

THE INTERNATIONAL
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THE TABLET



The Catholic marriage maze

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proposes a better way

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soul in Mare of Easttown

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THE G7
SUMMIT

CHANCE FOR REAL CHANGE

Corbis Bay, a seaside village near St Ives, Cornwall, will this weekend host the leaders of most of the world's wealthiest countries, the G7 group, amid increasing signs that Planet Earth is in trouble. The Covid pandemic is being beaten back in the seven countries represented, where public vaccination programmes are in full flow, but in some other parts of the world immeasurable disasters are unfolding, with the poorest populations often suffering worst. The direct impact of disease is matched by devastation to local economies and the increased threat of new variants spreading – all making the UK government's decision to cut its international aid programme a crime crying out to heaven.

A high priority has to be given by the G7 leaders not only to the exporting of vaccine supplies from the rich to the poor, but also to any measures necessary to disperse vaccine manufacturing facilities throughout the world. Crucial to that will be a global initiative to relax patent rules, so that western pharmaceutical companies would cease to control this desperate global need. Market forces should not be sacrosanct at a time of emergency. This is not just a matter of charity but also of justice and prudence.

Covid is not the greatest crisis facing the globe. Global warming must finally be tackled head-on at the COP26 summit in Scotland this November, where many of the same leaders will be joined by dozens of others, including, it is hoped, Pope Francis. The G7 has a great responsibility to show leadership in Glasgow, and should be preparing for that in Cornwall.

The globalisation of the international economy is also in need of repair, and G7 leadership is essential for that too. Protectionism – the erection of barriers to trade and investment from one country to another – was placed back on the international agenda by President Trump's "America First" policies. But the rise of China and its aggressive use of its new financial clout is an even more fundamental challenge. As Benedict XVI put it in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, globalisation "makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers". The creation of a global market place for goods and services does nothing by itself to protect human values. It can have the opposite effect, for instance when it leads western corporations to transfer the manufacture of goods to countries with lower safety standards and lower wages in order to minimise costs and maximise profits. The Washington Consensus, on which the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund were based, ignored the need for a "social dimension" in international trade relations. With particular regard to China's human-rights abuses, the G7 must look at ways to introduce a criterion of "good conduct" before states are admitted to the privileges of the globalised economy. Britain still has responsibilities for the citizens of Hong Kong, for example.

The G7 meeting must think of itself as a place of conscience, not just of economic power. The idea of a world government is too riddled with risks to be viable or desirable. But the idea that there should be no hands on the steering wheel at all is no less alarming.

CARDINAL MARX
RESIGNATION

A RARE MORAL EXAMPLE

The resignation of Cardinal Reinhard Marx as Archbishop of Munich and Freising, one of the most influential sees in the Catholic world, has sent a shock wave through the Vatican and the German Church. But its implications are even wider. He has invoked a convention known in Britain as "ministerial responsibility". This convention says that the head of an administrative structure must accept responsibility for mistakes made by subordinates, even if they had no personal involvement in that mistake.

In Cardinal Marx's case, he has made it clear that his particular regret concerns the handling of allegations of sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy, the implication being that the failure is as much structural and institutional as it is personal. The child-abuse scandal is symptomatic of an all-pervasive belief in the Catholic Church that is a law unto itself. So light supervision by Rome of local Catholic hierarchies is all that is necessary. Answerability – the duty to explain oneself and if necessary to correct mistakes – is upwards, not downwards. Bishops are left, in effect, to "mark their own homework".

As events have shown, this is a deeply inadequate system. Cardinal Marx's announcement has a sting in the tail. He believes the answer lies in the development of synodal structures, whereby priests and laity participate in the governance of the Church. Bishops become answerable downwards as well as upwards. Cardinal Marx wants to redesign the Catholic Church so that catastrophes such as the institutional cover-up of clerical sex abuse never happen again, and he is right to do so, even if

reservations over precisely where the German synodal path might lead are understandable.

In Britain and elsewhere, inquiries into sexual abuse in the Catholic Church have been instituted by state authorities. They have demonstrated the fallacy that the Church can be left to regulate itself. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has triggered a thorough overhaul into how these matters are handled. As a direct result a distinguished former public prosecutor, Nazir Afzal, is now the independent head of the safeguarding system in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Most bishops, priests and laypeople will want to cooperate with him fully; but he is likely to meet obstruction sooner or later. This is where the absence of a synodal element in church structures may prove a weakness.

The doctrine of ministerial responsibility emerged from the Crichton Down affair in the 1950s. A British cabinet minister, Sir Thomas Dugdale, resigned after his civil servants had failed to return a piece of land, temporarily requisitioned for military purposes, to its original owners. This led to the setting up of a Parliamentary Commissioner, known as the Ombudsman. In the realm of child abuse, Mr Afzal may find himself with similar responsibilities; but the possibility of maladministration by church authorities in other spheres suggests there is a need for someone with a broader remit – a Catholic ombudsman. But again the absence of synodality would be an issue. The Parliamentary Commissioner reports to parliament. To whom would an independent Catholic ombudsman report?



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The marriage of twice-divorced Boris Johnson in Westminster Cathedral made the Church look to many ridiculous at best, cruel at worst. A priest who has spent a lifetime wrestling with the Church's marriage laws suggests that an opening to the East may help unpick some of the anomalies / **By TIMOTHY BUCKLEY**

Is there a way out of the marriage maze?

IN MY Redemptorist community in Liverpool we have a confrère whose memory has failed, but he remains quietly content, responding to every query with the refrain: "Are you sure?" I have spent a lifetime wrestling with the Church's marriage laws and my confrère's refrain springs to mind whenever I hear the Catholic marriage maze defended, or possible reforms discussed.

The marriage of Boris Johnson and Carrie Symonds was conducted after due process and entirely within the laws of the land and of the Catholic Church. So why has it led to such outbursts of anger – including from Catholics who say they have not received the same degree of compassion and sympathetic pastoral care – and why has the Church been

so mercilessly ridiculed for the absurdity and hypocrisy of its rules on marriage?

The answer isn't that Boris Johnson was given special treatment or that the rules were bent to favour someone rich and powerful. It is simply that ever since canon law was codified in 1917, the section on marriage, which tried to embrace a centuries-long debate in the Church about the nature of marriage, has left us with legislation which is not only complicated but, it is increasingly clear, inadequate and often unjust. The teaching on marriage is full of anomalies and inconsistencies. It is a maze that sometimes allows a lengthy, elaborate route to freedom, and sometimes becomes a prison with no means of escape.

From apostolic times, the Church has wrestled with the dilemma of how to protect the sanctity and permanence of marriage while at the same time ministering the love and compassion of Christ to those traumatised by the experience of marital breakdown. The heart of the problem with the current legislation is the influence of a degraded form of medieval scholasticism, which sought to define the way God works in precise, absolute formulae, often collected into the infamous "manuals" that were for many years the staple of seminary training. Thus, distinctions between the natural bond of marriage and the sacramental bond (that is, when two baptised Christians are united in marriage) are so strictly defined that they leave no room for manoeuvre when delicate questions are posed in relation to people's faith and intentions at the time of their marriage. Had Boris Johnson been baptised in an Anglican church rather than a Catholic church, and had one of his two former wives also been a baptised Christian, then, no matter where the marriage took place, even in a register office, he would have been regarded as validly and sacramentally married, and could not have married

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Carrie in Westminster Cathedral unless he had first obtained an annulment.

The origin of the distinction between the natural and the sacramental bond of marriage is to be found in St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There, he teaches that a valid marriage between two unbaptised people can be ended if one of them is subsequently baptised, and the unbelieving partner desires to separate. After centuries of wrangling, it was finally agreed that in such cases a second marriage could follow, and this became known as the Pauline Privilege. The Petrine Privilege, relating to the authority of the Pope as the successor of St Peter, which allows that a marriage where one of the partners was not baptised is open to dissolution, is an extension of this exemption from the otherwise universal norm that a valid marriage that has been consummated cannot be dissolved by any cause other than death.

The only recourse for those in a valid sacramental marriage seeking to re-marry in the Church is to seek a decree of nullity, a declaration that there was something defective in the consent of the couple at the time of the marriage which renders the bond null and void. In practice, the Church has found ways of dissolving a valid marriage bond which is not between two baptised people – in other words the majority of marriage bonds in human history – and it has also been willing to annul even supposedly indissoluble sacramental bonds.

THIRTY YEARS ago I began a piece of research into the pastoral care of separated, divorced and remarried Catholics on behalf of the Bishops of England and Wales. I eventually reported to their Low Week meeting in 1994, and subsequently published an edited version of my findings as *What Binds Marriage? Roman Catholic Theology in Practice*. I interviewed hundreds of people, including a cross-section of the clergy. My brother priests tended to fall into one of two categories (although in fairness there was something of the rigorous canon lawyer and something of the good pastor in all of them): those with an instinctively legalist outlook and those with an instinctively personalist one. Those with a personalist outlook would begin by seeing the suffering person before them; those with the legalist outlook would begin by seeing the canonical complications. It was not that the latter necessarily lacked compassion; it was just that their training had so conditioned them that this was their reflex response.

I will always remember a meeting with the Senate of Priests of the Westminster Archdiocese at London Colney. I came under fire from a couple of rigid canonists, when Bishop Vincent Guazzelli came to my rescue. He told the unbending canonists he had heard all they were saying many times before and that it would not cut much ice with the poor people in the East End of London. He encouraged me to keep going. I felt I had come of age as a Redemptorist. Our founder, Saint Alphonsus, had battled in his day with those



A wedding at a Catholic church in Ireland

who took a rigid moral stance, and he is now the patron of moral theologians. It is not simply a matter of “lightening up” and being “more pastoral”. But we must move on from imagining that canon law and moral law are the same thing, as the manuals made us think.

A fellow Redemptorist priest, Bernard Häring CSsR, sometimes found himself in conflict with officialdom when he sought to help people in difficult situations form mature consciences. A year before I began my research, he published *No Way Out? Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried*, advocating in particular that we engage the Orthodox Churches in a dialogue about the ancient doctrine of *oikonomia*, the Greek word which gives us “economy”. The doctrine is built on the idea that the bishop is God's housekeeper, *oikonomos*, and is invested with the power of Christ to heal in the Church wounds that no law can cure. Economy must never harm dogma, it can never constitute a legal precedent, no one ever has a right to it, no one other than the bishop can use it. In exercising it the bishop intuitively imitates God's own prodigality. I was able to speak with Fr Häring about my work and I treasure some of the correspondence we shared before he died.

