venice, unless her fear was of washing. The sitters were ordinarily prostitutes by profession and sat for Sickert, then aged 43, in the rainy winter of 1903-4 when he turned to indoor figure subjects.

I like Sickert. I mean I like his painting. Some of his compositions are creepy and unlikeable. At Piano Nobile they have one of the five extant oil versions of *Ennui*, with a more limited view of the stifling room and its bored figures, making it even more claustrophobic.

In that painting the model for the bloke at the table smoking his cigar (who reminds me of my grandfather) was said to have been at school with Sickert and to have fallen on hard times. His nickname was Hubby, and Sickert liked his "kind silly old face". Since Hubby was addicted to drink, Sickert used to pay the man's wages to his wife.

Hubby was also the model for *Off to the Pub*, in which a man lurches out of the door leaving his wife sitting in her hat. The Tate owns it but it is not on display. I don't know why. *Off to the Pub* shows Sickert's genius for suggesting a narrative by a title. According to Wendy Baron, the writer on Sickert, he gave two titles to one picture in 1909: *Summer in Naples* and *Dawn, Camden Town*.

By 1914 Sickert had to break his arrangement with Hubby, who'd found a way to get drunk and arrived drunk and "upset my whole day's work and my nerves and makes my heart beat with anger and pity". The last we hear is that he joined up when the war came. He must have been in his fifties. Perhaps he died a hero.

I HAVE FALLEN in love with a channel of water running down the middle of the medieval Cheap Street in Frome, Somerset. It always has the same flow, winter or summer. The source is a spring at the corner of the churchyard where it debouches from a leopard's head. I was reminded of a passage in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, the novel that for obscure reasons C.S. Lewis said "baptised" his imagination. In the book the hero wakes to find the washbasin in his room overflowing then streaming over the carpet, where grass and daisies soon appear.

The idea of flowing water recurs in MacDonald's writings, but to find it in reality running down the middle of a street is rare, though Hobson's Conduit in Cambridge runs down each side of Trumpington Street, surprising unwary parkers. The channel in Cheap Street is called the leat and is neatly edged by the stone paving. The water is bright and the sides are lined with moss and liverworts. Children love it, even for the pretend risk in jumping from one side to the other.

It is amazing that the leat has survived modernisation over the centuries. In London, the saving feature of a development built just after the millennium was a channel of water called the Rill in a stone-paved pedestrian way running from Tooley Street 280 yards to the Thames. In 2018 it was filled in. Phone-users apparently kept stumbling into it.

NO SOONER had they hauled off the great iron barriers blocking my street for the funeral of the Duchess of Kent in nearby Westminster Cathedral than Thames Water set up camp for a project of stupendously violent drilling, sounding like a volcanic eruption. It's to replace the water main under the street, though I wonder whether sewers will also come into it, since if you kneel down in the middle of the road and, without getting run over, apply an eye to one of the iron grilles punctuating the tarmac, you see a reflection far below from one of those covered-in tributaries to the Thames.

It could all end in geysers and sinkholes. I'll report back, if I'm not washed away.



Christopher Howse is an assistant editor of The Daily Telegraph.

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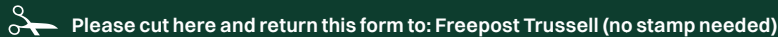


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The legendary story of the taming of the Wolf of Gubbio by St Francis of Assisi held a surprising lesson for a son wrestling with bereavement / By **WILLIAM CROZIER**

Welcome, Brother Grief

A S I KEPT vigil next to my mother's coffin during the small hours of a cold night in October 2022, the silence was broken only by the occasional sound of a gentle whimpering. On my knees sat my mother's little dog, Ted. Like me, Ted sat just staring at the coffin. The only source of light in the church was the paschal candle on the chancel steps directly above mum's coffin. Through the hours of my vigil, I was grateful for Ted's company, comforted by his warm body and occasional attempts to lick my face.

As the night drew on, I became aware of another presence in the church. Something else – unwelcomed but not unexpected – had slipped in under the cover of darkness and made its way to my side: grief. Among all the chaos that had been my mother's illness, and the anxious busyness in the weeks following her death, I had not stopped to recognise the reality now expressed so concretely before my

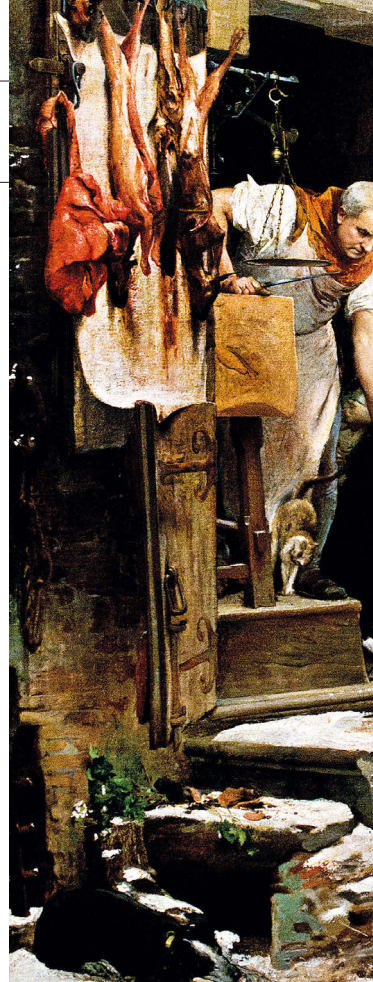
eyes: Mum was dead. Only that night did I feel for first time the full magnitude of my loss.

Three years later, I still revisit that night when grief first arrived. I think particularly about Ted's whimpering. Mum's companion for years, he had visited her regularly at the hospice and slept on her bed. There is some suggestion that dogs feel grief, perhaps because of their descent from wolves. As pack animals, wolves form intense social bonds. When a pack member dies, the other wolves experience distress and will howl for weeks, seemingly hoping for the lost wolf's return.

As time has gone by, the grief which arrived the night of my vigil has felt like a wolf. Dangerous. Ravenous. Predatory. For most of her adult life, mum struggled with schizophrenia. Perhaps it is this that has made her death from a cancer that left her frightened and bedridden so hard to process.

Wolves, of course, have a bad reputation. Scripture identifies them with greed and

Tamed: detail from the Wolf of Gubbio, 1877, by the French painter Luc Olivier Merson



cruelty (Jeremiah 5:6; Ezekiel 22:27), while Christ himself warned against those who are like wolves dressed in "sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). The most famous Christian story concerning wolves is that of the Wolf of Gubbio. Gubbio is a small city nestled in the mountains of Umbria. Tradition has it that St Francis of Assisi lived in Gubbio for several years. During this time, a giant wolf came down from the mountains and besieged the city.

THE WOLF ate not only livestock, but also men, women and children. Out of fear, those living outside the city retreated behind its walls, taking with them their animals. To keep the citizens safe, Gubbio's officials ordered the city's gates to be closed and prohibited anyone from leaving. From the high walls, Gubbio's citizens watched daily as the wolf would circle the city looking for a way in. As the siege progressed, the citizens began to starve. In desperation, several men armed themselves and ventured out of the city hoping to kill the beast. The wolf, however, ate them all.

Seeing this, Francis convinced the city officials to let him pass through the gates, claiming he could persuade the wolf to end its reign of terror. With the citizens of Gubbio watching from the walls, Francis ventured towards the forest where the wolf lived. Emerging from the trees, the wolf saw Francis and ran towards him, jaws open. Francis, however, stood firm and, raising his hand, made the sign of the cross and bade the wolf peace, saying aloud: "Come to me, brother wolf. I command you in the name of Christ not to hurt me or anyone else." Instantly the wolf slowed its course and walked gently up to the saint.

Francis chastised the wolf for its errors and told it that, provided it promised not to eat anyone else, he would ensure that the citizens

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gazing intently at the animal, impressed by its size and beauty. Its presence was made even more formidable by the silence of the crypt. As I looked at the wolf, I began to reflect on how the story of the Wolf of Gubbio offered an analogy with my own experiences with grief.

IN THE two years since Mum's death, I had experienced daily how ravenous grief was. In response to its threat, my initial reaction had been, like the citizens of Gubbio, to retreat to a place of refuge: to bar the emotional doors, hoping that grief would pass by. This, of course, did not work. Grief circled the walls I had erected, and I started to starve behind them. In time, I had tried to confront grief. By burying myself in work and constantly keeping busy, I sought to defeat grief by outlasting it in a test of stamina. As with the men of Gubbio, this strategy also failed. No armour could defend against grief's bite and no amount of emotional effort could kill it.

As I stood facing the stuffed wolf thinking about all this, I realised, with a sense of trepidation, that there was only one thing left to do with my grief: to heed St Francis' example and to walk unarmed towards that which stalked me and, against all my inclinations, to bid it peace. Of course, this did not resolve my feelings of loss. Unlike Gubbio's wolf, grief did not bow its head before me, nor did it hold out its paw. Quite the opposite. Each time I approached it, grief opened its jaws and attacked with ferocity.

Next year will mark the 800th anniversary of St Francis' death. Famously, Francis' attitude towards death was positive. We are told how, when a doctor informed him he would soon die, the bedridden saint responded by opening his arms wide, saying with joy, "Welcome, my Sister Death!"

We do not know if Francis was still in Gubbio when the wolf died. We can be sure, however, that he would have been the first to give thanks for *Frate lupo*. For Francis, there is no creature or person so bad that God's mercy cannot call out of them acts of love. Even death is to be welcomed with friendship. The same, Francis would

have counselled, is true of grief.

When Ted and I left the church at dawn, I had not appreciated just how wounding my new companion's bite would be. However, I have learned, gradually and painfully, the virtue of venturing unarmed outside the walls I have built to meet grief. Some days it attacks, jaws wide open. Other days it seems content simply to stand at the forest's edge and make its presence known. In time it will, I trust, bow its head in friendship and hold out its paw to me.

When it does, I shall say to it: "Peace be with you, Brother Grief."

William Crozier is the Duns Scotus Chair in Franciscan Studies in the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University.

of Gubbio would feed it daily. The wolf signalled its agreement by bowing its head and offering the saint its paw. Francis then led the wolf into the city where it was greeted by the stunned citizens. He told them that *Frate lupo* ("Friar Wolf") had repented of his sins and wished to make peace with them.

Each day for two years the wolf visited the city, going from door to door to be fed, and, true to its promise, it harmed no one nor any livestock. Indeed, so gentle and friendly did the wolf become that, when it died of old age, Gubbio's citizens buried it with great reverence.

Partly because of its absence from the earliest Franciscan sources, and partly because of its fantastical nature, the story of Gubbio's wolf was largely dismissed in subsequent centuries. In 1873, however, builders restoring the Church of St Francis of the Peace in Gubbio discovered something that sent shock waves through the city – the skeleton of a giant wolf.

Buried in the foundations, the wolf's skeleton was in an elaborate medieval sarcophagus. Upon hearing of the discovery, Gubbio's citizens flocked to see the contents of the sarcophagus. A local veterinarian was called, and he confirmed that the bones were indeed those of a giant wolf. Once the church's restoration work was complete, the wolf's bones were reburied inside its crypt.

Last year I visited the Church of St Francis of the Peace for the first time. As I descended into the dimly lit crypt, I encountered something I had not expected. Standing guard over the wolf's sarcophagus was the imposing figure of a taxidermised wolf. I found myself

Francis led the wolf into the city where it was greeted by stunned citizens. He told them Friar Wolf had repented

Tablet webinar

Saints of the Selfie Age: Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati – Models of Holiness for the 21st Century

With the canonisation of these two young men—separated by nearly a century, yet united in their deep devotion to Christ—the Church is offering a renewed vision of holiness that speaks powerfully to the modern world.



In this one-hour session, join **Fr Matthew Jarvis OP** as he explores:

- The lives, spirituality, and enduring legacy of Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati
- What their canonisations reveal about the Church's evolving understanding of sanctity
- How their examples might inspire young Catholics today in living a life of faith, charity, and Eucharistic devotion
- The interplay between faith, social action, and digital culture in contemporary expressions of holiness

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A Franciscan adventure

Joanna Moorhead and Peter Stanford invite Tablet readers to join them for a week of walking in the footsteps of St Francis in Assisi and La Verna to discover how the saint's life and ideas can transform our own

WHAT WOULD a *Tablet* retreat be like? That question has been at the front of our minds over the past few weeks. We've been colleagues and friends for more than three decades: first at the *Catholic Herald* where, what seems like a lifetime ago (it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s), Peter was editor and Joanna was deputy editor. Today we both love our roles at *The Tablet* – Peter is a regular interviewer and Joanna is arts editor.

Over the years our families, Peter's and Joanna's, have enjoyed breaks at a very special villa in northern Umbria, on the border with Tuscany near Arezzo. Peter's friend Morag Cleland runs the place: it's a delightful farmhouse in the hills near the tiny hilltop village of Lippiano, across the valley from Monterchi, home to Piero della Francesca's magnificent *Madonna del Parto*, one of the groundbreaking works of the Renaissance.

Staying at Villa Pia feels like being at a convivial house party, with terraces on which to enjoy a cup of coffee or a glass of wine and suppers of locally sourced ingredients, served (if the weather is warm enough) under the stars in the courtyard. In the summer many of the guests are families with young children, but in spring and autumn the focus is on themed weeks: and over a meal a few months ago, we got chatting about what fun it would be to take a group of *Tablet* readers to Villa Pia. *La dolce vita* meets discussion and musing on art, ecology and the meaning of life. We knew we'd love it, and we felt there had to be *Tablet* readers out there who would love it, too.

We turned our thoughts to a theme and we quickly realised that Villa Pia, which sits between the city of Assisi an hour to the south and the wild hilltops of La Verna an hour to the north, lent itself perfectly to a week centred on St Francis. No figure in the history of Christendom – save Jesus himself – has had such a monumental impact. We realised we could explore Francis' life, ideas and legacy in the courtyard and round the dining table at Villa Pia, as well as have day trips to both Assisi and La Verna, the Tuscan outpost to which he retreated later in his life.

So many themes in the current-day world and Church connect to St Francis. If it was initially a surprise that the last pope took his name, it seems an obvious choice now. Francis, the saint who was charged by God to "rebuild my Church"; Francis, the eco-warrior who



Villa Pia is located in northern Umbria, just across the Tuscan border from Arezzo

put care of the environment at the centre of his mission. Francis, the religious figure most depicted in art after Christ – some of the paintings he inspired would prove cornerstones of the Renaissance. Francis, who founded one of the great religious orders of the Catholic Church. Francis, whose simple entreaties ("Brother Sun, Sister Moon") seem as much of the minute in 2025 as they did in 1224 when he penned them.

In one of our sessions Peter, who has written in his forthcoming biography of the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí on the nature of sainthood, will look not only at the canonisation of Francis – who became a saint two short years after his death – but also at wider issues around sainthood. In Assisi we will visit the tomb of the recently canonised Carlo Acutis, the London-born Italian who died in 2006 of leukaemia at the age of just 15. What is sainthood in the twenty-first century? Who are the figures the Church looks to canonise; what are the factors at play? What has sainthood meant to the story of Francis, 800 years on from his death?

Francis' life and legacy spawned a vast quantity of art, some of the most important of it in the city where he lived: in Assisi, we will visit the Basilica of St Francis and see the Giotto frescoes depicting his life that marked a significant turning point in art history. Back at Villa Pia, Joanna will lead a session on the figure of Francis in popular culture, looking

at how he has been represented by artists from Caravaggio to Stanley Spencer and Diego Rivera – and how he has been the focus of many movies, including *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* directed by Franco Zeffirelli, which we will watch together one evening.

Also in Assisi, we'll be able to see the Basilica of Saint Clare. Back at Villa Pia, we'll delve into her story – and talk not only about Clare and her relationship with Francis, but about other women in Catholic history whose stories have at times been eclipsed by those of the men they worked alongside. St Clare has long been in Francis' shadow, though that is changing now.

POPE FRANCIS' defining legacy will be his championing of "integral ecology" – and *Laudato si'*, the title of the encyclical that lays out his belief that human life is intrinsically connected to nature, comes from the first line of St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*. At Villa Pia our guest lecturer, Siobhan Cross, a lawyer who works on matters of climate change, will look at the role the Catholic Church might play in addressing humanity's greatest challenge.

There are no prerequisites to joining us at Villa Pia, save a curiosity about the life and legacy of St Francis. If you'd like to explore your own creative response to the Francis story – in writing, in art, or in sketching – we will encourage you to do that. We'll be discussing Ann Wroe's *Francis: A Life in Songs*; you might like to read it before joining us, or you might want to read other books on St Francis. But if you'd rather just tip up and take it from the top, we're absolutely fine with that as well. We are keen to explore how Francis' life and ideas relate to how we live our own lives in the twenty-first century, and our retreat will include open forums in which we'll share our thoughts about how we might take some of the saint's wisdom and spirituality to heart.

We see our week at Villa Pia as an adventure, and we'd love to have *Tablet* readers sharing that adventure with us. We hope you will come with your own experiences and ideas. We're looking forward to lots of conversation and to sharing ideas around the table and in the courtyard – as well as lots of time to read or swim in the pool and to walk in the Umbrian countryside, as St Francis himself once did.

Saint Francis – A Modern Saint

Join us for a week-long retreat from 18 - 25 April 2026 run by two familiar *Tablet* names, Joanna Moorhead and Peter Stanford.

Inspired by Saint Francis, we'll be musing on faith and the meaning of life, art and ecology, sainthood and climate change.

The trip includes accommodation, all meals and drinks at Villa Pia, visits and talks. Prices range from £1,300 to £1,800 for the week.

More information can be found here:
www.villapia.com/st-francis-week/

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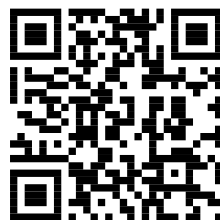


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*CHAIN report, Q1: April – June 2025.



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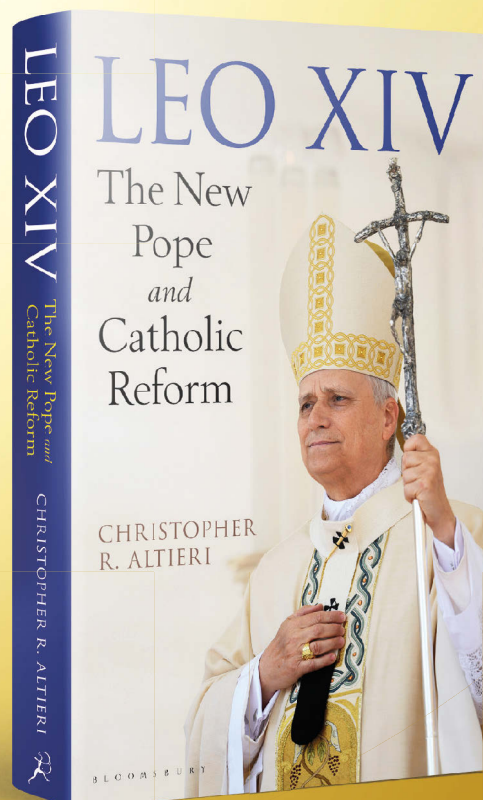
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AMY WELBORN

BLOOMSBURY CONTINUUM



WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

No night out

IN MARCH 2020, as the Covid pandemic was taking hold, the first meeting was held to plan the Everyone In scheme, which reframed street homelessness away from simply being a housing issue to being a public health emergency. The results were immediate. Dan Dumoulin of Depaul UK tells us: "Everyone In succeeded in accommodating 90 per cent of those who had been sleeping rough."

That first meeting was hosted by The Passage, the homelessness charity virtually next door to Westminster Cathedral. Since the end of the pandemic, Mick Clarke, its chief executive, has witnessed a "dramatic and depressing" increase in street homelessness. He said: "The rise of drug dealing, with criminals targeting those who are the most vulnerable, has made things even worse."

Depaul UK specialises in working with young people. "They tend to earn less and have limited protections in the welfare system, so have been especially hard hit by the cost of living crisis and spiralling rents. There are now twice as many 18- to 25-year-olds sleeping rough in London as there were in 2021," Dumoulin says.

The gloomy picture is confirmed by George O'Neill, chief executive of the Cardinal Hume



Centre. "The number of children experiencing homelessness has reached record levels. In England, over 150,000 children are homeless and living in temporary accommodation, while rough sleeping among under-25s in London is rising sharply. Child poverty rates are also at record highs."

For O'Neill, "homelessness and child poverty are deeply connected. The biggest indicator of future homelessness as an adult is poverty as a child. Too often, homelessness at a young age is repeated later in life. Severe poverty and homelessness damage children's education and employment prospects, and, at their

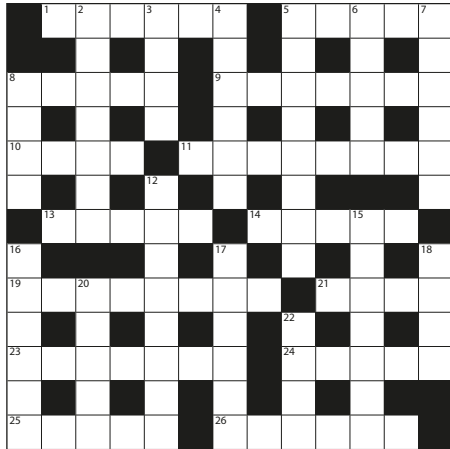
worst, can draw young people into the criminal justice, social care or health systems for life. This is not just a crisis of housing, but a serious risk to the potential in every child."

THE PASSAGE began in the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul house in St Vincent's, Carlisle Place, in 1980. Shortly after his arrival at Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume had been disturbed to see "night sleepers" congregating in the cathedral plaza, using the cathedral itself as a warm place to shelter from cold weather until it closed down for the night. With his encouragement, the Daughters of Charity, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and The Passage joined up to create Depaul UK, with a mission to end homelessness. The Cardinal Hume Centre in nearby Horseferry Road opened its doors in 1986, supporting homeless young people and families living in temporary, poor-quality accommodation.

Mick Clarke tells us that Everyone In was the inspiration for The Passage's No Night Out scheme, designed to prevent homeless people spending even a single night on the streets. "Prevention really does work," he says. "Street homelessness must – once again – be reframed: this time away from something that is managed once it has happened, to being something that is prevented from happening in the first place."

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 972 Enigma



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 4 October, 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 the Book of Common Prayer, the Old Testament and Methodism – from OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.**

Across

- 1 Not entirely amazed on seeing the river (6)
- 5 Principal American state, they say (5)
- 8 There is danger in bringing dishonesty back into advertising (5)
- 9 I'm back with unreliable nerds as babysitters! (7)
- 10 Silver in the moon was Othello's undoing (4)
- 11 After a scam, a broken loser needs someone to bring comfort (8)
- 13 A tree resembling Mrs Swan (5)
- 14 Famous Mr Crosby contributed nothing to the game (5)
- 19 About soft floor coverings; they can be deadly (8)
- 21 I am extremely proud when I get into this vehicle (4)

- 23 Initially, the hotel reviewed in Valesham, East Sussex, does excellent business (7)
- 24 Something is wrong with a young lady (5)
- 25 Player loses head on finding hen (5)
- 26 Dad's attempt to cover the pie (6)

Down

- 2 Russia's space station took a long time to create illusions (7)
- 3 French novelist covers half the zone adjoining an American city (4)
- 4 You are dim, Ron, writing that a biblical king had a military aircraft! (6)
- 5 Describing religious life and what it cost one man (8)
- 6 I distribute the cards? Perfect! (5)
- 7 Cockney fowl has devious ruse to provide a guarantee (6)

- 8 Does that swine have a right to be such a self-righteous character? (4)
- 12 Though a rebel, I've found faith! (8)
- 15 The French cigar is frozen (7)
- 16 Let Reg play the girl in Grimm's fairy tale (6)
- 17 Rises from bed to acquire a little drink (4, 2)
- 18 This burden is our responsibility (4)
- 20 A celebration for Pat online (5)
- 22 Dad boards the ship with his permit (4)

SUDOKU | Hard

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

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

Solution to the 13 September puzzle

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

Solution to the 13 September crossword No. 969

Across: 1 Refill; 5 Titus; 8 Butte; 9 Drunker; 10 Open; 11 Sixpence; 13 Medea; 14 Staff; 19 Tempting; 21 Zeta; 23 Uction; 24 Spire; 25 Gaunt; 26 Slight.

Down: 2 Extreme; 3 Ilex; 4 Ludwig; 5 Trumpets; 6 Token; 7 Surfer; 8 Book; 12 Centrist; 15 Flemish; 16 Strung; 17 Ananas; 18 Dame; 20 Macau; 22 Asti.

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That was about 10 years ago and I've not had a problem since.'

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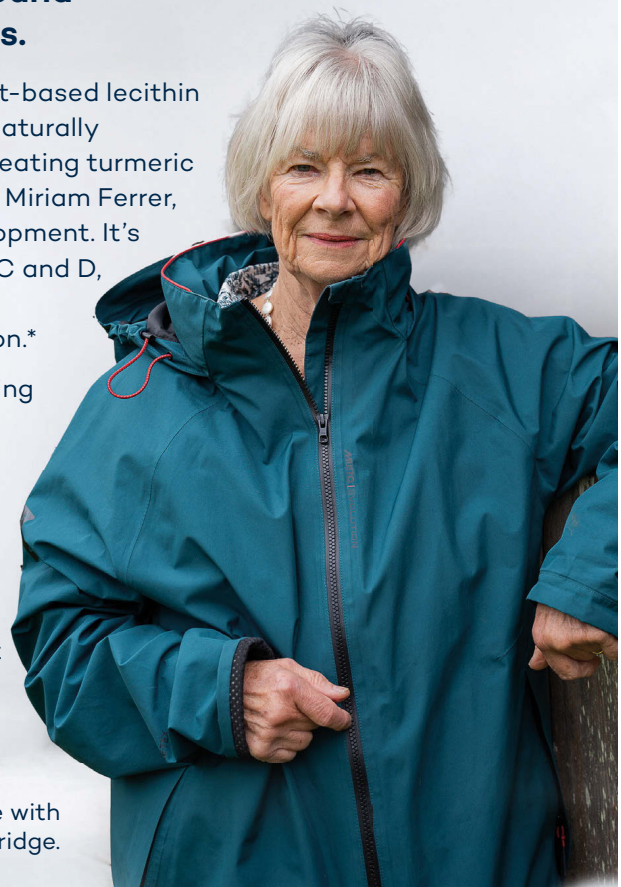
Developed by Cambridge scientists, Turmeric+ uses a patented Curcuma Phospholipid Complex that makes curcumin 30 times more absorbable than standard turmeric.