AFTER THE Second Vatican Council, real strides were taken in trying to address the anomalies, inconsistencies and injustices. The grounds for annulment were extended to include a range of psychological factors and the number of annulments rose exponentially in certain parts of the world.

Theologians explored the use of the “internal forum” – that ministry which seeks to find a way forward privately when the public (external) forum of the annulment process is unable to provide the solution – not just in the context of the confessional but also within spiritual direction, reminding us of the primacy of an individual's conscience. The internal forum solution became the focus of much attention precisely because canonists and theologians were looking for pastoral solutions to the problem of marriage breakdown and second marriages, seemingly with the blessing of the

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Vatican was, though, to attempt to outlaw the use of the internal forum even in the so-called “conflict cases”, where it is privately acknowledged that a former marriage was invalid, but for some reason this cannot be established in the external forum.

THERE ARE many different possible ways forward. Pope Francis has streamlined the annulment process and revived the use of the internal forum. Even before he became Pope, he had a reputation for reaching out to other Church leaders: we would do well to follow his example, particular with the Orthodox Churches. They, too, believe in the sanctity and permanence of marriage, but they are not hamstrung by our definition of the bond. One of the most compelling encounters of my life was a meeting with Gregorios, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, at his home in October 1995. He opened my mind to the wonder of the Orthodox theology of *oikonomia*. When problems arise, it is the job of the *oikonomos*, the bishop, to take the problems before the Lord and pray for the guidance of the Spirit. In this way he was able to resolve many marriage problems. Of course, in the Orthodox understanding of marriage, it's the Church that marries people, as opposed to the Western view that people marry each other: the Church (and the State) are merely witnesses. So what the Church does, according to the East, the Church can undo. But the question the Archbishop put to me before I left him still resonates: “Timothy, can you envisage any situation which is beyond the redeeming power of the Lord?” And to that there is only one answer.

Let us renew the dialogue that Bernard Häring proposed all those years ago and free ourselves from the madness of the present situation. If the Johnsons have hastened the day when this process begins in earnest, they may have done us all a great service.

Timothy J. Buckley is a Redemptorist and parish priest of Our Lady of the Annunciation (Bishop Eton) and St Mary's, Woolton, Liverpool.

When it was published earlier this year, an emigre journalist's attempt to look at the collapse of Irish Catholicism with fresh eyes was acclaimed by critics inside as well as outside the Church / **By DEREK SCALLY**

Dust to dust

I REMEMBER where I was when I understood, finally, why Ireland's Catholic Church collapsed. It was a grey January day in 2019 and I had slipped into St Monica's church on Dublin's northside.

Mass had just ended – with more brass memorial plaques on the pews than people sitting in them – and I headed into the low-ceilinged sacristy. I hadn't been here since serving Mass as a child: listening closely for the moment to ring the consecration bells; begging the thurible charcoal to burn. I sought out the dim room beside the sacristy where I would change into my cassock and surplice. There are no altar servers now in St Monica's and the old changing room is a cluttered storage space. In a corner I caught sight of a block of Oasis, those green blocks of sponge-like foam used to arrange flowers. Soaked with water, the block is heavy and firm. As an altar boy, though, I loved to break off a dry corner, rub it between my fingers and watch it turn to dust.

This, I realised, is what had happened to Irish Catholicism.

John McGahern once described ours as a "fortress church ... that, very much like an army, demanded unquestioned allegiance". For centuries Ireland was a spiritual superpower, sending out priests and Religious around Europe to light once more the Christian flame. In the last century, Ireland raised entire generations for export to every corner of the world: preaching, teaching, nursing and comforting from Liverpool to Laos. But 25 years of clerical abuse revelations and cover-ups, coupled with an unprecedented period of prosperity and liberalisation, emptied Ireland's churches of people. Like Oasis without water, what was once solid and firm was now dry and fragile; Ireland's ageing spiritual army of priests, nuns and bishops are now more figures of pity than fear.

OVER THE LAST 20 years, returning regularly to Ireland from my adoptive home of Berlin, I've had an emigrant's time-lapse perspective on the fall of this fortress. Each return visit, though, increased a nagging feeling that, in Ireland's rush to put the past behind us, an effort was underway to disown the Catholic past and our part in it. I went looking for a book that could explain to me why Catholicism rose so high in Ireland and fell so far. Realising it didn't exist, I decided to write it myself.

My starting point was my seat in the front row, observing a process Germans call *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – the task of com-



PHOTO: NANCY JESSE

Derek Scally wrote the book he wanted to read

ing to terms with the past. Through institutions, exhibitions and research, ordinary Germans are given opportunities to reflect on how two dictatorships took hold in quick succession. The point is not to create a paralysing guilt-cult but to cultivate an awareness of responsibility for historical memory. Real historical understanding is about locating yourself, your family or people like you, on the spectrum between the extremes of perpetrator and survivor. Empowering people to explore their own past circumstances, reflecting on why they reacted as they did, is a crucial part of being German.

I saw no appetite in Ireland for this; we already had our perpetrators. Within my lifetime Ireland's priests and Religious – once our holy anointed – became a disgraced "them". Knowing things were more complex than this, I began a journey of many surprises. Perhaps the greatest was how uniquely Irish our brand of Catholicism was – and how it is a decade younger than *The Tablet*.

Things many of us assume are intrinsically Irish Catholic – the Sacred Heart, the devotions, high Mass attendance – only became mainstream after the 1850 Synod of Thurles. Attuned to the needs of a people traumatised

by Famine, Ireland's first cardinal, Paul Cullen, carried out root-and-branch reform of the Irish Church. His new Catholicism was one of ritual and rigour that emphasised a suffering-salvation narrative.

It was in this period that Irish Catholicism became the Victorian prude we remember today. Historian J. J. Lee suggests Cullen's Irish Church was a response to middle-class needs, framing sex "as a satanic snare". Sex, in particular unexpected heirs, "posed a far more severe threat than the landlord to the security and status of the family". To avoid the risk of a return of Famine-era degradation, middle-class Irish Catholics idealised self-control and restraint to the extent that, eventually, they were internalised. The consequences are clear today: a faith once embraced as a comfort and a path to education is now rejected as a mental prison of shame.

IRELAND'S CATHOLIC prison break was so sudden, though, that many don't see the lingering effects in the Irish psyche: deference to bishops transferred to medical professionals and US multinationals; the survival of shame as a control mechanism, as seen during the early phase of the pandemic. Some argue that Catholic Ireland's shame containment infrastructure of mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries has, metaphorically, been re-purposed by modern Ireland to lock away, or at least silence, priests and nuns.

Life in post-Catholic Ireland can resemble a spiritual game of snakes and ladders straight out of a David Lodge novel: not everyone

knew about abuse but enough people knew. This is something everyone knows, but no one must acknowledge. This was clear when, a few weeks before my book appeared earlier this year, Ireland was confronted with the latest in a series of state reports into Ireland's toxic Catholic past.

This time, the subject was the mother and baby homes familiar to anyone who has seen the film *Philomena*. The report was met with anger by survivors and exhausted silence by the wider population.

After two decades of inquiries and reports examining the question of where guilt lay for the decades of abuse, my book suggests a new approach is required. To move forward, Ireland needs to go beyond emotive attack and sullen denial and embrace empathetic, informed reflection. That was the approach

Ireland's Catholic prison break was so sudden that many don't see the lingering effects in the Irish psyche

I took when I met Cardinal Seán Brady, a tragic figure whose appointment as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland in 1996 became tainted by an old link to a notorious paedophile priest. We met four times in total, filling two chapters that one interviewer described as my “Frost/Nixon” encounters. Now retired, Cardinal Brady reflected on his life and why he wasn’t emotionally open to the suffering of the abused children he had interviewed as a young priest. Eventually he conceded his anger now at the discretion the Church had demanded of him. That had contributed to a priest abusing children for 20 more years and, in the eyes of many, has left Brady a disgraced man.

Over two months after my book was published, I’m heartened by its positive reception in Ireland, both from critics and readers, inside and outside the Church. Many former neighbours in Dublin I spoke to on Zoom last month enthusiastically endorsed my decision to empathise rather than judge. “The priests made you feel like a child,” one woman said. The next evening, in an online discussion with Irish priests and Religious, one nun admitted she was reading my book slowly, “taking it like medicine”. Of the 100 people participating, all over 60, none expressed any desire for Irish Catholicism in its current form to survive. Indeed, many saw the Church’s leadership in self-preservation mode, and an impediment to a new beginning. One priest,

back from a lifetime working in Brazil, recalled how the life of faith there took place outside churches, without priests: people meeting in homes to pray, reflect on Scripture and co-ordinate community work. Another priest suggested the pandemic had opened the door to this in Ireland, with Sunday Mass replaced for many by online gatherings for reflection and prayer.

Perhaps the strangest experience was joining the Zoom book club of former schoolmates I hadn’t seen in 25 years. They were delighted by the book. It struck a chord: none was any longer a Mass-goer; most had young children and most said they were struggling with how to give them some sort of moral foundation. One former classmate told me how he had set up a (successful) campaign to change an admissions policy that allowed Ireland’s largely church-run primary schools to discriminate against non-baptised children. He argued that taking religious instruction and faith formation out of the classroom is the only way religious belief can survive. Most on the Zoom call nodded in agreement.

MY GENERATION – now in our mid-40s – was the last to have an Irish Catholic childhood. We are young enough to have been spared its excesses yet old enough to notice the gap left by its passing. Catholic Ireland achieved much but it collapsed under its own emotional and intellectual narrowness. The

child-like approach to faith and the undue deference given to bishops, priests and Religious had, in hindsight, left staggering opportunities for abuses of children and of trust. When that all emerged, it is no wonder people were annoyed – at Church representatives and, quietly, at themselves.

The more recent embrace of marriage equality and legal access to abortion, and the widespread lack of interest in Pope Francis when he visited in 2018, suggests Ireland’s teenage anger is now cooling off into a young adult apathy. Ireland’s recent ban on religious services on public health grounds – more stringent than anything elsewhere in Europe, and with fewer exemptions than those imposed under British rule at its most brutal – was for many a decisive secular, “end of history” moment. Some 15 centuries after Patrick, had the “Best Catholics in the World” finally moved on?

When I put that question to a senior Irish cleric in the Holy See, he snorted: “In our lifetime we have gone from believing we were the last Catholic country of Europe to thinking we are now in the vanguard of philosophical secularism. Maybe we need to get over ourselves.”