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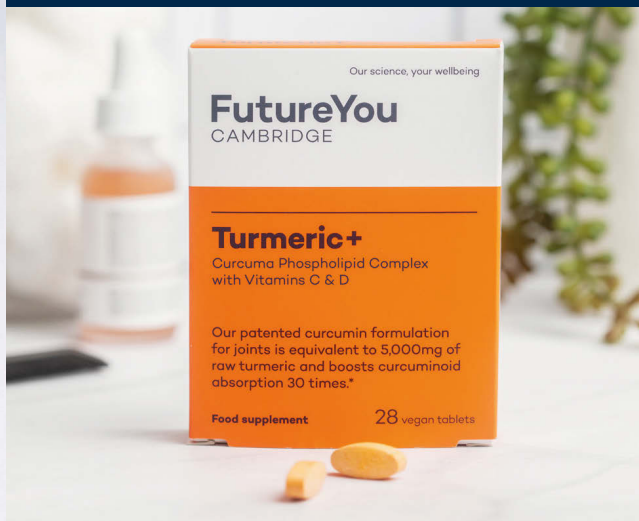
Turmeric+ is now a best-selling supplement for joint health, certified by Informed Sport for use by athletes.

'Recently I went dinghy racing,' says Pauline. 'I'm by far the oldest active dinghy woman sailor in the club, but even after hanging over the toe straps in rough seas, my knees were fine.'

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Our debt to Africa

● There is a quiet but crippling injustice in global finance. This injustice begins with international credit rating agencies, which overstate the risk of lending to African nations. Analysis from Standard Bank shows that, on average, an African country is rated four notches below what its economic fundamentals suggest.

This “prejudice premium” creates a massive financial drain. In 2024, African sovereigns paid an estimated \$102 billion to service foreign debt, with a significant portion going to private lenders at exorbitant interest rates.

Between 2016 and 2021, this premium cost the continent an additional \$56 billion in interest – funds that could have been invested in essential schools and hospitals.

The hefty premiums borne by African sovereigns are ultimately passed down to local banks, and then to citizens and businesses.

This results in African small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) facing interest rates of 15-30 per cent (4-8 per cent in Europe or the US). Similarly, Kenyan families grapple with mortgage rates ranging from 14.9 per cent to over 21 per cent (in the UK it's about 5 per cent).

Such pricing makes homeownership and wealth building an unattainable dream for millions, while stifling job growth across the continent. We bear a moral duty to champion a fair financial system that empowers Africa to achieve true economic sovereignty.

As Sidi Ould Tah, president of the African Development Bank, says: “There is no global development without African growth. And there can be no African growth without a fundamental reset of how capital is priced for the continent.”

MARCUS COURAGE

CEO, AFRICA PRACTICE

DAVID MCNAIR

GLOBAL POLICY DIRECTOR
THE ONE CAMPAIGN

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Europe's long history of antisemitism

JENNIFER LIPMAN is critical of the author Mark Mazower for failing to ask why there is so much focus on Israel's actions out of so many countries and conflicts (“Still going strong”, Books, 27 September). Is it perhaps that Israel presents itself to the world as a Western-style democracy, yet has controlled someone else's land for more than 50 years and settled its own nationals on it?

Or is it that knowing the history of the systematic murder of European Jews by the Nazis, we expect Israel, which identifies as a Jewish state, to behave better and not indulge in what seems to many of us to be the systematic destruction of the population of Gaza under the pretext of eliminating Hamas?

There are no shades of grey in what Lipman calls “Jew hate”. Antisemitism means one thing and one thing only – prejudice against Jewish people for being Jewish – just as racism means people who identify as being of one race exhibiting prejudice against those they consider to be of another race.

(DR) LES MAY

ROCHDALE, LANCASHIRE

IN HER REVIEW of Mark Mazower's book on antisemitism Jennifer Lipman asks whether antisemitism is based on “race, religion, politics or something else”.

Surely as a Jew she must know that antisemitism has its roots in Christianity's castigation of the Jews as the crucifiers of Christ. In the damning words which Matthew's Gospel puts into the mouth of the crowd baying for Jesus' execution: “His blood be upon us and upon our children.”

We don't find antisemitism in the Far East. Nazi antisemitic rants in Peking or Delhi would have meant nothing to locals. In the Middle East it is a postwar phenomenon, arising from the perception that Jewish settlers in Palestine are depriving the local Arabs of their homeland.

This leaves the West, where Christianity with its millennial antisemitism has been the dominant cultural force for 1,500 years. Despite Christianity's secular decline, this antisemitism persists.

The Holocaust is the greatest excrescence of evil ever to manifest itself. I doubt very much that it could have happened if the soil from which it grew had not over the centuries been impregnated with this antisemitism. We let the Nazis and the German population take the blame: we rarely acknowledge our complicity.

Indeed, the Catholic Church still fails to acknowledge the awful moral lapse in its failure at the time to publicly denounce and condemn the Holocaust – the industrialised extermination of Jesus' compatriots and God's chosen people.

Until we confront the legacy of the Holocaust honestly and openly it will continue to distort our perceptions and cloud the way forward.

Like most Catholics, I regard myself as being free from antisemitism. But this is a dangerous assumption. It is like a resident of Chernobyl thinking he isn't contaminated because he feels well. Constant vigilance is required; we are all contaminated.

CHRISTOPHER GLOVER

COOKHAM, BERKSHIRE

Chichester's art

● I was fascinated to read Joanna Moorhead's account of the artistic riches to be found in Chichester (“Too garish for God?”, Arts, 27 September), as it coincides delightfully with a concert to be given by Vasari Singers on 25 October at St Paul's, Knightsbridge.

The concert celebrates the legacy of Walter Hussey, who, as Moorhead points out, commissioned many works of visual art as dean of Chichester. In fact, this was a habit he had started when vicar of St Matthew's, Northampton.

Hussey's passion for contemporary art was not restricted to the visual; he also commissioned some of the twentieth century's most enduring choral works, including Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*.

The Vasari Singers concert will present these and other pieces associated with him, as well as spoken appreciations of several of the visual works of art he commissioned, and a reading of an Auden poem also commissioned by Hussey.

JULIA RIDOUT

CUDDINGTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

● Joanna Moorhead was so focused on the art at Chichester Cathedral that she missed the remembrance of Cardinal Manning's wife in its hallowed halls.

Buried in nearby Lavington, West Sussex, Caroline Sargent was married to Manning in his period as rector in Chichester Diocese until her death from tuberculosis.

Close to his own death, the by then convert defender of unwaged dockers and the urban poor told Herbert Vaughan that “not a day has passed since her death when I have not prayed (upon a volume

of her prayers and reflections). All the good that I may have done, all the good I may have been, I owe to her."

Chichester Cathedral reminds us of the need for colour that Moorhead so aptly records, but also raises the question as to the likelihood that every cardinal who might opt to defend the weakest first might benefit from the love of a wife to help keep him on that path of solidarity and compassion.

(PROF.) FRANCIS DAVIS
SOUTHAMPTON

Christianity in India

● The letter headed "Missing women" (27 September), responding to your photograph of some 60 leaders of India's Christian churches (20 September), deserves applause.

I am an outsider, but with my 25-year involvement with Kurisumala Cistercian Ashram, visiting church institutions all over the country, I do have a first-hand inkling of the "handmaid" status of the Indian sisterhood, to say nothing of the often sidelined laity.

It is no accident that the brains and energies of the most insightful, inspiring and broad-minded women are hidden at the margins – in the Ashram movement (through Vandana Mataji and Sara Grant, both RSCJ Sisters) or in the dignity of Pune slums, as well as in

clinics, hospitals, social support agencies, or colleges.

There was an opportunity after Vatican II to re-create the Indian Church through the national Catholic bishops' centre in Bangalore. However, too many non-episcopal components of the Church were not supported and withered.

India's importance in the global Church makes genuine synodal re-creation vital.

BERNARD KILROY
HARTLEY WINTNEY, HAMPSHIRE

Lectionary woes

● Further to my letter (19 April) and many others' since, I appeal for an explanation for the current translation of the lectionary for the 26th Sunday of the year, 28 September.

New translation: "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves out on their couches and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp ..."

Jerusalem Bible translation: "Lying on ivory beds and sprawling on their divans, they dine on lambs from the flock, and stall-fattened veal; they bawl to the sound of the harp ..."

Which version captures the decadence, so succinctly and so poetically?

How was this debacle

instigated? Are "we" just meant to endure it, in the hope we will give up on the hope for reconsideration of the use of this translation and just "get used to it"? I sincerely hope not.

CATHERINE IVATTS
BOLLINGTON, CHESHIRE

Rome's magic wire

● Further to Michael Walsh's article on the restoration of the hierarchy ("England's Rome-wards turn", 27 September), there is a fifth verse to Wiseman's hymn "Full in the panting heart of Rome" which is rarely, if ever, seen these days.

It goes: "For, like the sparks of unseem fire / That speak along the magic wire, / From home to home, from heart to heart, / These words of countless children dart – / God bless our Pope, the great, the good!"

The "magic wire" was Marconi's recently invented telegraph via which messages between Rome and other countries, at least in Europe, could now be exchanged in days, rather than months or years. Here was another weapon in the armoury of Ultramontanism.

(REVD DR) SEAN HALL
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

Recusant texts

● The bookseller Richard Booth does not emerge too well

from the review of his biography (Speed Reading, 27 September). My experience was more positive.

Shortly before I joined Heythrop Library he had been sold a collection of books from its shelves. He rang me. Did I know that one of the recusant texts he had purchased was listed as the only known copy?

I went to check. In fact, Heythrop had two of them, one of which was imperfect. He had been sold the perfect copy, which, when I told him, he promptly returned without asking for reimbursement.

But then his original cheque had bounced ...

MICHAEL WALSH
LONDON N4

Greengage summer

● Yes, you were unlucky, Christopher Howse (20 September). You missed an opportunity here in South Yorkshire. The harvest of greengages was prolific in friends' back gardens around August time.

There were so many I took some to the community at the Cistercian monastery in Leicestershire. I have to confess that, at 83, it is the first time I have eaten a greengage. I am hoping it will not be the last.

ANN TYAS
ROTHERHAM,
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

THE LIVING SPIRIT AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth his praise. For when you assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.

ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH (BORN C.50; DIED C.110)

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 (DLT, 2004)

In mysticism that love of truth which we saw as the beginning of all philosophy leaves the merely intellectual sphere, and takes on the assured aspect of a personal passion. Where the philosopher guesses and argues, the mystic lives and looks; and speaks, consequently, the disconcerting language of first-hand experience,



not the neat dialectic of the schools. Hence whilst the Absolute of the metaphysicians remains a diagram – impersonal and unattainable – the Absolute of the mystics is lovable, attainable, alive.

EVELYN UNDERHILL
FROM *MYSTICISM* (E.P. DUTTON, 1911)

We are perhaps tired of words. Tired of asking God in words that have no life in them. Tired of thinking about God. Tired of being talked to about God. Tired of saying prayers that may be beautiful in themselves but are not bringing God closer to us.

BENIGNUS O'ROURKE OSA
FROM *FINDING YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE: THE WAY OF SILENT PRAYER* (DLT, 2010)

◆ CALENDAR ◆

Sunday 5 October:
Twenty-Seventh Sunday of the Year

Monday 6 October:
Feria or St Bruno, Priest

Tuesday 7 October:
Our Lady of the Rosary

Wednesday 8 October:
Feria

Thursday 9 October:
St John Henry Newman, Priest

Friday 10 October:
Feria or St Paulinus of York, Bishop or St Denis, Bishop, and Companions – Martyrs or St John Leonardi, Priest

Saturday 11 October:
Feria or St John XXIII, Pope

Sunday 12 October:
Twenty-Eighth Sunday of the Year

◆◆◆

For the calendar for the Missal of 1962 go to www.lms.org.uk

SAFE SPACE, Minerva Theatre, Chichester (opens 11 October) • **FRANKENSTEIN**, directed by Guillermo del Toro (in cinemas 17 October) • **INTO ABSTRACTION: Modern British Art and the Landscape**, Firstsite, Colchester (opens 18 October) • **POULENC'S GLORIA**, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Cadogan Hall, London (11 November)

ARVO PÄRT CENTRE, BIRGIT PÜVE



Arvo Pärt at 90

From a life under Soviet rule to becoming the world's second most-performed composer, for whom religion is everything. Alexandra Coghlan explores his beguiling range of music

WHO IS THE world's most-performed living composer? According to statistics, the answer is John Williams: classical music's commercial king of Hollywood. No surprises there. But in second place, close behind, is someone far more unexpected. So how exactly did the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt – whose music, far from courting the listener, can seem to hold them at arm's length, whose Orthodox Christian faith is the source of music of austere, inscrutable beauty and often wilful restraint – manage to make himself heard over the clamour of today's musical babel?

Pärt's music has been more whisper than shout: a still, small voice gradually amplified and intensified by devotees since the 1970s. High-profile champions include Björk and Nick Cave, Radiohead and Rufus Wainwright, but Pärt's success has been largely a grass-roots affair, his music inviting listeners into a meditative sonic space long before the term "mindfulness" was common currency. At a time of political upheaval and global uncertainty, Pärt offered an alternative to the

jagged complexity of the classical avant-garde.

However, the dazzling, blanching landscapes he painted concealed shadows. Born in 1935 and growing up under Soviet rule, Pärt came of age in a world of unspoken and unspeakable: repressing, conforming and surviving under an authoritarian regime. The composer's artistic instincts soon came into conflict with Soviet diktats. While working as a sound engineer for Estonian Radio, he launched into musical experiments that tested creative boundaries – first exploring 12-tone techniques in *Nekrolog* in the early 1960s and then confronting state-enforced atheism head-on in 1968's *Credo*.

IT WAS A significant statement from a composer previously awarded a state composition prize, a departure from which there was no coming back. *Credo* was unofficially banned after a single performance, its explicitly

Christian statement of faith ("I believe in Jesus Christ") an explosive provocation which sent Pärt into de facto musical exile. Asked to disown the work publicly, he refused, instead choosing silence and a period of

musical contemplation – eight years spent studying psalms, polyphony, Gregorian chant and Russian Orthodox liturgical music.

Pärt emerged from that silence a different musician. Spirituality was not just the theme but the essence, the everything, of a new style he called "*tintinnabuli*" after the Latin for "little bells", radical

in its restraint, paring music back to its purest harmonic and melodic core, incorporating silence as an equal partner to sound. When he escaped to the West with his family in 1980, this was the Pärt the wider public first encountered: at once eternal and utterly new, a voice from – and of – another world.

"The 1980s and early '90s were a fascinating

'Even a prayer can be a political act; in many ways Arvo Pärt's music can be heard as one great prayer: Love!'

time in contemporary music,” explains Helen Wallace, the Barbican’s head of music and curator of this autumn’s “Arvo Pärt at 90” season. “Composers with lived experience of totalitarian regimes, many of whom moved to the West, began to express themselves with startling emotional directness: think of Górecki’s *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, or Gubaidulina’s *Canticle of the Sun*. There was this powerful spiritual seriousness which had its roots in ancient liturgical music and made an instant connection with the listening public. In comparison with the apparently arcane, some might say decadent, preoccupations of Western complexity, the music of Pärt seemed to be in touch with something essential, timeless and universal.”

It’s a connection that has persisted, and while Pärt, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday in September, has now officially retired from composition, his works are in greater demand than ever, continuing to draw people in yet still refusing to give up all their secrets.

It is music that’s notoriously difficult to describe, but its effects are undeniable. To sing Pärt’s choral music is to feel your heart-rate change, to surrender yourself to being part of a larger whole – a cog in a harmonic machine that turns only if every mechanism is precisely and minutely calibrated.

THE CONDUCTOR George Parris, whose Carice Singers perform alongside the organist and long-time Pärt collaborator Christopher Bowers-Broadbent, and who also leads a workshop of the composer’s choral music for the Barbican season, tries to put the Pärt phenomenon into words.

“The music might look pure on the page, and potentially anti-expressive,” he says, “but it’s an incredibly emotional experience. It demands a great deal to perform: a sense of connection, concentration, intense emotion. The music seems to slow your metabolism down in a way no other music can. There’s stasis, but within that there’s a journey of dissonance and consonance.”

Does a listener have to share Pärt’s faith to experience it fully?

Parris pauses. “For Pärt, religion is everything, and while many people will find it a really concentrated form of religious devotion, others experience it as a moment of contemplation, reflection or joy. Pärt can express the poetics of lamentation and solemnity beautifully, but he also provides uplifting moments. I think that’s something people are drawn to: his music is willing to embrace the totality of the human experience. He sees the evil in the world, but at the same time his music provides you with the space and time and sounds to heal it.”

Running through October and November, “Arvo Pärt at 90” explores various facets of a composer whose range is vast – from the raw, violent energy of his early work to the looping, sonic meditations of his string music and the charged simplicity of much of the choral music. It is these latter genres that the festival will focus on, says Wallace.

“It’s where Pärt’s voice is clearest and most

original. *Adam’s Lament* has an epic grandeur, while *In Memoriam Benjamin Britten* seems to distil the sorrows of the world into its brief span, and the *Te Deum* has an ecstatic freedom.”

But for Wallace there was one non-negotiable when it came to programming.

“We had,” she says, “to involve the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and Tõnu Kaljuste, who have had such a key relationship with Arvo Pärt through the past 40 years.”

Founded by Kaljuste in 1981, the choir has grown up alongside Pärt’s works – shaped by the distinctive character of music the conductor describes as “a space where silence and sound breathe together”, and responsible for introducing and communicating so many of the major pieces to the world. While the programme he has put together represents “the best of Pärt”, there is one work that holds particular significance for Kaljuste.

“The *Te Deum* was the first Pärt I ever conducted, and it opened up a completely new sound world to me. The polychoral



Pärt festival curator and Barbican head of music, Helen Wallace

writing makes the sound expand and contract like breathing, which is part of what makes it so powerful for me.”

For a conductor, he explains, Pärt’s music “allows you to be outside the box, to create a world that exists beyond the notes”.

A world beyond: it’s what Pärt offers all of us, a chance to “neutralise the noise”, as Kaljuste puts it, to join a gesture and experience that seems to stretch right back to the start, connecting us to music’s origins in collective, spiritual, fundamental music-making. As our own world becomes more troubled, the need, Kaljuste argues, only becomes greater.

“The more violent the times, the greater the human need for the arts to help us endure. Even a prayer can be a political act; in many ways Arvo Pärt’s music can be heard as one great prayer: Love!”

Arvo Pärt at 90 is at the Barbican from 3 October to 26 November.
www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2025/series/arvo-part-at-90

RADIO

On the road

Blast from the past

D.J. TAYLOR

Driving, Driving, Driving on the Autobahn

BBC RADIO 4

OLDER READERS will probably remember German synthesiser pioneers Kraftwerk from their legendary appearance on BBC1’s *Tomorrow’s World* back in 1975. Normally one tries to avoid racial stereotyping, but it had to be said that Ralf, Florian, Wolfgang and Karl, eager and besuited, seemed the absolute epitome of Teutonic earnestness as they discussed the machine-driven “music of the future” to the accompaniment of their big hit “Autobahn”, a song then taking Europe by storm.

To call *Driving, Driving, Driving on the Autobahn* (28 September) a celebration of the number’s half-century was a bit of a stretch, as the album on which it appears came out the year before. It was a shame, too, that Ralf Hütter, the surviving founder of the group, didn’t feature in Alan Dein’s fascinating documentary. On the other hand, Dein had managed to unearth the artist Emil Schult, who collaborated with the group in the early part of the 1970s and was able to unearth the notebooks in which “Autobahn” took shape.

Although the entity known (sometimes rather disparagingly) as “Krautrock” was already going strong by the mid-1970s, propelled by such ensembles as Neu! and Can, “Autobahn” was undoubtedly the song that pushed the movement towards mainstream attention. Eerie, mesmeric and repetitive, it bypassed conventional instrumentation altogether to foresee a musical landscape consisting entirely of artificial sound.

All this, as the Mainz-born Schult hastened to explain, had a political context. He and his generation were products of the Second World War: “The cities we came from were bombed out.” Motorways were both a reminder of the industrial planners of the Third Reich and a symbol of postwar reconstruction, “a new, promising future of progressive technology”; the tainted old-style culture had to be “destroyed and dismantled”.

Not, as the historian Berthold Franke was quick to assure us, that the West Germany of Willy Brandt didn’t have its problems. This, after all, was the era of the Baader-Meinhof Group and Cold War unease. As well as reflecting postwar economic prosperity, “Autobahn” doubled up as an ironic comment on it.

Dein’s other guest was the Mute Records MD, Daniel Miller, first alerted to the record’s existence by a copy of *Melody Maker* picked up in a German coffee bar. Dein drove around Berlin, entranced by “the wonder of it all”. One can think of other records that offer this kind of conduit into the cultural landscapes of the late-twentieth century, and someone at Radio 4 should straightaway set Dein to work.

EXHIBITION

Queen of fashion

What keeps a story alive?

JOANNA MOORHEAD

Marie Antoinette Style

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

WHAT MAKES a story perennial and overarching; what gives it longevity? Over the past week I've visited two shows whose central themes seem as intoxicating and fascinating today as they were in their own time – "Titanic and Fashion: The Last Dance" at the Kunstmuseum in The Hague (to 25 January) and "Marie Antoinette Style" in London (to 22 March). Both shows had plenty of younger as well as older folk looking round (the latter are, of course, the easiest for museums to attract; today's curation is all about getting the former through the doors). So, a tick for the Kunstmuseum and a tick for the V&A: the *Titanic* went down in 1912 and Marie Antoinette was executed in 1793, but both are in the everlasting chapter of history. The *Titanic* has never been old news; and Marie Antoinette is as cool today as when she was queen of France.

What makes these stories so lasting is a cocktail of factors they share. First, both tales encompass characters from both sides of the



VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Manolo Blahnik's 2005 'Antonietta' shoes

tracks – Marie Antoinette was royalty, and the mob who brayed for her head (and got it) were the impoverished. On the *Titanic* was the widest cross-section of early-twentieth-century folk, from aristocrats from across the world, to migrants in steerage, to the workers, the cooks and the waiters and the cleaners. In the end, in both cases, being rich and famous and advantaged counted for little; there is power in a story that shows the parity we human beings ultimately share.

BOTH STORIES also have an abundance of beauty, of fashion, of colour, of style: both on the *Titanic* and in Marie Antoinette's court, there was much to admire – until everything slid suddenly away. At the heart of both stories, too, is something that seemed invincible: the unsinkable ship, the unassailable monarchy. Nothing is impregnable, is the moral of both tales; no one in this life is absolutely safe.

The V&A show groans with jaw-droppingly beautiful outfits, either worn by Marie

Antoinette or very similar to outfits she did wear. They are colourful confections, with wide skirts and beads and lace and tulle; and what most strikes you is how modern many of them were. Some of the pieces are of striped and patterned fabrics that could be worn by today's fashionistas; and this, of course, is what makes the dead queen a true icon.

She herself, having endured a notorious reputation for centuries after her death by guillotine in Paris, has been the subject of a reappraisal by historians and academics; she did not, after all, utter the words "let them eat cake". Moreover, she was kind-hearted and thoughtful, concerned and compassionate. She was also a lifelong Catholic, and her last letter before her execution, which features in the V&A show, is an appeal to her Maker: "My God, have pity on me!" There is no exploration here, though, of her Catholicism – it is barely mentioned, which is a shame, as her faith was clearly part of her life (and death).

She has long been a hero of mine, and heroism is a side of her that the V&A brings to the fore admirably, for her patronage of women artists – in particular, Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun (1755-1842), who was her official artist and who painted roughly 20 portraits of her, some of which are in the exhibition. Today Vigée Le Brun, who fled Paris at the Revolution, is one of the best-known women artists of the eighteenth century, and for that we have Marie Antoinette to thank.

THEATRE

A perfectly tuned tale

Catholicism right and centre as Gleeson makes his UK stage debut

MARK LAWSON

The Weir

HAROLD PINTER THEATRE, LONDON

ABUSY YEAR for the Irish writer-director Conor McPherson already includes a new play, *The Brightening Air*, and a revival of *Girl from the North Country*, his 2017 dramatisation of the Bob Dylan songbook (reviewed 26 July). But, enjoyable as those shows were, the likely gem was the completion of McPherson's accidental 2025 trilogy: a West End production of his 1997 play *The Weir*, a much-revived modern classic, with Brendan Gleeson, right, a movie star (*In Bruges*, *Calvary*, *The Banshees of Inisherin*) making, aged 70, his British theatre debut (though after considerable Dublin stage experience).

In form, *The Weir* is a five-character play that is in effect a platform for five extraordinary monologues. In the late 1990s in rural Ireland (Sligo or neighbouring Leitrim, McPherson's opening stage direction suggests), the barman Brendan (Owen McDonnell) welcomes to his farmland pub three regular drinkers: Gleeson as the garage owner Jack; Joe

Biden lookalike Seán McGinley as Jim, a single man living with his "mammy"; and a flash "Celtic Tiger" businessman, Finbar (Tom Vaughan-Lawlor).

Tonight there is also a new boozer: Valerie, a 30-something singleton who has just moved to the area, played by another performer with a starry TV CV, Kate Phillips (*Peaky Blinders*, *Wolf Hall*), in only her second stage role and her first in London. Although he is the only married character, Finbar seems to see himself as squiring Valerie, but McPherson, directing his play for the first time, brings out more strongly than other versions do how a female presence triggers competitive attention, tinged with regrets and fantasies, in the single men.