Derek Scally is Berlin correspondent for *The Irish Times*. *The Best Catholics in the World* is published by Penguin Sandycove at £16.95 (Tablet price, £15.26).



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Wednesday 23 June 2021
6:00-7:00PM BST

Mental Health and the Catholic Christian Response

(You Don't Need to be a Therapist)

Keith Leslie, Chair of Trustees at Samaritans and Rachel Kelly, Author and Mental Health Campaigner will discuss how the mental health landscape has been changed by the pandemic and the role of leadership in promoting mentally-healthy workplaces.

Friday 25 June 2021 | 6:00-7:00PM BST

For more information on speakers and content, please visit www.thetablet.co.uk/events

The discovery of unidentified Indigenous children's remains in the grounds of a Catholic-run boarding school has further damaged the withering moral authority of the Church in Canada. Pope Francis has turned to its senior cardinal for advice on how to respond / **By MICHAEL W. HIGGINS**

Canada's shame

WHEN Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, looks out from his curial residence in a westerly direction, he must wonder what he would be doing were he still Primate of the Church in Canada and Archbishop of Québec City. And he must breathe an immense sigh of relief that that is no longer the case.

This past week has seen a scandal of demoralising proportions unfold with relentless speed. In fact, it is the greatest moral challenge the Church in Canada is facing as it struggles to retain its dwindling credibility. The trigger for national outrage, shame and remorse was the discovery of 215 unidentified children's remains in the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia. This experience in national shock is not dissimilar to the roiling waves of despair and fury that followed the disclosure of the children's remains in Tuam, Ireland, on the site of its home for unwed mothers.

But if Ouellet felt relief in being absent from his native Canada, it was short-lived. He was summoned to a discussion with Pope Francis last Saturday, 5 June, the same day that the Pope was also meeting that other Canadian cardinal resident in Rome, the Jesuit Michael Czerny, to try and fathom some of the multifaceted dimensions of the crisis unfolding in Canada and to work out a strategy of response.

In his Sunday Angelus locution, Francis addressed the pain associated with the palpable and perduring suffering of the Indigenous peoples of Canada but he did not offer the kind of formal apology that the majority of Canadians – Catholics especially – are clamouring for.

THERE HAVE, as it happens, been many apologies offered by the Catholic entities, as they are legally called, that ran the residential schools on behalf of the government. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Sisters of St Ann – the premier orders associated with the schools – have offered apologies and some, the Jesuits in particular, have been exceptional in working on a legal and moral relationship of restitution that has taken seriously the imperatives of meaningful reconciliation. But the rebuilding of trust is taking a long time, the government has often been dilatory in meeting its obligations, and the diocesan bishops – with outstanding exceptions like Michael Miller, Archbishop of Vancouver and Don Bolen, Archbishop of



PHOTO: CNS, PAUL HARING

Cardinal Ouellet, left, pictured with Pope Francis in January 2020

Regina – have taken a predominantly legal approach to the matter, more concerned with vicarious liability than prophetic witness.

Things on Turtle Island are not going well. The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, who self-identifies as a Catholic, has called on fellow Catholics to besiege their parish priests, bishops and cardinals with calls for repentance, reparation and, more boldly still, the intervention of Pope Francis himself, on site preferably, delivering a formal apology to the Indigenous peoples for the Church's participation in the management of the residential schools. This has been in the winds since the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report in 2015 with its 94 recommendations, one of which explicitly calls on the Pontiff to make a formal apology. Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, hit back in an interview on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation when he accused Trudeau of being unfair and uninformed.

There is a long and tortured history around these schools. They were established in the nineteenth century as a way of enculturating Indigenous children into the dominant society. It was a protracted, deliberate and sustained exercise in "cultural genocide", perceived by many Canadians as preferable to the American mode of operating: send in the cavalry for yet another massacre. But the result is the same: the decimation of First Nations' historical identity, the elimination of their languages,

the suppression of their culture and spirituality, their complete marginalisation in the economic-political orbit. They have become aliens in their own land.

The Catholic Church ran – commissioned to do so by the federal government along with other churches (Anglican, United Church and Presbyterian) – the lion's share of the residential schools, the total number of which under the Residential School Settlement Agreement consisted of 139 schools in operation from the 1870s with the final one closing in the 1990s. The public outcry in Canada this week is qualitatively different from the past. It is a threshold moment in terms of the conscience of the nation and a huge challenge to the withering moral authority of the Church. Although Ouellet is not in town for this historic upheaval and bears no immediate responsibility for oversight for the residential schools – only 10 of which were in Québec – he cannot be unaware of the turmoil.

THIS IS ONLY one of several disturbances on the political and ecclesial landscape, the most important of which is the infamous Bill 21, provincial legislation that has survived largely intact its legal challenge in the Court of Appeal. Bill 21 was introduced by the current party in power – the Coalition Avenir Québec – with the express intention of securing further in the social fabric of Québec the doctrine of *laïcité*, the strict separation of Church from state as discrete non-intermingling spheres first introduced in France in 1905. No political jurisdiction in all of North America has been more occupied with the challenges posed by religious and cultural accommodation than Québec. Bill 21 strengthens the hold of *laïcité*: all civil employees are forbidden to wear any religious article in the performance of their duties – kippa, hijab, burka, turban, crucifix, etc. – as they are seen as potentially divisive and in violation of the separation of the two spheres.

When the bill was first introduced, the Catholic Church expressed its opposition, seeing it as a violation of the Charter of Rights and as specifically targeting the Islamic community – which, in fact, was the primary if unacknowledged driver of the bill's legislation – but it has been tepid in decrying the government's initiative, which is manifestly popular in rural Québec, the one remaining region in Canada where there is demonstrable Catholic piety.

When Ouellet was archbishop, he tried to reawaken the province's urban residual

religiosity, convoking a Eucharistic Congress, assailing all the markers of secularism, trying to rally his fellow bishops to the cause of the restoration of the religious genius of this daughter of the “eldest daughter of the Church”, as the Church in France has been called. But it didn't work.

OUELLET WAS born on 8 June 1944 in La Motte, Québec, into a Catholic family he has described as “religious but not very devout”. The Church of his youth, in which he was formed and in which he was ordained in 1968, was in an accelerated momentum to catch up with the post-1789 mother country. Within two years of ordination, he was teaching at the major seminary in Bogotá, and in 1972 he became a member of the Sulpicians, an order specifically dedicated to the training of priests. Although at the time of his own priestly training he had been living through the convulsive social and ecclesial changes that began just before the Second Vatican Council, by temperament and intellectual disposition he would have been inoculated to the encroaching threats to Québec's Catholic hegemony. Colombia offered him a safe, familiar and traditional environment.

When he returned to Canada in 2002 after being appointed Archbishop of Québec and Primate of Canada by Pope John Paul II, the atmosphere – political and religious – was even more distant from his youthful memories. It was a world utterly changed. Ouellet and Québec were a misalliance. Enter Benedict XVI. In 2010, Benedict brought him to Rome, making him prefect of the Congregation for Bishops following the retirement of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re: a position he has adroitly managed during two pontificates, with one pope prioritising orthodoxy and compliance in his choice of bishops and the other giving precedence to that special pastoral gift Francis calls the “smell of the sheep”. He has not been disloyal to either boss, though his ecclesiological instincts and clerical sensibility position him more comfortably in the Ratzinger antechamber.

THE SENIOR of the Canadian eminences – Collins of Toronto, LaCroix of Québec City, and Czerny in Rome handling the “Migrants” file at the Vatican – are his juniors. At 76, Ouellet is now past retirement age, his service possibly soon to be terminated, but for some cardinal-electors still *papabile*. Amiable, a gifted linguist, like Francis from the Americas, an organic conservative but not an obscurantist, neither a core sympathiser with the Bergoglio style nor in any way a detractor, Ouellet is in a waiting pattern.

Hard to imagine that, in the current maelstrom, where he would prefer to land is *not* back home. And who could blame him.

Michael W. Higgins is the principal of St Mark's College at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. His latest book is *Impressively Free: Henri Nouwen as a Model for a Reformed Priesthood* (Paulist Press), co-authored with Kevin Burns.

A fortnight ago, I was thwarted in my attempt to light a candle at Westminster Cathedral



I BEGAN to work out in my head how many days without buying a cup of coffee I would have to go before I could afford the estimate for a lovely book up for sale at Forum Auctions. It wouldn't be days or months, but eight years or more.

The book was a copy of the New Testament in Greek, and of course you can get that for nothing online. This was a folio bound in red morocco and tooled in gold with the initials of Kenelm Digby and his wife Venetia Stanley. It must have been a sort of wedding present from him to her in 1625.

Theirs was the romance of a romantic age. She, a great beauty, had met him in childhood and he had fallen in love. Then they were separated. In events that make a Shakespeare plot look plausible, in his late teens Digby, according to his private memoir *Loose Fantasies*, fled the amorous pursuit of the Queen Mother of France by spreading the news that he was dead, writing to Venetia explaining the reality. But the letter was never delivered. Venetia heard the bad fake news but not the good true news and was said to have turned to “a disordered life of pleasure” in reaction.

It wasn't for three years that Kenelm turned up again, and had some explaining to do. They married in secret, lest they be cut out of family inheritances. Their Catholicism complicated things. When Kenelm was two, his father had been executed for his part in the Gunpowder Plot. Yet, for trying to fix up the Spanish marriage for the Prince of Wales, King James I knighted Kenelm, who then seemed to conform to the Church of England by taking the oaths required for office.

Venetia settled down, followed Franciscan spirituality and bore children, several of whom died in miscarriage or infancy. Her labours were painful and dangerous but her husband holding her hand, she said, “did abate a great part of her paines”.

One morning after breakfast, Sir Kenelm was discussing literature with a recusant friend, Sir Thomas Hawkins, when word came that Venetia had been found dead in bed. She was 32.

Sir Kenelm got Van Dyck to make a death mask and paint a portrait of her on her deathbed. It is on show at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Sir Kenelm took it that

God had taken her to punish his sins. Though of a uxorious disposition, he did not marry again.

There's more to Kenelm Digby than his love for Venetia. He was an experimental scientist, an early member of the Royal Society, with some funny ideas, by our lights, such as the powder of sympathy – by which a sword wound might be healed by the powder's application to the sword, not to the wound.

He must have had an engaging character, for he wrote to Descartes telling him where he had gone wrong in his *Discourse on Method*, yet they met again on friendly terms. That old magpie John Aubrey says that Digby had “high words” with the Pope when they met in 1647, but he had better luck with his enemy Cromwell, whom he persuaded to lift the confiscation of his lands.