THE WEIR most resembles an Irish Halloween episode of the sitcom *Cheers*, with the barflies each formally telling a ghost story. Brendan doesn't merit his own set piece (possibly the play's only weakness) while Jack is effectively given a second soliloquy, a story of a different sort of haunting, in the final scene.

If these pages ever catalogued the greatest Catholic stage plays, as we recently did movies, *The Weir* would compete with John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt* for top spot. In McPherson's dialogue, however, the word "Catholic" is never spoken because whatever else would these people be?



But, every few minutes, a detail further fixes the religious context of the countryside and country of that era.

Jack is fixing "Father Donal's jalopy" next morning. On that same day, if the night has not frightened them out of their wits, Jim is driving his "mammy" to see her sister in "the order", which one of the other boozers knows to be a "closed order". A gambler on a losing streak wonders if he should "lash a few Hail Marys out". Crucially, all the male ghost tales feature a priest, arriving to cast out prospective devils or supervise the digging of a grave.

Valerie's monologue is different in tone from the whoo-hoo spookiness of the men's – a story of realistic tragedy that draws shocked sobs from the audience – and is the only one with no ecclesiastical element, reflecting the younger generation and Ireland that she represents. But the gulf between the old and new countries shows when, after hearing this awful story, Jim instinctively and touchingly tells the young woman that he will "say a little prayer".

McPherson takes no sides but the play flickers with various ghosts: spooky, holy, or buried in human history, memory or trauma. The ensemble plays together like a perfectly tuned string quintet, but special credit must be given to the least theatrically experienced. Gleeson, a massive presence with a nimble voice and wit, must surely do *King Lear* pronto and Phillips, rivetingly delivering a big speech that must root surreal details in searing realism, feels a Beatrice or Lady Macbeth waiting to happen.

RICH GILLIGAN

BOOKS

• OUR REVIEWERS •

CHRIS PATTEN was chancellor of the University of Oxford from 2003 to 2024. He was governor of Hong Kong from 1992 to 1997

ANTHONY GARDNER is a poet and novelist • LINDSAY DUGUID is a former fiction editor at The Times Literary Supplement

Enough blood, enough tears

From the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 to the present day, the plight of the Palestinian people has been one of blood, starvation and violence. Is there any hope this might change?

CHRIS PATTEN

The Palestinians

JONATHAN DIMBLEBY

(QUARTET BOOKS, 256 PP, £25)

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JONATHAN DIMBLEBY was a fine television journalist who has become in recent years a widely acknowledged historian of the Second World War. But well before this, while a working journalist, he wrote in 1979 a book on *The Palestinians*. He was provoked into doing this by an absurd and morally objectionable statement by Golda Meir, the then prime minister of the young Israeli state. She said that there were no Palestinians. In fact the new Israeli state had been made out of what had been for centuries a country which had been home for both Palestinians and Jews.

Dimbleby's book, which benefits from first-class photo-journalism by Don McCullin, charted the history of the Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews from the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the attempts after the First World War to secure the future of these countries between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean coast. Because of their previous imperial claims, Britain and France took the leading role in carving up this land. This was made more difficult by the growing pressure to provide a homeland for the Jewish people after the First World War. Many of them had of course lived side by side with Arabs since the years of Roman imperial rule. But the attempts to establish a base for their doing so in the future proved extraordinarily difficult. The British, in particular, chose to accommodate Zionist ambitions by accepting the case for the establishment of a national home for Jews in Palestine.

This commitment was set out in the famous Declaration of 1917 by the British Foreign Secretary, Balfour. This not only pledged that Britain and other countries would create a Jewish state, but at the same time promised that they would safeguard the interests of Palestinian Arabs, their human rights and their civic ambitions. The extent to which Britain and other powers felt themselves genuinely committed to these promises to Palestinians and Arabs is exceptionally doubt-



Destruction in Gaza City, Palestine, following Israeli action last month

ful. In a later letter from Balfour to his colleagues in the Cabinet, he noted that these promises would be violated when this seemed to be required. So began decades of dishonesty, dispute, violence and mayhem. There was a general wishful hope that in due course Arabs would genuflect to *force majeure* and settle reasonably contentedly with their Jewish neighbours. But of course this was always likely to depend on how they were treated.

AT THIS POINT I should make clear, ahead of any snide criticism of this review, that Dimbleby is a close personal friend. But he is also a fine historian and has written a magisterial account of the events before Prime Minister Netanyahu came on the scene.

In the main body of his 1979 text we have accounts of the Palestinians being driven from their homes and land in and after 1947/48 by Israeli settlers supported by military forces. The Arabs understandably called this a catastrophe. Dimbleby also covers the wars launched by Israel's neighbours against their new state. Wars which went very badly for

these Arab armies. In addition, he deals with the international community's attempts to help those moderate Israeli politicians who believed that the best way forward was to negotiate a two-state solution with moderate Palestinian leaders where they existed. From time to time, success seemed to be within the grasp of both sides. Unhappily, again and again, peacemaking became a victim of extreme politicians in both camps. Tragically, for example, the efforts of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose message to the Palestinians had been "enough blood, enough tears", were ended with his assassination by an Israeli extremist. He had come very close to sealing a two-state deal.

More recent efforts to re-launch this peacemaking process have foundered with the arrival at the top of Israeli politics of the Likud party and Benjamin Netanyahu its leader. Netanyahu has always opposed the two-state solution and made considerable efforts to divide the Palestinian Arabs who live on the West Bank from those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

**Unhappily,
again and again,
peacemaking
became a victim of
extreme politicians
in both camps**

To have loved and lost

ANTHONY GARDNER

The Boundless Deep: Young Tennyson, Science and the Crisis of Belief

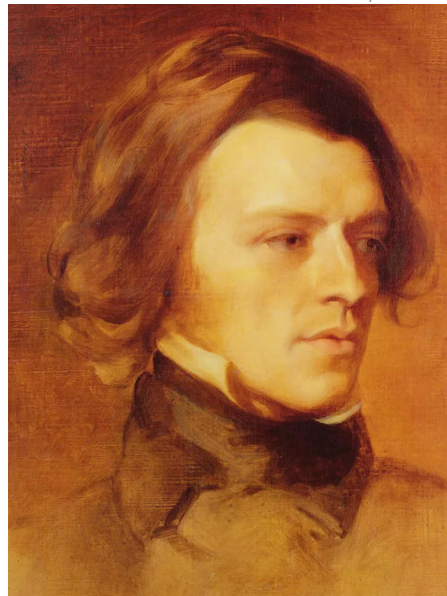
RICHARD HOLMES

(WILLIAM COLLINS, 448 PP, £25)

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WAS TENNYSON ever young? Richard Holmes' enthralling biography of the great poet begins with this question. Surviving photographs have fixed him in the public imagination as an ageing, forbidding patriarch with straggly hair and a classic Victorian beard. Meanwhile, his most frequently quoted poems – "The Charge of the Light Brigade", "The Lady of Shalott", "Ulysses" – place him firmly in the historical and mythological past.

In his youth, however, Alfred Tennyson cut a very different figure: handsome, charming and formidably strong. He was also a wonderful dancer and extremely funny, with a gift for mimicry that reduced his friends to helpless laughter. Intellectually he was driven by a passionate interest in social questions and science: he even predicted (in "Locksley Hall") the invention of the aeroplane.



Alfred, Lord Tennyson, c.1840, painted by Samuel Laurence

His genius was apparent at an astonishingly young age. He wrote "The Lady of Shalott" while still a Cambridge undergraduate; at 24, following the death of his friend Arthur Hallam, he produced the world-weary "Ulysses", as well as the first of the verses that would be published 17 years later as his masterpiece *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

AGAINST THESE gifts were set dark moods which clearly had a hereditary element. His clergyman father was given to wild rages; one of Alfred's brothers became an alcoholic and another an opium addict; while a third spent several years in the same mental asylum as John Clare. Tennyson became fascinated by madness and his poetic study of it, "Maud", was much admired by the medical community.

For Holmes, a key poem is "The Kraken". Partly inspired by the Book of Revelation, it is a haunting description of an enormous monster sleeping in the depths of the sea, awaiting the Apocalypse. Holmes sees it as symbolic both of an indefinable darkness in Tennyson's psyche and of the scientific ideas that challenged Victorian faith.

Science captivated the poet from early childhood: he had learnt how to use a telescope by seven, and his first verses were interspersed with closely observed notes on nature. He devoured the latest books on geology and astronomy, and the inspired descriptions of the cosmos in his poetry anticipate the extraordinary images captured by the Hubble telescope. No one could have been better qualified to encapsulate in verse the great intellectual and spiritual debate of the age.

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, is often seen as the catalyst for the Victorian crisis of faith. But as Holmes makes clear, the first challenges had come much earlier. In 1788 James Hutton argued

that vast geological time made a nonsense of biblical chronology; in 1796 the naturalist Georges Cuvier concluded that most fossils belonged to species that had become extinct. This raised an awful question: why would a benevolent God create beings only to allow their destruction?

The idea of extinction was reinforced in 1833 by John Herschel's brilliant account of the formation and destruction of stars, while in 1844 Robert Chambers put forward an early theory of evolution, attacking the biblical account of Creation. The very existence of God, and the belief that he had given humanity a lasting place in the universe, were now in question.

THESE WERE the issues with which Tennyson grappled in *In Memoriam*, finally published in 1850. In Holmes' words, it acknowledged that human civilisation "had grown out of a dark and violent past, infinitely older and more savage than the one conceived by contemporary religion". But it also admitted that the consequence of this knowledge was "terrifying and monstrous, and almost impossible to accept". The greatness of the poem, Holmes asserts, lies in its ability to articulate these two fundamental, opposing beliefs, evoking the world's cruelty ("Nature red in tooth and claw") and its mutability ("The hills are shadows, and they flow / From form to form, and nothing stands"), while at the same time expressing the urgent need to believe ("I stretch lame hands of faith ... and call / To what I feel is Lord of all").

Many would consider *In Memoriam* great even without these elements: as a diary of grief in all its shifting forms it has few rivals. Its success lies partly in the choice of verse form: short, rhyming four-line stanzas which despite their simplicity have an enormously powerful effect. The devastating conclusion of the lyric "Dark

house ...", recording a visit to Arthur Hallam's family home, is a supreme example:

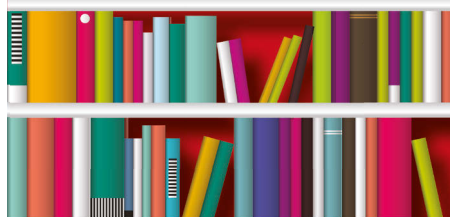
He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

This simple format is deployed just as effectively in expressing doubt and existential dread: so effectively, in fact, that Tennyson feared the consequences. Holmes' narrative becomes a genuine page-turner as the poet, having kept *In Memoriam* secret from even his closest friends, prepares to send it out into the world. Will his epic, despite its final affirmation of "one far-off divine event / To which the whole Creation moves", see him publicly vilified as an unbeliever? Or could it win him the hand of the woman he loves, Emily Sellwood? I recommend that you read this splendid book to find out.

He had learnt how to use a telescope by seven, and his first verses were interspersed with notes on nature

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Small-town secrets

LINDSAY DUGUID

Buckeye

PATRICK RYAN

(BLOOMSBURY, 464 PP, £16.99)

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BUCKEYE IS set in Bonhomie, N. Ohio, a town situated off Route 23 at a distance from warehouses, petrol stations and gun stores and far from the excitements of city life. It is a quiet, friendly place with solid houses, sidewalks and a local bakery. It has its own inner districts where neighbours come round with meals in Tupperware to help the bereaved while keeping an eye on anything worrying. When Margaret leaves her husband and son, and is seen driving off, there is much concern: "Some said ... She had a dark side. A mental breakdown... Good riddance to her." It seems that this small-town

novel, which comes with dust-jacket praise from Ann Patchett and Alice McDermott, has more in common with John Updike than Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Marriage is a central theme. Cal Jenkins, who is lame and works at the local hardware store, is married to hard-working practical Becky, who is also able to hear messages from the dead. They live on Taft Street not far from the bigger houses in Roswell Lane where red-headed, tempestuous Margaret, an orphan and an incomer, lives with her wealthy husband, Felix. The couples visit each other and discuss menus and parenting. Their sons Skip and Tom hang out together, riding bikes then driving cars recklessly, staying over at each other's houses and sharing friends. All the while their parents are hiding a secret, never shared, from 1945.

One of several elements linking the novel's separate present-tense episodes is the long-term effects of war. Felix's last-minute escape from a naval destroyer torpedoed in the Pacific, and the death of his fellow sailor Augustus, cause a deep sense of loss which lingers while

work blossoms and marriage goes on. Cal's exemption from fighting, due to his lameness, enables a reckless affair which involves secrecy and hidden feelings. While the passage of time is marked in postwar innovations such as Disneyland, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, polio vaccine and novels like *Watership Down* and *Jaws*, there are also national upheavals: the death of Roosevelt, the Kennedy-Nixon debate, the atomic bomb, above all Vietnam, where Skip is killed. Watergate is swiftly followed by the bicentennial celebrations. Many deaths are mourned. The novel ends with secrets exposed, new partners found and a separation from the old ways. Cal and Becky's reminiscences as they look back from a changed bonhomie are fond but full of doubt: "the wisdom that comes with age was needling ... Because it brought the clarity of hindsight without the means to change anything."