But it was as a souvenir of his loving marriage that this book was up for sale. I saw the bids go skywards, far above my years of no coffee, till the estimate was left behind, a small spot on the earth below. It went for £38,000.

I CLOSELY missed the controversial romantic event of our own day. A fortnight ago, I was thwarted in my attempt to light a candle at Westminster Cathedral by locked doors and a notice saying: “Wedding in progress”. I cursed and walked on. If I'd known, I should have been blessing Mr and Mrs Boris Johnson.

The much loved *Big Issue* seller outside the cathedral was one of the few people to notice anything going on. He was quoted at length by *The Sun*. He is now demanding a reasonable fee for his remarks. “We're talking puppy money, here,” he said, tugging at the unused lead that hangs about his neck. Not long ago, he lost his companion of many years, Murphy, a well-behaved dog. I hope he gets enough for a successor.

IN THE POST came a letter. On the back of the envelope was written: “This letter was dictated in the main by the Angel of Death from the Bottomless Pit.” I liked “in the main”. But I didn't open it. Should I?



Christopher Howse is an assistant editor of *The Daily Telegraph*.

This month is the centenary of the birth of John Bradburne, the poet and warm-hearted eccentric who may be the first Englishman born in the twentieth century to be declared a saint / By **ROGER RIDDELL**

God's outcast

JOHN BRADBURNE was born in remote Skirwith high up in the Cumbrian Fells, where he spent a happy early boyhood. When I first met him, 14 years before his gruesome murder in Zimbabwe's rural Mashonaland, which he so loved, he was living in a hen house, skin suntanned, sitting in shorts on a low stool hovering over a typewriter, his long straw-hatted hair tied at the back, bees buzzing around his head, uncertain he wanted to be distracted. He died in September 1979, just days before the start of the Lancaster House conference in London which led to the agreement that stopped the guerrilla war in which Bradburne and 20,000 others lost their lives.

For many years after his death, few outside Zimbabwe's Catholic community had even heard of John Bradburne. Now, more and more people are discovering his poems. He is thought to be Britain's most prolific poet, writing three times as many lines as Wordsworth and almost twice as many as Shakespeare. Three themes dominate his poetry: the natural world, his search to find a role and purpose in his life, and his Christian faith, often viewed through its Jewish roots. He wrote in verse for fun, sometimes taking to pen from drink, or typing his lines tongue-in-cheek. Bradburne was the first to admit that some of his poetry was rubbish or inconsequential. But some of his poems are touching and beautiful, some profound and captivating. Ever the mimic (he called himself God's jester), at times he wrote like Chaucer ("Hail chanticleer"), Hopkins ("First Eve fell fast for fallen find's false fable, Foul weather followed for us folk forlorn") and Ogden Nash ("O Snails and beetles, worms and grubs, Lady birds and slimy slugs").

IN 2019, THE Congregation for the Causes of Saints issued a formal *nihil obstat* for the cause of Bradburne's beatification to proceed, with the full support of Zimbabwe's bishops. He would be the first Englishman born in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, and the first Zimbabwean, to be proclaimed a saint or martyr. Last year, he was declared Servant of God, and the Ecclesiastical Court began taking testimonies from those who knew him well. As one of the shrinking band of his long-time friends – he last wrote to me (in verse) the year before his death – I have

been interviewed by the postulator, Enrico Solinas, a judge at the Umbrian Interdiocesan Ecclesiastical Court.

Bradburne was born on 14 June 1921, the son of Erica May Hill and Thomas Bradburne, a High Church Anglican priest. He had two brothers and two sisters. His teenage years were spent in Norfolk, where he was a pupil at Gresham's school in Holt. Three days after his 19th birthday he was called up, and six months later he joined the Indian Army, with which his mother's family had connections, and saw active service in Malaya and Burma. His friend, the Jesuit priest John Dove, said of Bradburne: "He was both a hero and a misfit. War demands courage and expertise in killing. The latter was quite foreign to John."

Returning to the England he sorely missed, Bradburne spent the next 17 years as a searcher and seeker, taking odd jobs, a farm labourer and a teacher in a boys' school, but he never settled. Having had some sort of religious experience during the war, he felt the pull of faith, and in 1947 he became a Catholic. Steered away from the Jesuits by Dove, he tried his vocation first with the Benedictines at Buckfast, then the Carthusians at Parkminster, the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion in Louvain, and finally



with the Benedictines again, this time at Prinknash. Yet each time he either chose to leave or, more often, was judged to be unsuitable. With interludes for pilgrimages – to Lourdes, Rome and Jerusalem – his wanderings continued.

Following a spell selling books at Burns & Oates shop in Ashley Place, Bradburne became what he wryly called "fifth sacristan" at Westminster Cathedral next door. There, by chance, he bumped into Cardinal William Godfrey and soon found himself the caretaker of the cardinal's country home, Hare Street House in rural Hertfordshire, where Robert Hugh Benson, a convert and searcher like him, had lived. Hare Street had few visitors, and the cardinal came infrequently, so Bradburne had the run of the place; he cherished the solitude and stayed for over two and half years, a record for him. But when the builders arrived to start renovations to convert the house to a renewal centre for diocesan clergy, he knew he would have to move on, and in August 1962 he found himself in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Though he didn't know it then, the country was to be his home for the last 17 years of his life.

By this time, Bradburne had become a secular Franciscan, and John Dove had fixed up for him to work as a mission helper at the main Franciscan Fathers Mission at Mount St Mary's Wedza, in Mashonaland. Though he fell in love with and soon started writing poetry about the country, he didn't stay long at Wedza, and his wanderings continued until Dove brought him to the Jesuit training centre, Silveira House, which he had recently set up. There Bradburne learned to type and busied himself as best he could as organist,



Left and above, Bradburne in his early days at Mutemwa and below left with his dog, Simba

sacristan, beekeeper, nightwatchman, friend of those who came begging, dog walker and general dogsbody. But as the Jesuit community grew and the centre became more institutionalised, he pined for the solitude he thought he could not live without.

It was soon after this, in March 1969, that Bradburne made his first visit to Mutemwa, a settlement some 90 miles east of Harare where people with leprosy from all over Zimbabwe were sent to live pretty much as outcasts – not for nothing does the Shona word *mutemwa* mean “You have been cut off”. After meeting a few of its more mobile residents and seeing the inhumane conditions they were forced to live in, Bradburne promptly announced he was staying. With great difficulty, he was persuaded to leave, but within a month he was back and, except for the odd brief break, he never left Mutemwa until his death.

THOUGH OFFICIALLY “the warden” (Bradburne knew his Trollope), he saw his role more as a companion of the residents than a distant grand administrator: he sought not only to improve their quality of life, but to live alongside them and build a vibrant community – and he succeeded. More and better food was provided, as were warmer clothing and extra blankets needed for Africa’s bitter winters. Quality medical care came courtesy of Dr Luisa Guidotti, the Italian mission doctor, and her team who made weekly visits to bandage wounds and dispense pills, and keep a watchful eye on Bradburne, known to skip meals and pass on food gifts to the residents. Soon Bradburne not only knew each person by name, but he wrote a

poem about every one of Mutemwa’s residents. He became the eyes for the blind, the ears for the deaf and the fingers and toes for those who had only stumps for hands and feet; he sat with those who were sick and prayed with those close to death. But he also brought joy and laughter, and to celebrate special events they partied, sometimes aided by alcohol. From a colony of stigmatised and forgotten lepers, Mutemwa became a vibrant community of living people.

Bradburne lived in a one-room converted butchery. To his delight, a small chapel was built. Soon after, Bradburne’s growing numbers of supporters tracked down a harmonium for him, and kept him supplied with paper to feed into his poetry-writing typewriter. Bradburne had found meaning to his life and felt fulfilled. Despite the mental anguish of many who had been removed from their families, a number forcibly, Mutemwa was a happy place, as I witnessed myself when I visited. On occasions, Bradburne would cajole me to climb with him to the top of the large granite outcrop behind Mutemwa, called Chigona, and we would remove our shirts and race round the “running track” he had etched out until we were both exhausted.

But then – perhaps inevitably – just short of four years after he arrived, judged to be incompetent (and, perversely, too kind), Bradburne was sacked as warden. But he refused to leave, and for some weeks lived precariously in a tent on the side of Chigona before a hut was built for him just outside the settlement so he could continue as the keeper of the keys of the church, and he visited the residents when allowed. It was an uneasy time, and his relationship with the new warden became more strained as Bradburne saw the standard of care dropping – rations were cut to save money – and his heart and his sense of justice drove him to try to intervene. One warden left and another came; sometimes Bradburne was allowed to interact with the residents; sometimes he

was all but frozen out. Perhaps inevitably too, over time, splits within the community started to surface and divisions arose, with some residents allying themselves more closely to Bradburne and others to the new regime. There was talk of funds going missing or being misused.

Bradburne continued to live a precarious life – pushed on to the margins of the community of the marginalised but determined to stay engaged – until early September 1979, when he was abducted. The Zimbabwe war of liberation had been hotting up in the area for some time; Bradburne had been told it had become far too dangerous and that he should leave, but he stayed, even after Dr Guidotti had been killed, left to bleed to death after being shot by the Rhodesian Security Forces. (Her beatification process began in Modena in 1995.) Three days after his abduction, Bradburne’s body was discovered by the roadside with bullets in his back, some distance from where he had been living.

THE STORY commonly told about his death is that Bradburne – a (saintly) white man who cared for black lepers – was (viciously) killed by Robert Mugabe’s black guerrilla fighters. Even if true, this tells only part of the story. Bradburne was not political, though he had no time for Ian Smith, whom he bluntly dismissed with the words “He is a racist”. Numerous deaths in Zimbabwe’s guerrilla war happened when people with axes to grind led soldiers to believe that those they had a grudge against were political sell-outs or informers. Bradburne had ruffled the feathers of some powerful local individuals who saw him and his uncompromising stand for the rights of Mutemwa’s residents as a threat. What better way to get rid of him than to tell the guerrillas that he was a supporter of the Smith regime? From what has been pieced together of what happened before Bradburne was shot, fierce arguments took place as to whether or not he should be killed. If guerrillas did shoot Bradburne, they would have been guided by what they were being told by influential locals: his death is likely to have less to do with race than with power.