Patrick Ryan is a successful American author and *Buckeye* is his first novel to be published in the UK. Readable and engaging, if slightly sentimental, it might also be useful as a history of the postwar United States.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

in Gaza. Dimbleby also notes that the UN has never accepted that East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank were parts of Israel. It has described them as occupied territories.

The new introduction to Dimbleby's book, written this year, carries the story forward through recent months and years of blood, starvation and violence.

Recent history has been dominated by the appalling attack by the Arab terrorist group Hamas, which had emerged from the events and arguments of previous years. They murdered and raped well over 1,000 Israelis living in and near Gaza and took hundreds as hostages, imprisoned in the tunnels below Gaza. This was rightly regarded with horror by Israel and by most of the international community.

FACING WHAT it understandably took to be an existential threat, the Netanyahu government launched an all-out assault on Gaza and Hamas. Gaza itself was reduced to rubble. Homes, hospitals, schools, roads were blown up. Many civilians, including of course women and children, were killed. The Netanyahu government consistently argued that it was trying to avoid civilian casualties and that its principal aim is to destroy Hamas as a military force. Even after its military commanders seemed to think that this had been accomplished, the bombing and the artillery fire went on. Dimbleby makes the fair point that Netanyahu's government, propped up as it is by the most extreme politicians in Israel, appears to believe that the

best way of finding a needle in a haystack is to burn down the haystack.

The Israeli government also imposed for much of the time what amounted to a blockade on Gaza, limiting the number of trucks carrying food and medical supplies from entering the territory. Many people who were starving were killed while trying to find something to eat.

It was scarcely surprising that so many international lawyers described the approach of the Israeli government as representing a series of rejections of the undertakings given by the Israelis, among others, regarding the rules of warfare, not least the Geneva Conventions. Some lawyers believed that they were not only committing war crimes but were even on the brink of committing genocide.

Dimbleby, quite correctly, reminds us that 36 leading members of the Board of Deputies, using much the same language as had already been used by the former Supreme Court judge, Lord Neuberger, and the prominent human rights lawyer Philippe Sands, denounced what was happening. The president of the Board of Deputies, Phil Rosenberg, criticised those members of the Board for a lack of perspective and accused them of breaking their terms of engagement as deputies. But what these members of the Board had said was very close to the remarks made by Lord Neuberger and Philippe Sands and to the observations of another Supreme Court judge, Jonathan Sumption.

Rosenberg's behaviour and that of others who seem to think that the principal yardstick

for judging the Middle East was Netanyahu, right or wrong, would encourage the very antisemitism which we should be determined to avoid if at all possible.

Israel's behaviour has led an increasing number of states, not least in Europe, to recognise a Palestinian state. But however appalling Israel's behaviour, it seems that the Trump administration will continue to mind their backs, continuing to provide money, weapons and support at the UN.

THE AMERICAN ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, suggested, when France announced that it intended to recognise a Palestinian state, that perhaps the French should offer two million Palestinians some territory in the south of France. As with so much else that the Trump administration has done, this manages to combine damaging prejudice and the deepest ignorance.

The new foreword to Dimbleby's book is as good, and of course depressing, an account as anyone has written so far about these ghastly events which will stain Israel's reputation for years to come and will doubtless turbocharge the most despicable sorts of antisemitism. Even while I write these words, Netanyahu is proposing yet further assaults on the rule of international law, taking over Gaza City completely and expelling its citizens. All those in Israel and around the world whose concern is for the protection of humanitarian values will be horrified. It is yet another area where moderation and decency need forthright defenders. The sooner they get them the better, much the better.

NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

ALAMY/AP/PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

Last Christian minister flees

The last Christian minister in the besieged city of El Fasher fled his church after an attack by militia forces. The Revd Daramali Abudigin had remained in the capital of **Sudan's** North Darfur state since the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began fighting government troops in April 2023, keeping the St Matthew Episcopal Church open even after the RSF blockaded the city in May 2024. The last Catholic priest in the city, Fr Luka Jomo, was shot dead in June. RSF gunmen attacked Abudigin's church on 16 September, killing two people and injuring others, forcing him to flee to the outskirts of El Fasher.

A bishop in **Tanzania** warned priests and Religious not to intervene in politics ahead of crucial elections in October. Bishop Wolfgang Pisa of Lindi, president of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, was responding to reports that a group of nuns had declared support for President Samia Suluhu Hassan, the country's first female president.

The **Malawi** Conference of Catholic Bishops has congratulated Peter Mutharika, the 85-year-old former president who won the general election on 16 September with 57 per cent of the vote. Bishop Martin Anwel Mtumbuka of Karonga, the conference president, said Malawians could "rejoice in our ability to transition peacefully from one government to the next".



Parishes in the Philippines' Bicol region, south of Metro Manila, opened their doors to evacuees fleeing Typhoon Bualoi. The Bishop of Sorsogon, Jose Alan Dialogo, said the Church should serve both as "a sanctuary and a service centre in this time of trial". Herman Abcede, Bishop of Daet, said: "Let us transform this difficult moment into an opportunity for solidarity and faith." Bualoi and two storms preceding it killed at least 27 people over two weeks.

Bishop Martín Lasarte Topolansky of Lwena voiced alarm at "the felling of precious trees and the disappearance of animals that are part of our environmental heritage" along **Angola's** border with Zambia. He alleged that **Zambian** loggers were responsible for the destruction of Angolan forests, which declined by 7.7 per cent from 2001 to 2024.

Order dismisses 'whistleblower'

A congregation in southern **Nigeria** dismissed a Religious Sister who, in a viral video, alleged sexual exploitation by priests. Sr Kinse Shako Anastasia of the Congregation of Mother of Perpetual Help of the Archangels Sisters (Mophas) accused clergy of treating nuns as their "wives", and said superiors leave them

"vulnerable to predators". In a post last week, she said that on 24 September she received a letter dismissing her, dated 21 July, along with 100,000 Nigerian naira (£50). Mophas superior general Sr Mary Ann Ogowkhamhe confirmed to *The Tablet* the congregation had dismissed Sr Anastasia.

The **United States** Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement on 24 September pledging support for the "millions of our brothers and sisters on the African continent [who] have been displaced from their homes and communities, forced to flee due to conflict, religious and ethnic persecution, economic hardship and environmental crises".

Several US bishops criticised Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago for making an award to **Illinois** Senator Richard Durbin for his advocacy on behalf of migrants. Durbin is also a long-time supporter of abortion rights, which Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois said made him "unfit to receive the proposed award or any Catholic honour". Others supported his intervention on social media. Cardinal Cupich responded: "At the heart of the consistent ethic of life is the recognition that Catholic teaching on life and dignity cannot be reduced to a single issue."

The organisers of World Youth Day **Seoul** in 2027 have invited competition entries to write its official song on the theme, "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The people of Rakhine State are "just trying to survive", said Bishop Peter Tin Wai of Pyay, but young people were "forced into enlisting and fighting" in the war between **Myanmar's** junta and rebel groups.

The Church in **Luxembourg** reiterated its opposition to abortion, after criticism of Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich when he said he was against introducing a right to the procedure into the constitution. Hollerich said the amendment could "push people toward right-wing extremism".

Fr Carlos Lorient, a 45-year-old canon of Toledo Cathedral, was arrested after **Spanish** police found 10 packets of drugs on his person. The Archdiocese of Toledo suspended Lorient from his duties as episcopal vicar for clergy, pending an internal investigation.

The **Slovakian** national assembly agreed to abolish its public holiday on 15 September, the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, whom Pope Paul VI declared the main patron of Slovakia in 1966. The governing coalition said it was acting to address the national debt.

Parliamentarians in **Italy's** lower house voted to reinstate the feast of St Francis of Assisi as a national holiday. On 23 September, the Chamber of Deputies approved the bill by 247-2 with eight abstentions, advancing it to the Senate.

Cardinal Lucian Mureşan, the head of the **Romanian** Greek Catholic Church, died aged 94 on 25 September. After the fall of Communism in 1990, John Paul II appointed him Bishop of Maramures, and Archbishop of Făgăraş and Alba Iulia in 1994. Pope Benedict XVI made him a cardinal in 2012.

Compiled by **Patrick Hudson, Ellen Teague, Bess Twiston Davies and Marko Phiri.**



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Pope Francis

THE
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“It has been wonderful for me to be with you these years and to watch you grow spiritually, intellectually and socially.”

Sr Jean Schmidt BVM, who this month retired as chaplain to Loyola University Chicago basketball team, to students on her 106th birthday.

UNITED STATES / Pope Leo says refugees remind Church of her pilgrim dimension

McElroy urges Catholics to pledge to support migrants

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS
and ELLEN TEAGUE

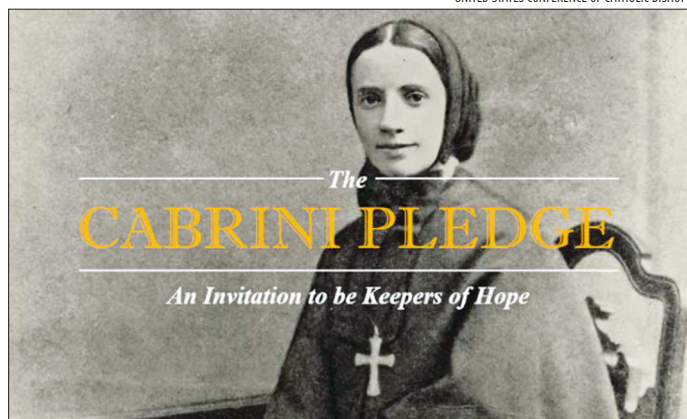
THE ARCHBISHOP of Washington Cardinal Robert McElroy condemned the “comprehensive governmental assault” on migrants in the United States.

Preaching at a Mass for National Migration Week in the Cathedral of St Matthew the Apostle on Sunday, Cardinal McElroy called on Catholics to respond to this threat.

“Our first obligation as a Church is to embrace in a sustained, unwavering, prophetic and compassionate way the immigrants who are suffering so deeply because of the oppression they are facing,” he said.

The Trump administration’s policy was “designed to produce fear and terror among millions of men and women who have through their presence in our nation been nurturing precisely the religious, cultural, humanitarian and familial bonds that are most frayed and most valuable at this moment in our country’s history,” he said.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) marked



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

National Migration Week by calling on Catholics to take the “Cabrini Pledge”.

Named for St Frances Xavier Cabrini (pictured on the USCCB website), the patron saint of immigrants, the pledge asks Catholics “to affirm, in word and deed, the inherent dignity of every person, regardless of immigration status or country of origin”.

Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, chair of the bishops’ committee on migration, said that Cabrini “never relented in her determination to build an empire of hope”.

The week concludes with the World Day of Migrants and

Refugees on 5 October, a date chosen by Pope Francis to coincide with the celebration in Rome of the Jubilee of Migrants and of the Missions.

In his message for the day, published in July, Pope Leo said that “migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope” because they “bear heroic testimony to a faith that sees beyond what our eyes can see”.

“Migrants and refugees remind the Church of her pilgrim dimension, perpetually journeying towards her final homeland, sustained by a hope that is a theological virtue,” he said.

Archdiocese overcomes charity centre opposition

TOM HENEGHAN

THE ARCHDIOCESE of Paris has begun building a centre for the homeless, the disabled and vulnerable mothers in the middle of the city’s most expensive district.

After winning a long legal struggle with residents of the rich 6th arrondissement, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich blessed the first stone of the House of the Visitation on 22 September. It is scheduled to open in 2027.

“Solidarity, which reflects the love of one’s neighbour, is at the heart of our faith,” the archbishop said. “We live too easily alongside one another, mixed in an indifference that signals individualism.”

The archdiocese inherited the football pitch-sized property in 2012 when a dwindling cloistered community, the Sisters of the Visitation, moved to a nearby convent of their congregation but did not sell the property to investors.

Prosperous residents and the Sites and Monuments heritage group mounted several attempts to block the development. A leading opponent, the actor Gérard Depardieu, owns a listed mansion overlooking the site. Courts decided that the plans would restore much of the site and that the buildings to be demolished were not architecturally valuable.

The €48 million project (£41.9m) will develop the House of the Visitation, a property of over 7,000 square metres, to be rented to three associations: one working to reintegrate people living on the streets, a second housing expectant and young mothers in precarious situations, and a third providing inclusive housing for people with disabilities.

Bätzing tells voters populist AfD is ‘anti-democratic’

THE CHURCH must enter into constructive dialogue with social developments in the secular world, and seek cooperation to respond to contemporary challenges, the president of the German bishops’ conference said, writes Natalie K. Watson.

Preaching at the opening Mass of the bishops’ plenary in Fulda on 23-25 September, Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg said the Church needed allies to

develop the seed of God’s Kingdom amid the turmoil of war, migration, the climate emergency and artificial intelligence.

During their meeting, the bishops warned that the agitation and division of US politics must not be allowed into Germany, with Churches and political parties responsible for maintaining a block against the right-wing Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) and refusing to cooperate with it.

“As a Church, we are not partial but stand above the parties. But when it comes to a largely right-wing group, we have to speak out,” Bätzing said after the conclusion of the plenary.