Not only did Bradburne take sides with the marginalised and the struggle to help those with leprosy lead more human and fulfilling lives, but he (doggedly) defended the gains made to their quality of life as best he could in the face of growing opposition. His way of acting may not always have been the most tactful, but his commitment to the people he had grown to love was both deep and unswerving. If John Bradburne is to be heralded as a martyr, he is best seen as a martyr for justice, seeing past the fog of politics to the clarity of the human dignity of the people he had grown to love and whom he strove to uphold and defend.

Roger Riddell is a former Jesuit who worked in Zimbabwe as an economist until he was declared a prohibited immigrant by Ian Smith’s government. He is a former international director of Christian Aid.

A controversial new book by a British philosopher defends the right of trans people to live free of harassment and discrimination, but argues that emphasis on gender identity instead of biological sex carries a heavy burden for women / By **TINA BEATTIE**

Contested identities

WHEN THE Catholic Women's Council published an open letter to Pope Francis asking for the inclusion of sisters (*sorelle*) as well as brothers (*fratelli*) in the title of his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, a Catholic male gender activist in the US wrote a blog in which he accused the council of being Terfs – a derogatory term that stands for trans-exclusionary radical feminists – because the statement referred only to women and not to LGBTQI people. As Kathleen Stock points out in her book, *Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism*, this imposed inclusivity

is making it near impossible for feminists to focus on issues primarily affecting women and girls.

Stock is a professor of philosophy at the University of Sussex, but her book is intended for a general audience. It is heavy-going in places, mainly because she is careful with her analysis, arguing for a pragmatic, evidence-based approach which can respect trans rights without silencing feminist advocacy for women and girls. She has in her sights campaigns which call for the recognition of gender identity as a self-validating expression of an innate intuition or desire to be identified as

other than one's biological sex. In UK law currently, the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) protects the rights of those who have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) – trans women (males who have undergone a lengthy process of social and sometimes hormonal and surgical transitioning to identify as women), and trans men (ditto in reverse) – to be legally recognised as their acquired gender. Stonewall, the LGBTQI campaigning organisation, argues that the law should be reformed to allow trans people to change their gender identity without such a transitioning process.

In September 2020, after a public consultation, the Government decided not to change the GRA. Nevertheless, Stock demonstrates that many institutions, including universities, are capitulating to pressures and incentives to adopt self-definition as the sole criterion for recognition of a person's gender. This would mean that there could be no restrictions on access, participation or identification on the basis of biological sex. Women would have no way of challenging men who use female changing rooms, for example, because such men could claim that they are trans women.

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But there are, argues Stock, only two biological sexes, and no amount of hormonal or surgical treatment can change that. Intersex conditions resulting from disorders of sexual development (DSDs) are more rare than is often claimed and, while they can be confusing with regard to some sexual characteristics, they do not constitute an additional sex but chromosomal variations that are sometimes debilitating for the person involved.

Transitioning does not change the fact that males and females generally have different physical capacities and characteristics – men tend to be stronger than women, and there is a greater tendency to physical violence and aggressive behaviour among men than among women. The more people are categorised as male or female by their inner gender identity rather than their biological sex, the less reliable statistics and data become with regard to the demographics of sex and its implications for the shaping of social policy, health-care provision, access to public spaces, law etc. In a society in which women are statistically more vulnerable than men to sexual abuse and violence, to under-representation in many professions and institutions, and whose personal and social opportunities are profoundly influenced by their child-bearing capacities, the erasure of biological difference in favour of self-determined gender identity has dire implications. For example, there have already been cases of serious sexual assault by trans women in women's prisons, and such crimes are now often recorded as woman-on-woman violence.

PROFESSOR STOCK draws out the implications for women like herself, “a six-foot tall lesbian, working in a male-dominated academic discipline”. Homosexual people are not attracted to people with the same gender identity, but to people of the same sex. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of teenage girls claiming to be trans. Given that many of these are lesbian, Stock suggests that this might constitute the erasure of lesbian identity in favour of maintaining the heterosexual norm at all costs, even if it involves life-changing hormonal and surgical intervention. She also has concerns about the extent to which lesbian women are accused of being transphobic if they refuse to have sex with anatomical males who identify as trans women. Stock cites the example of Alex Drummond, a trans woman on the advisory board of Stonewall, who has a beard and has not undergone any physical transitioning, but describes herself as a lesbian because she is attracted to women and, she claims, “I draw out the inner lesbian in women”.

Stock wades into this minefield with philosophical rigour. Apart from a few rhetorical swipes, she is on the whole sensitive to the vulnerabilities and rights of trans people, who are, she argues, often used by campaigners with little regard for their own opinions and feelings. Her main argument is that knowledge requires conceptual categories, and the concepts of woman and man, girl and boy, are fundamental to our meaning-making



capacity from early childhood. To reject such categorisation on the basis of exceptions (not all women reproduce, some people are intersex, etc.) is not a viable proposition with regard to many other concepts, which retain their validity despite exceptions, so why in this case should the exceptions invalidate the concepts?

Gender theorist Judith Butler is the target of some of Stock's most trenchant criticisms. She is, writes Stock, “the Harry Potter of philosophy, transforming boring old truisms about the material world into something alchemical, shifting and sexily impermanent”. Butler's pioneering theory contends that all bodies are linguistically and culturally constructed and inscribed into oppressive gendered hierarchies: language produces sex as well as gender, which is performative and open to many interpretations. Butler insists that individuals are entitled to choose their own genders irrespective of any sexual characteristics. I am generally a fan of Butler, but Stock is a persuasive critic.

She points out how little evidence-based research there is around issues of transgender and gender dysphoria, and how blatantly some organisations manipulate the statistics to serve their well-funded campaigns. Stonewall comes in for repeated condemnation. The long-term effects of puberty-blockers administered to children and adolescents are not known, there are no reliable statistics for the incidence of transitioning or detransitioning, and such statistics as do exist are wildly misinterpreted and used for propaganda purposes. Stock suggests that the trans organisation Mermaids “weaponises false suicide statistics which may well frighten parents into acceding to social and medical transition”. These are strong claims, but she provides ample supporting evidence. The relationship between gender dysphoria and

Professor Kathleen Stock: ‘philosophical rigour’

high levels of autism, as well as eating disorders and other mental-health issues, has not been investigated. Again, girls are particularly vulnerable during the often traumatic challenges of puberty. Socially and sometimes surgically seeking to become male may seem to some a way to escape the realities of female commodification, sexual exploitation and objectification which are often experienced with the onset of adolescence.

Stock also challenges claims that transgender people are disproportionately victims of violence. In fact, the murder rate for transgender people is lower (at around one a year in the UK) than for the general population as a whole, and many such assaults and murders occur elsewhere when transgender people are working in high-risk areas such as the sex trade.

WHILE INSISTING that the rights of trans persons should be recognised and protected by law, Stock points out that much of the debate around trans rights is shaped by an elitist theoretical discourse with an obscure rhetoric (she cites references to “menstruators” rather than “women”). This disadvantages those for whom English is a second language. It also risks violating the religious scruples of those like Orthodox Jews and Muslims for whom segregation of the sexes is important.

Stock suggests that a way forward would be to differentiate more clearly between campaigning causes – feminism, lesbian and gay rights, trans rights. These might sometimes find common ground, but to lump them all together permanently is to lose sight of the vital differences which should shape their objectives and strategies. This calls for “inter-

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sectionality” as a way of analysing how different forms of social oppression intersect, not in the sense of identity politics (from which Stock dissociates herself), but in the sense of how prejudices and injustices around race, sex, religion etc. might converge to make some people disadvantaged in multiple ways.

One of Stock’s most interesting proposals is the idea of transsexuality as a legal fiction which can be positive when properly understood. While it is not scientifically possible to change one’s sex, there are cases where the law accepts certain fictions (for example, when a corporation has the legal status of a person). To allow trans persons to legally change their gender as a way of protecting their privacy and their rights is an acceptable fiction, Stock argues, provided there are exemptions in situations where sex is a significant factor. She also argues that individuals should have the right to engage with the fiction of transgender identities with regard to themselves and others. We can respect the wishes of our trans friends and colleagues by using their chosen genders. What Stock objects to is the censorial power of organisations like Stonewall to insist that we all must subscribe to this fiction in a way which stifles freedom of speech and inhibits important political debate and academic research. Inhabiting fictional worlds is essential to our imaginative lives, but however immersed we are in a play or a story, we remain aware



that it is not real. We are furious if somebody intrudes with an untimely reminder that the character we’re watching on stage is only acting, or the story we’re reading isn’t true, but we don’t entirely subsume our consciousness into the fiction. If a trans person inhabits a fictional sexual identity, they may become angry and distressed if somebody points out that it isn’t real: that calls for sensitivity, but it doesn’t mean we should all have to collude in denying the reality.

Stock’s act of resistance to Stonewall’s slogan “Trans women are women. Get over it!” takes considerable courage for an academic working in today’s febrile world of gender politics. When she was awarded an OBE for services to higher education and academic freedom in the New Year’s Honours List, over 600 of her colleagues, primarily in academic philosophy, signed an open letter of protest, suggesting she was personally responsible for “transphobic fearmongering”. She said earlier this year: “I’ve stopped attending philosophy conferences as I can’t cope with the ostracism and dirty looks. I walk around my own workplace at the University of Sussex with a sense of dread.”

HAVING WORKED in a university which proudly proclaimed itself a “Stonewall Diversity Champion”, I know the extent to which challenging this new gender orthodoxy is taboo. I share Stock’s concern about the appropriation of the idea of “woman” as an innate identity independent of the sexed body (she likens it to the lettering in a stick of rock), at a time when many of us are questioning what it means to be a woman in the context of the social conditioning and stereotypes imposed on us from birth. I also agree with her that a less polarised, more non-binary approach might help to defuse some of these confrontations, and this is where I bring in a theological perspective.

A casual aside in the chapter on fictional identities gave me food for thought: “During the Catholic Mass, for instance, some worshippers immerse themselves in the fiction of transubstantiation.” Could we think of transgender as in some sense analogical to transubstantiation – not capable of scientific

A 2020 Trans Lives Matter protest in Plymouth

proof, but constituting a real presence which is different from the material appearance? When I began teaching a theology course called “Understanding Gender” several years ago, my aim was to bring a more informed and nuanced perspective to these issues than official Church teaching offers, with its blanket condemnation of “gender ideology” and its romanticised fiction of the Theology of the Body. I still hold that position, but some gender theory is ideological, and I welcome the emergence of critical voices like Stock’s. However, gender fluidity is central to the language of Catholic ecclesiology and sacramentality, and I think we need to wrestle with these complex issues while resisting the ideological pressures from both sides. I use Pope John Paul II’s 1988 apostolic letter on the Dignity of Women – *Mulieris dignitatem* – to teach gender analysis, because there are at least six combinations of sex and gender in that document.

An understanding of the language of Catholic theology would have much to contribute to these debates, if it were not for the entrenched secularism of English-speaking intellectuals on the one side, and the entrenched obstinacy of the Catholic Magisterium on the other. The lack of any meaningful dialogue impoverishes both sides and leaves too many people in a wilderness of confusion and alienation, as they seek to make sense of their gendered roles and identities amid so many conflicting and competing ideologies. Stock’s book can, I believe, open up such a dialogue, offering as it does a thoughtful path through the conflicted intersections of (post)modern identities.

Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism by Kathleen Stock is published by Fleet at £16.99 (Tablet price £15.29).

Tina Beattie is professor emerita, School of Humanities at the University of Roehampton in London. She researches and writes on issues of Catholicism, gender, art, theology and psychoanalysis, and women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. Her novel *The Good Priest* was published in 2019.



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Ted's talents

IF THE NAME doesn't ring a bell, you have probably heard his voice. Ted Harrison is a former BBC religious affairs correspondent who at various times presented *Sunday* and *Does He Take Sugar?* on Radio 4. He's also a prolific and versatile writer; his two dozen books range from a scholarly study of stigmata to a chirpy guide to the cult of Elvis Presley.

Harrison has dabbled in cartoons since scribbling unflattering pictures of teachers at school, but over the past ten years, since he turned 60, he's thrown himself into art. He has produced some high-profile public works, including an installation in St Paul's Cathedral and memorials at Guy's and St Thomas's hospitals that honour organ donors. A couple of weeks ago, his first solo exhibition opened, and it's running till 20 June on Artsy (www.artsy.net/laura-igallery/artist/ted-harrison-b-1948).

Harrison, who divides his life between two places at opposite ends of the British Isles, both of which he calls home – Aberystwyth, Ceredigion and Unst, Shetland – sees his work as a form of visual theology. “I was keen to find ways to explore the mysteries of life that did not rely on language. I had come to realise



that when asking the big questions, human language, even religious language, seemed very inadequate.”

A launch was planned this week with Harrison discussing art and religion with his old friend Richard Coles. “I’ve known Richard for several years,” Harrison told us. “We collaborated on *Improbable Saints*, a light-hearted look at some holy legends: the unstoppable preacher who carried on talking after being beheaded – you know the sort of thing. Richard wrote the text and I did the illustrations.”

“HAVING BEEN a cleric for 46 years, I set out to de-clericalise myself,” Fr Tom Grufferty, a retired parish priest in the Diocese of Portsmouth and regular on our letters pages, writes. “Over the last few years I have discovered that clericalism is the greatest challenge of our time. Without us noticing, it has created an elite in which one group of people think and act as if they are better than others.”

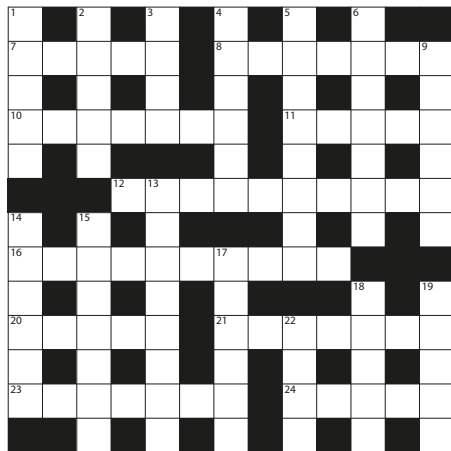
What follows is what Tom – the title “Father” was the first thing to go – describes as a “personal clerical detox”. Inspired by Pope Francis’s call “to strip myself of everything that separates me from the missionary mandate of the Gospel”, Tom next dropped the clerical collar “and all those garments that separate me from my fellow human beings”.

Most importantly, though, he began, as he puts it, “to walk with the laity”. Listening to the laity “is healing, is forgiving, and, above all, allows us to grow in the faith”.

Tom’s account of his “self de-clericalisation” is included in *Echoes of a Parish Priest* (available direct from the author at tomgrufferty1@gmail.com for £14.99). It is headed “Submitted to The Tablet in 2019 but not published”. The editor must have slept in the morning it arrived in his inbox.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 760 Enigma



Across

- 7 The Fife -----; piece of jewellery housed in Kensington Palace (5)
8 The 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* was in this language (7)
10 Puccini’s Christian name (7)
11 In this TV comedy travel documentary, Karl Pilkington was this abroad (5)
12 21 February 1804 saw the first ----- in Wales (5,5)
16 The Cassini Division is found inside Saturn’s ----- (5,5)
20 “Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden -----”; (*The Princess*; Tennyson) (5)

- 21 Their founder was Eugene de Mazenod (7)
23 Seminary for rabbis (7)
24 Girl’s name, from Greek word for peace (5)

Down

- 1 The whole world is this (Shakespeare) (5)
2 Annual holiday on 11 February celebrates the myth of this country’s foundation in 660 BC (5)
3 “----- nome”, aria from *Rigoletto* (4)
4 Traditional ceremonial drink, made from kava roots in the Fiji Islands (6)
5 *Caveat emptor* is an example of one (5,3)
6 World’s smallest country (7)

- 9 The term “----- chain” was first coined by scientist Geoffrey Milne in relation to soil (6)
13 Spice coming from the root of the *curcuma longa* plant (8)
14 Borough on the English Riviera, it has the same name as a suburb of Auckland (6)
15 Nietzsche was one (7)
17 On maps, it links points having the same barometric pressure (6)
18 *Lutra lutra* is better known as this (5)
19 Germany’s Folkwang University of the Arts is located here (5)
22 Christian name of Superman’s girlfriend (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 12 June, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Jesus, Christian Art and Catholicism – from the OUP’s Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. ■ We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.

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

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

Solution to the 22 May puzzle

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

Solution to the 22 May crossword No. 757

Across: 7 Back us; 8 Empire; 10 Iron man; 11 Inane; 12 Tens; 13 Amend; 17 Pious; 18 Amok; 22 Omits; 23 Elapsed; 24 Garter; 25 Finance.

Down: 1 Obviate; 2 Account; 3 Duomo; 4 Ambient; 5 Milan; 6 Meter; 9 Enamoured; 14 Minster; 15 Amusing; 16 Skidded; 19 Lodge; 20 Litre; 21 Nadir.

LETTERS

• THE EDITOR OF THE TABLET •

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

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

Is he a Catholic?

● Your editorial (“Now let Boris embrace Catholic Social Teaching”, 5 June) is based on the assumption that Johnson is a Catholic. He was certainly baptised into the Catholic Church as an infant. But there is no evidence that he ever endorsed these vows when he reached an age when he could consent, or made his first Communion. Indeed, he repudiated his Catholicism when he was confirmed into the Anglican faith. You meekly accepted the word of a proven dissembler that this was “doing what was expected of him”.

It is hard to sustain that a lucky infant Baptism grants membership of the Catholic Church without any further input from Mr Johnson. So, welcome the happy Mr and Mrs Johnson, but not “congratulations without reservation”.

JAMES HANLON
WIRRAL, MERSEYSIDE

● The marriage of our prime minister at Westminster Cathedral indicates that he has returned to the Catholic faith after his Baptism.

When *The King and the Catholics*, my study of Catholic emancipation, was published in 2018, I added a footnote to the effect that the UK had not yet had a Catholic prime minister (Tony Blair announced his conversion after he left office). This footnote needs amending.

It is also worth mentioning that the US now has a Catholic president again. So both the US and the UK have elected Catholic leaders. Henry VIII's mighty body must be turning in its grave at Windsor.

(LADY) ANTONIA FRASER
LONDON W8

Logical puzzle

● Like many, I was puzzled and dismayed that Johnson and Symonds were able to marry in Westminster Cathedral. There seems even in the Church to be one law for the establishment and one for the rest.

For 13 years I was chief executive of Marriage Care

♦ TOPIC OF THE WEEK ♦

Don't put laws before people

JESUS WAS invariably welcoming, forgiving and generous to those whose messy, complicated lives put them at odds with religious laws. He saved his condemnation for religious leaders when they acted as if those laws were more important than people. He described all this as hypocrisy: a kind of falsehood in which cruelty and abuse of power were justified in God's name.

I pray that Boris Johnson's third marriage may receive every blessing, and may be a strong step in the journey of faith and fidelity for him and his new wife. I am pleased that the Church was able to support them in this sacrament and I am sure that every aspect of canon law was properly met. Unfortunately, even if it was the right thing to do, celebrating the wedding is a disaster for the Church and for proclaiming the Good News.

I cannot think of any clearer example of religious authorities straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel than insisting on Mr Johnson's right to access the sacrament of marriage while denying it to so many others. Surely, we cannot continue to deny the sacraments, and cause so much harm, to so many whose lives are not neatly aligned with canon law, but seem far less messy, and compromised, and far more faithful to the Gospel, than Mr Johnson's appears to have been?

And while we work to address this scandalous hypocrisy in our Church, we

should also look at all the other ways in which we elevate clerical and canonical power and rules above the love of God and service of our neighbours.

We will soon be returning in person to a liturgy that elevates adherence to the letter of the Roman text and rubric far above the needs of a hungry people of God, longing to be fed. We elevate the rules of celibacy and male hierarchy above the urgent call to preach the Good News and shepherd God's people.

This wedding has cast hard light on us, as have so many awful things that have been revealed in recent years. I hope, at last, that we will start listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Second Vatican Council and have the courage to live up to our calling.

CHRISTOPHER CURTIS
SOUTHAMPTON

I CARE NOT a whit where or whom the prime minister chooses to marry. However, I do care about how many thousands of erstwhile good Catholics or their spouses have turned away from the Church or are denied the sacraments because some priest or canon lawyer has not considered whether any previous extra-ecclesial union was “of the proper canonical form” or not.

I suppose the great thing about canon law is at least it's flexible!

JUDITH BRIDGMAN
MISERDEN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

(formerly CMAC) and I would not be able to count the number of distressing telephone conversations that I had with active, committed and divorced Catholics who wanted to marry again in the Church. Inevitably I had to tell them that it wouldn't be possible.

Nobody gets married with the intention of divorcing, but lots of relationships break down. It isn't surprising, since all of us who fall in love are under the influence of a Class A drug called Romance. Very few are able in these circumstances to make a rational choice but, again, choices are made in good faith and then many are left to suffer the consequences.