He said it was important to explain that the AfD was “nationalist, anti-European and anti-democratic” because it has a strong chance of victory in state elections in Saxony-Anhalt and voters “have to be aware for what kind of a future they are voting there”.

Bätzing was responding to Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, the deputy leader of the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt, who had accused him of “vilifying” its voters.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO / 'End the violence'

Dialogue, not war, 'is the only way'

NGALA KILLIAN CHINTOM

A BISHOP in the Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu province appealed for dialogue to end the violence still blighting the east of the country.

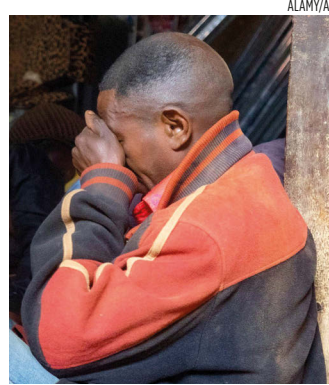
Speaking at the close of the National Day for Justice and Peace initiated by the Congolese bishops' conference (Cenco) on 21 September, Bishop Paluku Sikuli Melchisédek of Butembo-Beni urged all warring parties to stop fighting and begin talks.

"We must be willing to engage

in dialogue, even with the enemy. It is perhaps through this dialogue that they can come to their senses. As soon as they start talking, it is a step towards peace," he said.

Bishop Paluku condemned those he said were obstructing peace negotiations and urged them to "stop killing and violating human rights". "What they are doing is wrong, and evil will not triumph over good," he said.

His appeal followed a new wave of violence in the eastern DR Congo in recent months, driven by fighting among 120 armed



A man grieves following an attack in North Kivu last month

groups with various political and financial backers who have been struggling for control of minerals and territory for 30 years.

On 8 September, an attack carried out by the Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu killed 90 people in the village of Ntoyo,

within St Joseph of Maguredjipa parish. In a message to Aid to the Church in Need, Bishop Paluku said it was an "umpteenth and horrible carnage".

The United Nations reported at least 319 deaths in a series of attacks in Rutshuru, also in North Kivu, on 9-23 July by the M23 rebel forces backed by the Rwanda government. ADF fighters killed at least 40 Christians in an attack in Komanda village in Ituri province on 12 July, three days after killing at least 70 civilians in Pikamaibo village, Ituri.

Peace negotiations repeatedly stall. A US-brokered peace agreement signed by the governments of DR Congo and Rwanda in June failed to stop the fighting despite President Donald Trump's claims to the contrary. Last week at the UN General Assembly in New York, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi admitted it had failed.

Orthodox school discussed in Trump-Erdogan meeting

ANDREJA BOGDANOVSKI

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump raised the reopening of the Greek Orthodox theological school in Halki during a meeting with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House.

This followed Trump's meeting in Washington, DC on 15 September with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I, who asked him for support. Referring to that conversation, Trump told Erdogan: "The Greek Orthodox Church was here and they would really like some help, and I said

I would bring it up." Erdogan said he would discuss the issue directly with Bartholomew in Istanbul. "We are ready to do whatever we can that falls on our part," he said.

The seminary was founded on the island of Halki - Heybeliada in Turkish - in 1844 and became a key centre for training Orthodox clergy near Istanbul. The Turkish authorities closed it in 1971 during a wave of nationalisation of educational institutions, and its status has remained a point of contention between Turkey and Greece ever since.

During his 40-minute meeting

with Trump, Bartholomew raised other issues including the protection of Middle East Christians and the likely trip of Pope Leo to Izmir in Turkey for joint celebrations for the 1,700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea.

Bartholomew was invited to speak at the Council on Foreign Relations event in New York, where he described the war in Ukraine as an "unnecessary tragedy" costing "more than a million lives".

"The tragedy also has a spiritual dimension," he said. "The Orthodox Church of Russia has given its ringing endorsement to the invasion of Ukraine and the murder of fellow Orthodox Christians by the Putin regime."

The focal point of the patriarch's 12-day visit to the US was the New York ceremony on 24 September where he received the Templeton Prize, awarded to him in April in recognition of his environmental leadership.

Mayor of Bethlehem tells Leo of his fears

POPE LEO met the mayor of Bethlehem who told him of his fears for the future of Christians in the Holy Land after years of war, writes Ellen Teague.

"People have been leaving Bethlehem, leaving Palestine because of what's happening," Maher Nicola Canawati said after speaking to the Pope at the general audience on 24 September, describing how illegal settlements surrounding the city now rival its population.

Canawati, a Christian appointed mayor of Bethlehem in April, said he had asked the Pope to intervene in the war for the sake of the Holy

Land's dwindling Christian population. "The Holy Land without the living stones is just a mere museum," he said, noting 1,000 Palestinian Christians' approval to emigrate to Canada, the US and elsewhere in the past year.

Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed the Palestinian Authority (PA) was responsible for the declining Christian population.

"When Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, was under Israeli control, 80 per cent of its residents were Christians. But since the PA took control, that number has dwindled to under 20 per cent," he said.

The ecumenical group Jerusalem Voice for Justice insisted that "the reason Christians and many others too are leaving Bethlehem is Israeli occupation and its policies".

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VATICAN

'Good sign' for Becciu appeal

THE VATICAN City State appeals court dismissed a request from the Vatican's chief prosecutor to reconsider a number of acquittals in the major corruption trial that concluded in December 2023, writes Patrick Hudson.

A Vatican court convicted eight defendants – including the former *sostituto* Cardinal Angelo Becciu – on a range of charges after a two-year trial, but dismissed more than 30 others. All eight appealed their convictions, while the prosecutor Alessandro Diddi also appealed the acquittals.

Both sets featured in the appeals trial that opened on 22 September, but on 25 September the court accepted the defendants' case that Diddi had not submitted a proper appeal according to Vatican legal codes. It indicated it would not consider prosecution appeals in future hearings.

Cardinal Becciu told reporters this was "a good sign, but there's still a way to go". On the first day, he was one of four defendants to demand that Diddi recuse himself, alleging that since-disclosed messages revealed his improper conduct in the original investigation.

CAMEROON

Change 'a must' in a democracy

CHANGES IN political leadership are essential to healthy democracy, a Cameroonian bishop said ahead of presidential elections on 12 October, writes Ngala Killian Chimtom.

In a public letter on 26 September, Bishop Paul Lontsié-Keuné of Bafoussam said alternation of power should take place regularly through "free, fair and transparent elections".

He warned against deifying leaders because "the reign of a leader must have an end", citing scriptural examples including Moses. "Change distils its benefits to the people and the nation ... it is not an option, it is the living proof that democracy works," he said.

The letter did not name President Paul Biya, at 92 the world's oldest leader and the second-longest ruling president in Africa, who has held office for 43 years and is seeking an eighth term.

Bishop Lontsié-Keuné urged all 12 candidates to present their visions to voters by visiting all parts of the country.

VIEW FROM ROME

Patrick Hudson



POPE LEO named the new prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops last Friday, so my suggestion he'd make an unconventional appointment looked a little tired as it hit the doormat. To call Archbishop Filippo Iannone an unconventional choice would demand too much of that long-suffering adjective.

The former prefect of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts is a Neapolitan Carmelite canon lawyer who has held senior office in his order, in the Archdiocese of Naples and in the Diocese of Rome. I confess that doesn't set my heart racing, though neither did Pope Francis' decision to bring in a sombre-looking Augustinian from Peru in 2023.

Iannone served at what was then the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts from 2017, first as adjunct secretary and then prefect. What he made of the Francis programme for the Curia depends on who you ask and what they think the programme was. He did, however, supervise the revision of penal sanctions in the Code of Canon Law and preparation for the 2023 expanded provisions of *Vos estis lux mundi*, the *motu proprio* governing bishops' accountability in abuse cases. Under its terms, his new post makes him responsible for reports of abuse or cover-up by bishops.

Alongside Iannone's appointment, Leo renewed the terms of the dicastery's secretary and undersecretary for another five years. Archbishop Ilson de Jesus Montanari, 66, and secretary since 2013, can consider this an endorsement of his long service.

Anyhow, if there *is* a Leo programme, he wasn't going to let his first appointment define it. His predecessor's first big signing took six months. For all the hoo-ha about mozzettas and apartments, commentators hailed Pietro Parolin's arrival as Secretary of State in September 2013 as the "real beginning" of the pontificate. But you couldn't claim that this quiet, diplomatic *consigliere* exactly characterised Francis' next 12 years.

ALESS EXALTED personnel move last week saw Leo ask Bishop Giovanni Paccosi of San Miniato, in Tuscany, to release Fr Marco Billeri – yet another canon lawyer – to serve as his second personal secretary alongside Edgard Iván Rimaycuna Inga, 36, a priest of the Diocese of Chiclayo.

Besides expressing the two wings of his personality, lawyerly and Peruvian, it will be interesting to see how the papal private office functions. Previous secretaries, notably Daniel Pellizzon who worked with Francis during his frail latter years and Georg Gänswein who ran Benedict's household, had significant con-

trol over access to the Pope, for better or worse. Those mechanics are no more: Leo is the first WhatsApp-savvy pontiff, accessible to his old contacts without mediation. Unless Fr Billeri is to monitor his smartphone usage.

More pressing is the need to sift the invitations littering the apostolic desk and the appointments filling the calendar. Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was the latest head of state to deliver a formal invitation, while the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Maronite Church are so confident of the Pope's unconfirmed visit to Turkey and Lebanon in November that they have begun to circulate itineraries. And the King and Queen are due at the Vatican "in late October"; but surely Charles, a confirmed John Henry Newman fan, will want to hear him declared a Doctor of the Church on 1 November?

GLORIA BRANCIANI received a four-minute standing ovation at a screening of a documentary about her campaign to bring allegations of spiritual and sexual abuse against the artist Fr Marko Rupnik. *Nuns vs The Vatican* premiered at the Toronto Film Festival on 6 September, telling the story of Branciani and two other former nuns who accuse him of abuse, and investigating the wider scandal of clerical exploitation of women Religious long neglected by the Vatican.

The producers hope to arrange a screening in Rome in the autumn, when campaigners expect Rupnik's trial in the Vatican to start. It is two years since Pope Francis lifted the statute of limitations to allow the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) to examine the case, but only in July did it confirm the appointment of a panel of judges to hear it. The DDF prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández said it was slow work to find judges independent of the dicastery who were willing to be involved.

It may have been a struggle to find disinterested candidates. Even after his expulsion from the Society of Jesus in June 2023, Rupnik enjoyed support in Rome and his art made regular appearances on the Vatican website despite Cardinal Seán O'Malley's pleas. Its sudden disappearance in June, shortly after Pope Leo met O'Malley and the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, suggests a firm hand at the top can overcome such cabals – and Francis, disappointingly, failed to take one.

There will be a wider reckoning once the trial proceeds. Rupnik mosaics dominate the Chapel of Santa Monica degli Agostiniani in the Augustinians' Curia just south of St Peter's Square, which Robert Prevost visited daily for morning Mass as a cardinal-prefect.

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Westminster diocese turns 175

“There are so many ways in which we can be proud of those who have gone before us and handed on to us this great inheritance,” Archbishop of Westminster **Cardinal Vincent Nichols** said in a pastoral letter read out in churches on Sunday to mark the 175th anniversary of the Westminster diocese. Pope Leo XIV has sent the diocese his apostolic blessing.

In response to the recent “Unite the Kingdom” rally in London, Cardinal Nichols and the other presidents of Churches Together in England have expressed “deep concern” about the symbols and words of the Christian faith being co-opted to support **messages that breed hostility**.

To mark the building 50 years ago of **Worth Abbey** in West Sussex, architect Fred Manson is speaking in the Abbey Church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, on 4 October about its design by Francis Pollen.

Archbishop Emeritus of Liverpool Malcolm McMahon has presided over a Mass in the city’s Catholic cathedral to celebrate the **Jubilee of Social Justice**. Meanwhile, the Caritas Social Action Network has also produced a youth version of “Love the Stranger”, the 2023 document on a Catholic response to migration.



SCIAF, COLIN HATTERSLEY

Rutherglen artist Mark Armstrong has painted a new work for the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (Sciaf) to mark its sixtieth anniversary. Under the title “Journey” the work seeks to capture the charity’s history and mission in images of work, leisure and worship, all cast in strong colours, with two clerical figures and a saintly statue observing from the foreground. Armstrong (pictured) said he wanted to sum up the story of Sciaf, which was set up in 1965 and now works in three continents to provide aid and support for vulnerable people.

Chief executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society Kate Nightingale is giving a **Catholic Union pub talk** on the changing landscape of those in need. Chaired by former editor of *The Tablet* Catherine Pepinster, the event is at the Rising Sun in Belgravia, central London, starting at 6pm on 13 October.

Westminster auxiliary Bishop Paul McAleenan has met survivors of **trafficking and modern slavery** through the Medaille Trust, which supports around 500 survivors a year via a network of safe houses.

A YouGov survey commissioned by the think tank Theos has revealed that 75 per cent of respondents could not name a leader from any of their local **faith communities**.

Burnham to give Theos lecture

Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham is to give this year’s **Theos lecture** on Thursday at the city’s Methodist Central Hall.