Of course, the logic of the Church's position as it is set

out is impeccable – it's just that it is absurd.

TERRY PRENDERGAST
HAREFIELD, MIDDLESEX

Eastern right

● Recognising the natural goodness of marriage, Christ made marriage between baptised persons a sacrament. Lest that sacramentality be seen just as an “add-on” to the natural contract, the Western Church insists that “a matrimonial contract cannot validly exist between baptised persons unless it is also a sacrament by that fact” (can. 1055, section 2).

Contract and sacrament are inseparable. The parties to the contract are the ministers of the

sacrament – the priest the Church's official witness.

Baptised persons, once married sacramentally, cannot enter into further valid but non-sacramental marriages.

This is not a problem with Eastern Orthodoxy. There, the priest is the minister of the sacrament; his blessing confers sacramentality on the union. By withholding that blessing in second and third marriages, which are nonetheless recognised as contractually valid, these Churches are able to deal sensitively with partners of failed marriages.

Eastern practice may well answer the question posed by Ladislav Orsy, and implicitly by your correspondents (June 5): “What is the right balance

LETTERS

between protecting the institution and respecting the person?"

BASIL LOFTUS

HELMSDALE, SUTHERLAND

Cardinal error

● I enjoyed Melanie McDonagh's column (Notebook, 5 June). She misrepresented my argument though. I had suggested that the pastoral effect of the prime minister's Catholic marriage was a declaration by the cardinal and the Archdiocese of Westminster that they had never considered the mother of some of his children, or his first wife, ever to have been married to him. McDonagh argues that they did not "say" this. But the cardinal and his archdiocesan trustees are accountable for the cathedral and all that happens there, and so remain entirely responsible for recent events.

I was not questioning the canon law position, which is clear. I do regret though the cruel consequences, and dilution of mercy, that emerge from it where the Church arrogantly discounts relationships. There is nothing "silly" about that. Only those trapped deep in a self-referential Catholic bubble are blind to the anguish and hypocrisy the Church's current position sustains.

(PROF.) FRANCIS DAVIS
BIRMINGHAM

Catholic anger

● We've never known such widespread and angry feelings from fellow Catholics about any recent news item involving our Church as their response to Boris Johnson being granted the sacrament of marriage in Westminster Cathedral.

It may well be that his selfish, adulterous behaviour has been "priced in" by the electorate, but for Catholic parents whose lovely LGBT family members are denied even the comfort of a blessing this sticks in the throat like nothing else.

We tried to explain to our own children the canon law basis on which this service was permitted. Their response? "It still stinks."

ANTHONY AND VALERIE McNAMARA

WHALLEY, LANCASHIRE

Canonical game

● If the only marriage that "counts" is in a Catholic church, then clearly if you have any sense you will get your ducks in a row and save your Catholic marriage till last. Such are the strange consequences of narrow legalistic thinking.

The argument that our prime minister should have access to the sacraments because they are not a prize for good behaviour is compelling. But access should also be there for the significant numbers of Catholics who are acting in good faith, even

though they may be struggling with difficult marital situations and choices, and even if (heaven forbid) they have fallen foul of the laws of the canonical game.

ANDREA KELLY
LONDON N1

Our mistake?

● During the 17 years we spent facilitating the pre-marriage courses at Westminster Cathedral, we worked with at least 12 different cathedral chaplains, and must have helped prepare several hundred couples. Throughout this time we stressed the nature of Christian marriage as a freely made lifelong exclusive commitment entered into in a sacrament which the partners conferred on one another and expressed in vows recognised by the Church.

Should we perhaps have spent less time focusing on this and more on discussing the details of canon law?

ROSY AND MARTYN BAKER
LONDON SW10

Political stunt

● Boris Johnson had made it publicly known that he intended getting married next year. Then, three days after the Cummings revelations, Westminster Cathedral is suddenly cleared to enable an unannounced wedding to take place.

This smells like a political stunt on the part of Johnson,

and the cathedral authorities owe us an explanation.

ALAN PAVELIN
CHISLEHURST, KENT

Is nothing sacred?

● Further to the letters from Hilary Horn (29 May) and Antony Sisley (5 June), I didn't know whether the "Ave Maria" in the Warburton's ad was by Schubert or Bach/Gounod, but I knew it to be a precious and powerful prayer. So I wrote to Warburton's head office, explained the meaning and value of the "Hail Mary", told them I was sure that they hadn't intended to upset people and would never have used it if they had realised what it was, and blessed their business and staff.

In her reply, Warburton's representative sounded startled, remorseful and grateful. She said that the management would be talking to its marketing team. Let's pray for the Warburton's team that the Holy Spirit will water the seed that has been planted in their minds and hearts so that they too can say, "My soul glorifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Meanwhile, whilst it's still being broadcast, let's turn it to good: when we hear it ringing out over Mary's Dowry, let's stop and actually pray it for everyone listening.

ANGELA JORDAN
NEWBURY, BERKSHIRE

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.

ST RICHARD OF CHICHESTER (1197-1253)

Another very treacherous temptation is a feeling of security that we shall never relapse into our former faults or care for worldly pleasures again. We say to ourselves: "Now I know what the world is, that all it contains passes away, and I care

more for divine things."

This temptation is the most dangerous of all, especially at the beginning of the religious life. Such souls, feeling safe, do not avoid customary occasions of sin which they enter blindfold, and God grant they may not fall lower than ever before, and that they may rise again. This the demon, seeing the harm they may do him and the good they may do their neighbour, will use every means in his power to prevent.

What, O eternal Father, can we do, except have recourse to thee and beg thee not to permit our enemies to lead us into temptation? You will be freed more quickly from



temptation if you are near our Lord than if you were far off. Beg and entreat this freedom of Him, as you do every day in the Paternoster.

ST TERESA OF AVILA

FROM *LIVING WATER: DAILY READINGS WITH ST TERESA OF AVILA*, EDITED BY SISTER MARY ODC (DARTON, LONGMAN & TODD, 1986)

Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival.

MAX WARREN (1904-1977)

CALENDAR

Sunday 13 June:
Eleventh Sunday of the Year (Year B)

Monday 14 June:

Feria

Tuesday 15 June:

Feria

Wednesday 16 June:

Feria or St Richard of Chichester, Bishop

Thursday 17 June:

Feria

Friday 18 June:

Feria

Saturday 19 June:

Feria or St Romuald, Abbot

Sunday 20 June:

Twelfth Sunday of the Year

♦ ♦ ♦

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

The Pentecost Readers' Appeal

We all have an image in our mind of the intern – slightly bumbling, fetching coffee, making photocopies, and living on sandwich money. When, after a year of life at home, in the middle of the pandemic, I learnt I had been accepted as the Newman Intern for 2021 I was delighted, but I didn't know what to expect. What I've experienced over the past 6 months is one of the best and most thorough apprenticeships in journalism out there.

From day one I was given responsibility and treated as a colleague, whilst at the same time being given invaluable advice and guidance. I've written dozens of news stories, reviewed books, written leaders, commissioned opinion pieces, conducted interviews, chaired one of the events at the Spring Festival, and helped launch *The Tablet's* new youth-focused quarterly *Inspire*. Even more remarkably I was allowed and helped to do all this while working remotely, having only arrived in London to work in person last week.

I've been given this opportunity thanks to the generosity of the readers who have donated to our development fund. I'm grateful to the unique culture of *The Tablet*. Serious-minded but idealistic: you immediately know you've entered a Catholic organisation, one motivated by the best parts of Vatican II. For all the lessons that I've learned since starting my internship, perhaps the most significant has been the importance of generosity: journalism as a vocation in service of the truth, offered as a gift to the world.

Sebastian Milbank

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- ☐ Please send me a standing order form
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The Tablet from Scotland • MARCUS TANNER is an author and a senior editor at Balkan Insight • SEÁN HEWITT is a poet, lecturer and literary critic

Covid superheroes

A disparate group of Americans anticipated coronavirus, but nobody listened

CHRISTOPHER BRAY

The Premonition: A Pandemic Story

MICHAEL LEWIS
(ALLEN LANE, 320 PP, £25)

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MICHAEL LEWIS is one of the best storytellers around. He writes the kind of events-fuelled tales too many post-Jamesian novelists self-consciously eschew. Three of Lewis' books (*The Blind Side*, *Moneyball*, and *The Big Short*) became hit movies, and I have a feeling that his latest, *The Premonition*, is already being cast.

The book is subtitled *A Pandemic Story*, but it's not really about America's chaotic response to the Covid crisis. Most of the action takes place before the virus hit. The fact is, Lewis makes clear, the US (which in 2019 came first in a Global Health Security Index ranking of countries' preparedness for a global pandemic; Britain, incidentally, came second) had a plan for dealing with just such a crisis. The trouble was, nobody with clout dared instigate it. Enter Lewis' superheroes.

The Premonition is basically about a bunch of experts who were ignored by a bunch of know-nothings. The star of the show is Dr Charity Dean, a Californian health official whom we first meet as she's removing a lung from a suspected TB victim's corpse with a pair of garden shears. Held back from promotion because of "an optics problem" – she was "too young, too blonde, too Barbie", an unnamed source tells Lewis – Charity has to fight through and off political shenanigans and chicanery to "grab hold of an entire state and turn it into an example that might lead the nation".

Next comes Laura Glass, an eighth-grader who in the course of a science project worked out that you can stop an epidemic in its tracks by closing down schools. Yes, really. Then there's Joe DeRisi, a biochemist who, having built a chip containing all the world's known viruses, soon finds himself in a US Navy bunker surrounded by what he calls this "cool ... Tom Clancy shit". And let's not forget *soi-disant* "redneck epidemiologist" Carter Mecher, who very early on read the Covid runes. On 23 January 2020, after a night spent spreadsheeting the numbers of cases and corpses that were coming out of Wuhan, Mecher declared that "we are already far behind the curve". By the next month he was



comparing the situation to a heart attack – except that instead of "time = tissue", "time = transmission".

Time for the White House to listen up? Not a bit of it. A couple of days after Mecher's prediction, President Trump declared that a mere 15 Americans were infected and that "one day – it's like a miracle – it will disappear". As *The Premonition* went to press, that miracle had left America, which makes up around four per cent of the global population, with 20 per cent of the world's deaths from Covid. One of Lewis' interviewees compares the US health system with that of Communist-era Poland and calls the country "a failed state". (The UK's record, incidentally, is slightly worse ...)