Mgr Michael Nazir-Ali, the former Anglican bishop who converted to Catholicism, is among those backing the **2025 Westminster Declaration**, by

a coalition of Christian leaders and groups “united by a shared concern for the moral and spiritual welfare of the nation”.

A National Justice and Peace Network webinar on child poverty in the UK has called for an urgent end to the **two-child benefit cap**.

Pax Christi in England and Wales backed an international appeal to governments to use **Nuclear Abolition Day** last week to announce plans to prevent nuclear war.

Eighty-seven-year-old Scottish great-grandmother Ellison Hudson from near Stirling has cycled 30 miles to raise awareness of school meals charity Mary’s Meals.

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Chancellor of St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, awarded an honorary doctorate to Irish Loreto missionary Sr Orla Treacy, who set up the **first secondary school for girls** in Rumbek, South Sudan.

Thirteen men begin their studies for priesthood in Maynooth this autumn, down from 21 last year. It brings the total number of **seminarians** in Irish dioceses to 77.

Compiled by **Ruth Gledhill, Bess Twiston Davies, Sarah Mac Donald, Ellen Teague** and **Brian Morton**.

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PERSON IN
THE NEWS

Bishop of Gloucester Rachel Treweek, a favourite to be Archbishop of Canterbury, on BBC Radio Gloucestershire in 2024: "Anyone wanting to be Canterbury archbishop needs their head reading."

UK/ROME / Royal couple will join Leo XIV in Jubilee Year of Hope celebrations

Holy See to welcome King and Queen on state visit

RUTH GLEDHILL

KING CHARLES III and Queen Camilla will undertake a state visit to the Holy See this month when they will meet Pope Leo XIV.

The state visit was postponed from its intended date earlier this year, when they were due to see Pope Francis during a visit to Italy. The late Pope's declining health meant the state visit had to be cancelled although they did meet Pope Francis privately.

During the coming visit, they will join Pope Leo for celebrations related to the current Jubilee Year of Hope. There will be a significant ecumenical element to the visit, involving representatives of the Church of England in Rome. The name of the next Archbishop of Canterbury is imminent, after the Crown Nominations Commission met for the final time last week and chose the successor to Justin Welby.

If he or she is announced before the visit, they could be expected to comment or be



King Charles and Queen Camilla in Rome in April this year

involved in some way and if, as many believe possible, the next archbishop is a woman, such as Bishop of Gloucester Rachel Treweek as some observers are suggesting, this would add particular ecumenical interest to the visit.

To the disappointment and anger of many of its own members, men and women, the Catholic Church has ruled out indefinitely the ordination of women as deacons, priests or bishops. King Charles is Supreme

Governor of the Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury is "first among equals" of the primates of the wider Anglican Communion, which is itself divided over the issue of women's ordination.

It is understood the visit by the King and Queen will include a visit to the Sistine Chapel with Pope Leo. Besides Pope Francis, King Charles, when he was Prince of Wales, met the two previous Popes, Benedict XVI and St John Paul II. Interfaith relations and ecumenism have for decades been a deep interest of the King, who has developed allies across many faiths throughout the world due to his own commitment to his Christian beliefs and his abiding advocacy for the importance and relevance of faith in the wider secular world.

Last month, he visited the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Birmingham, founded by St John Henry Newman, shortly to be made a Doctor of the Church, whose canonisation he attended in Rome in 2019.

Liverpool head accuses Labour of 'chronic underfunding'

ANDY DROZDZIAK

A CATHOLIC head teacher from Liverpool has joined colleagues in highlighting "chronic underfunding" in education in Liverpool and calling for greater investment as the 2025 Labour Party conference takes place in the city.

A letter signed by 29 head teachers was sent to Chancellor Rachel Reeves ahead of the Labour conference, which began on 28 September, complaining that schools in Liverpool have lost £52.3 million in real terms since 2010, which has affected 86 per cent of schools in the area. The head teachers also called on Reeves to restore "the achievements of the last Labour government".

"Years of chronic underfunding have brought our schools to a breaking point," the teachers said, urging the government to "give schools in Liverpool and across the country the funding we need so we can give this generation the education they deserve".

Christopher Davey, head teacher of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School in Aintree, Liverpool, who was one of the signatories, outlined his opposition to the cuts, saying: "Need cannot be met well enough, cuts are impacting quality of provision, progress and attainment as well as staff morale and well-being due to the gap constantly widening between needs, funding and external expectations and pressures."

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Primary School describes itself as being "at the very heart of our local Catholic community".

The cuts figures, which came from analysis by the Stop School Cuts coalition, were rejected by the government.

Each one of us must embrace 'synodal conversion' says Grech

POPE FRANCIS' vision of synodality is "essential" for today's "polarised world of culture wars and populist politics", the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Mario Grech, has said, writes Sarah Mac Donald.

In a public lecture to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dominican priest Fr Austin Flannery (1925-2008), translator into English of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Grech warned that this divisive world is affecting communion within the Church.

"If we in the Catholic Church are truly open to all our baptised

brothers and sisters, then we may well be a prophetic sign to the world," he told the gathering in St Mary's Priory in Tallaght, which included Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin and Archbishop Michael Jackson of the Church of Ireland.

In his talk, "From Vatican Council II to a Synodal Church", he underlined that for the Church to be a light on the hill to nations, "each one of us" needs to be embrace ongoing synodal conversion.

Synodality "is not a zero-sum game where one side wins and the other loses". Rather, it is a process of encounter, respect, listening

and discernment in the Spirit.

"It proceeds on the conviction that the person with a different perception of the Gospel may also be guided by the same Holy Spirit."

According to Cardinal Grech, a synodal Church is a listening Church. "It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn – the faithful, the bishops, the Pope." The council "recognised that the Magisterium is not above the Word of God, but its servant".

"Sometimes, I hear or read of people speaking about synodality as if it were an invention of Pope Francis. Nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

Synodality, he said, brings together many of the theological, ecclesial and spiritual dimensions of Vatican II.

IRELAND / Bishops' visit builds on historic connection with Maynooth seminary

Link with China unbreakable

SARAH MAC DONALD

THREE BISHOPS from the Catholic Church in China travelled to Ireland last week to discuss a possible future partnership with the national seminary, St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Bishop Guo Jincai of Chengde Diocese is vice president of the bishops' conference of the Catholic Church in China. He was joined by Bishop Joseph Cai Bingrui of Fuzhou Diocese and Bishop Sun Wenjun of Weifang Diocese as well as Fr Wang Dongcheng, canon lawyer and lecturer at the National Seminary in Beijing.

"We have had some informal but quite serious exchanges," Dr Séamus O'Connell, professor of sacred Scripture at St Patrick's College, told *The Tablet*. He explained that the visit by the Chinese delegation followed a



SARAH MAC DONALD

The Chinese bishops at Dalgan Park, home of the Columban Missionaries in Ireland

2018 visit to China by representatives of Maynooth.

Dr O'Connell paid tribute to the Missionary Society of St Columban, whose links with China had "provided the foundation and the context" for the visit. The visit to China occurred in the

year that the Columbans celebrated the centenary of their foundation as the Maynooth Mission to China.

In light of this link, the three Chinese bishops visited Dalgan Park during their stay in Ireland and spoke to the Columban missionaries about the Church in China today. Speaking through an interpreter, Bishop Jincai told them that there are still more than 30 dioceses vacant in China at the moment.

Greeting the Chinese prelates, missionary Fr David Kenneally said he was "mindful of our long-standing relationship with China. We were formed to go to China, and to this day, our legal title is reflective of that relationship: the Maynooth Mission to China ... We have a bond that no one can break with the Church in China. Many of our members have died in China and are buried there."

Competition on perceptions of sanctuary

STUDENTS in Britain and Ireland aged 13-18 are invited to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme of exploring perceptions of people seeking sanctuary in Britain and Ireland, considering practical examples of welcome and solidarity, *writes Ruth Gledhill*.

The latest Columban schools competition aims to increase young people's compassion and understanding of journeys of displaced people seeking safety in another country.

A quote from United Nations secretary general António Guterres, who is Catholic, is the theme of the competition. "Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is," Guterres said on World Refugee Day in June this year. *Details at columbans.co.uk/update/education/*

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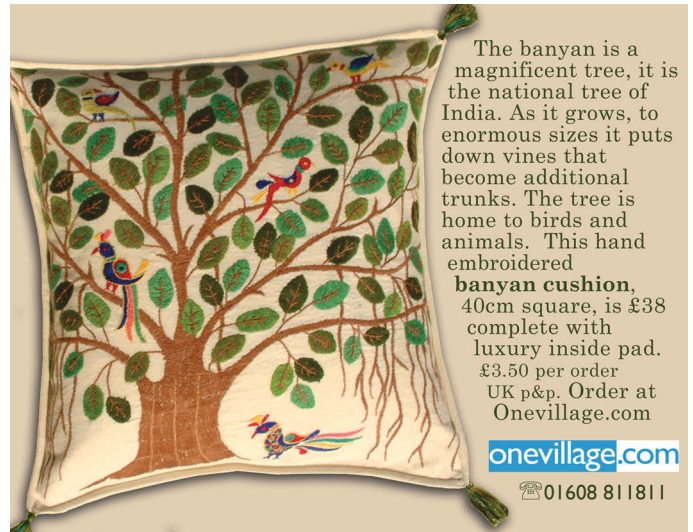
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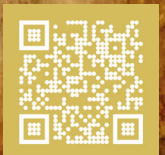
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The paper chase

GUY CONSOLMAGNO

THIS PAST MONTH, I completed 10 years as director of the Vatican Observatory. With no small sense of relief, I've passed the baton to a younger Jesuit, Fr Richard D'Souza.

A director's job is mostly making sure that the other astronomers have the resources they need to do their job – then you get out of their way. So what have my fellow Vatican astronomers accomplished with those resources? What's the most significant science to come out of the *Specola* since 2015?

One measure of a scientific paper's importance is simply to see how often it has been cited by other scientists. Our most cited paper since 2015 is a work on the stripping of gas from galaxies, explored by a team of astronomers led by Bianca Poggianti, head of the Italian National Institute for Astrophysics, which included our own Fr Alessandro Omizzolo.

They've been looking at what happens when one galaxy of stars and gas (but mostly empty space) passes through another such galaxy. Stars are so tiny compared to the space between them that they never actually touch; but the gravitational pull of those stars on the gas clouds between the stars can pull that gas into long trails away from the starry disc, giving these galaxies a peculiar shape that leads us to call them "jellyfish" galaxies. According to Nasa, this paper has been cited 330 times in the scientific literature since its publication in 2017.

Another notable paper about galaxy



Our scientists present beautiful nuggets of the Universe's truth ... echoing the intricacy and beauty of its Creator

collisions was published in the journal *Nature* in 2018 by Fr D'Souza and his co-authors. They presented computer models for the evolution of the Andromeda galaxy and the small galaxies that orbit it. It also featured on the cover of *Sky and Telescope* magazine.

One problem with using only citations as the criterion for significance is that older papers obviously have had a longer time to be cited. Two more recent items of research from our staff have the potential to be very significant in the future.

Fr Gabriele Gionti and Fr Matteo Galaverni have made complicated calculations on various mathematical approaches used to attack cosmological

questions. Their results have been published in *Physical Review D*, a very prestigious physics journal, and mark a significant step forward in the ways that we attempt to understand the nature of the universe itself at the very earliest moments after Creation. It is a small but significant step in a very large and important question.

I also note the the work done by Br Robert Macke and his collaborators on determining the physical properties of the bits of asteroid Bennu returned by a recent Nasa mission. Learning how these materials behave at asteroidal temperatures will be fundamental not only to our understanding of the asteroids from a scientific perspective; they are also crucial to our ability to exploit, or deflect, these asteroids as they approach Earth.

Note that none of these papers was done by one person alone. Scientists by necessity work in teams. We need a community to get things done. We also need a larger community to appreciate what we have done.

The Vatican Observatory exists to show the world that the Church supports good science. By any standard, what our scientists have done is very good. These are intricate, beautiful nuggets of the Universe's truth ... echoing the intricacy, and beauty, of its Creator.

Guy Consolmagno SJ is director emeritus of the Vatican Observatory.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

I KEEP ON promising myself to stop, but I just can't resist planting trees. At this time of year after the corn is cut, you'll always find an assortment of oaks, ashes and maples self-seeded in the stubble. These wildings are living on borrowed time. They may have been small enough to duck the sharp teeth of the combine harvester, but nothing will save them from the imminent arrival of the plough. I always dig out a dozen and plant them where they will have a chance to thrive.

That's the easy bit. The subsequent



watering can be time-consuming. Every summer is hotter and drier than the last, and although carrying gallons of water through balmy evening after evening can

be fun, it isn't always; especially when horseflies lie in wait. But the rewards are plentiful. Last week I was tending a tiny oak, and as I trickled the water down the protector (originally sourced from a nearby plantation), I heard a feeble cheep. A half-moulted robin clambered from the tube and flew bedraggledly to a clump of bushes. It was enduring its annual moult. These six to eight weeks are the most dangerous part of their year; barely able to fly and low on energy, they're easy prey for rats and stoats. This one had found the perfect safe house.

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