NOT THAT *The Premonition* is a fiesta of Republican-bashing. To be sure, Trump made things worse. But if, like me, you're given to dismissing Dubya as a dunce, Lewis will make you think again. The second President Bush is one of *The Premonition's* minor heroes. He it was who, after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina (and a reading of John Barry's account of the 1918 flu pandemic, *The Great Influenza*), ordered a strategy for dealing with the next crisis. "We need," he said, "a whole-of-society plan. What are you going to do about foreign borders? And travel? And commerce?" Alas, once Dubya departed office, the Obama team junked the resultant plan.

Still and all. It should be pointed out that none of Lewis' visionaries was saying anything

startling. The idea that when a lurgy comes to town the government locks down the populace, quarantines anyone who's been away and instigates a system of track and trace to keep tabs on those with the disease and those who've had contact with them, has been around since the Middle Ages. Given Trump's wilful ignorance, you can't help but laugh when someone describes him as a "comorbidity" of the pandemic.

But Covid's main victim, Lewis argues, has been the neoliberal settlement of the past 40 years. Publicising his last book, *The Fifth Risk* (2018), Lewis joshed that it would take a pandemic to shake Americans out of their post-Reaganite distrust of bureaucracy. Certainly, the early days of the Biden administration suggest that big government has returned to America. And there can be no doubt that here in the UK the idea of state intervention is back with a bang. Boris Johnson's Tories are hosing public money at problems they would until recently have claimed were caused by *too much* government.

The trouble with *The Premonition* is that Lewis' thrillerish style, his *High Noon* faith in maverick loners taking on the powers that be, is itself the stuff of right-wing fantasy. Everybody loves knockabout tales of good and evil, but serious stories make clear that the world is more complicated than white-hatted heroes and black-hatted villains. Michael Lewis is to be applauded for having so quickly written a page-turning account of the Covid-19 disaster. But it would take a Dickens or Tolstoy to help us grasp what's really been going on.

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PHOTO: JIM WILEMAN/ALAMY



Respect for the elderly is key to Kate Mosse's family story

With all due respect

SUE GAISFORD

An Extra Pair of Hands: A Story of Caring, Ageing & Everyday Acts of Love

KATE MOSSE

(PROFILE BOOKS, 192 PP, £12.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69 • TEL 020 7799 4064

MY MOTHER, twice widowed, spent the last year of her life in our house, at the very heart of our large family. She came reluctantly, because the hospital had forbidden her to go back to living alone, and on the strict understanding that it was a temporary arrangement. She had cared for her own old parents and she was determined, as were so many of her generation, not to be “a burden”. In the event, for all of us, it proved to be the very best and happiest year of our lives.

My husband bought her an electric bed, which could sit her up, or raise her feet, or both. It had a 25-year guarantee but luckily, he told her, we could extend that. In the mornings, the old dog would potter affectionately into her room and lean on the controls, until the whole thing virtually jackknifed, to her huge amusement. Largely surviving on her chosen diet of chocolate, grapes and an evening tot of whisky, she told us we'd never get rid of her as she was having far too much fun. We never wanted to. Her grandchildren still vividly remember and frequently quote her with tremendous affection.

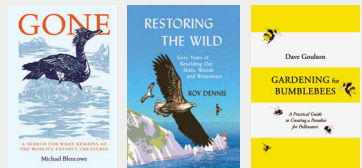
Kate Mosse knows all about this kind of thing. She moved her elderly parents into an annexe of her house in West Sussex, where they were able to retain their independence while still being within reach of help, particularly as her father's Parkinson's disease developed. Eventually her mother-in-law moved into her home as well. This mighty

little book describes, with powerful and moving immediacy, how simultaneously wonderful and challenging such arrangements can be. It moves swiftly, sometimes seeming like notes from a weary late-night diary, sometimes like a fully reasoned and furious protest at the government's gross incompetence and indifference to the real heroism of shockingly undervalued carers, especially during their grim mismanagement of the pandemic.

But most of all, it makes a compelling case for the tremendous importance of respect. Respect for carers, certainly, but also for the individuals who are forced, by age or infirmity, to accept such care. Too often, she says, old age is seen as a problem, rather than a cause for celebration. She loves the fact that, because of their proximity, she was able to get to know her parents as adults, as the people they were before they had children. She learned to give them all the time and autonomy they needed, and was rewarded a hundredfold. By lovingly detailing their lives and characters, she draws her readers into an intimate affection for them so that, in their successive deaths, although of course we do not fully share it, we really do understand the pain of her bereavement, and her sense of being abandoned. Grief, as she says, is both universal and utterly particular.

The happy footnote to all this is that Granny Rosie, Kate Mosse's mother-in-law and a woman with enough energy to power the Royal Albert Hall, is still alive, still living with the family and still providing them with laughs aplenty. Ancient and disabled she may be, but her spirit seems indomitable. It is a joy to read about her hammering out old songs on her portable keyboard during the “Clap for carers”, thus creating impromptu street parties; or yodelling along to “The Lonely Goatherd” with an old friend in the kitchen; or taking on every imaginable knitting challenge, from a Nativity scene to a woollen duck pond, with ducks. Long may she flourish.

SPEED READING



BRIAN MORTON

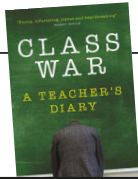
on creatures lost and found

Gone. It's a braver word than “extinct”, which can seem as squeamishly euphemistic as a Victorian headstone. The truth is that the animal species we have denied an existence are simply not there any more. Except they can have some continued, slightly macabre presence. Michael Blencowe's *Gone* (Leaping Hare Press, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.09) is an account of his search for the stuffed, dried, boxed remains of such once-glorious creatures as the great auk, the upland moa, Steller's sea cow and Schomburgk's deer. (Note: we preserve the name of the naturalists who first identified them, rather than naming-and-shaming the individuals who tipped them into gone-ness.)

Blencowe's story is sardonically, sometimes lightheartedly told, but there is no mistaking the anger and sorrow behind it. Fortunately, it isn't all gloom. All over the world, dedicated naturalists are easing precious species back from the edge. Roy Dennis' *Restoring The Wild* (William Collins, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.09) describes six decades' dedicated work, reintroducing white-tailed sea eagles and ospreys, red kites and goldeneyes, cranes and bustards to locations in the UK and beyond which have been denied heart-lifting sight of them for decades. And his work has extended to the four-footed as well: wolf, lynx, traditional cattle and elk.

As his patiently detailed memoir shows, such work depends on a highly complex and sometimes precarious dynamic of mutual assistance, resistance, re-education and sometimes unabashed hype. It would be easy to read and admire Dennis, thinking that only a pro can achieve much. Welcome Dave Goulson's beautifully presented and illustrated *Gardening for Bumblebees* (Square Peg, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29) which will tell you how to save the world. Literally. One penstemon at a time.

BOOKS



RECENTLY PUBLISHED **Class War** / BITEBACK, £16.99; TABLET PRICE £15.29 / An anonymous teacher working in a state secondary school takes us inside the classroom to see a system on its knees

Long-buried anger

MARCUS TANNER

My Phantoms

GWENDOLINE RILEY
(GRANTA, 208 PP, £12.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69 • TEL 020 7799 4064

HOW EXCRUCIATING can a mother-daughter relationship be? Try this one: Bridget, “Bridge”, is youngish, partnered, employed, childless – there’s a hint there – and living in London. Her mother Helen, “Hen”, is twice divorced, a pensioner, flitting from one unsuitable home in the south to another up north.

Hen fills the threatening silence of a life

shorn of responsibility with group walks, the wine club, gallery openings, travel and supposedly hilarious jaunts with her gay hanger-on friend. Unfulfilled by any of this, she invests too much emotional energy in frustrating annual meet-ups in a London restaurant with her daughter, where the two of them struggle to communicate.

These meals are the scenes of some undeclared, unexplained war. Hen valiantly deploys her ceaseless chatter and tales of derring-do with her gay pal. Bridge, with deadlier effect, deploys the heavy weaponry of her enigmatic silence, sphinx-like smile and her contented relationship – from which she has pointedly and ruthlessly excluded her mother. You know who’s going to emerge the victor. Hen is a fluttering moth, waiting to be squashed – and so, in the end, she is.

In a recent BBC Radio 4 interview, Riley was described as a miniaturist, a term she did not object to. Her books – this is her sixth – are certainly short and laser-focused, without a word wasted. She recently said they are best read in one sitting.

She doesn’t do plots, either, preferring to set a scene and then fill it in. She also withholds. She does not make it clear why Bridge keeps her mother on such a short leash, why she won’t let her into her home, or allow her to meet her partner, why they only meet up once a year for these unsatisfactory, ritualised encounters in a restaurant. There’s some long-buried anger here, but we don’t get to the bottom of it.

Some claim to detect an element of dark humour in Riley’s books. It’s completely escaped me. I finished this one appalled and curious. I can’t wait for the next.



A loss for words

SEÁN HEWITT

Notes on Grief

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE
(FOURTH ESTATE, 96 PP, £10)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £9 • TEL 020 7799 4064

ON THE cover of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Notes on Grief*, we see an image familiar to many of us who have spent the past year or more working from home, communicating with family and friends through the screen of a computer. In the image, a woman sits staring into her laptop, her face covered by her hands. From the opening page, we learn that the woman in the image must be the writer herself: her pose into the laptop signifying the acutely distressing way in which she learned of the death of her beloved father.

Expanded from an essay published in *The New Yorker* in September of last year, *Notes on Grief* is a book written from the raw state of loss, valuable in its testimony and its lack of ornament. Adichie’s essay is remarkable for the way it plunges straight into its subject, and explores the various ways in which the writer is “undone”. Its brevity, each chapter spanning only a few pages, gives the reader a sense of the spiralling, unanchored world of the mourner.

Snapshots of Zoom conversations punctuate the book, and in the background is the incompetence of government communications, the inept handling of the pandemic, both nationally and internationally, adding to the confusion and pain of



PHOTO: JEFF MORGAN/ALAMY

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

losing a loved one. Alongside the agony of loss, the family also has to contend with restrictions on airports, funerals and wakes. The result is that “all of us [are] weeping and weeping, in different parts of the world”. Both a testament to grieving in the pandemic, and a more timeless testament to grief itself, Adichie’s essay is a straight-spoken report from a person in the midst of various isolations which complicate and compound one another.

The strange faiths of people are uncovered with tender precision throughout, as where Adichie reflects on her family’s shock, suggesting that “perhaps we also unreasonably thought that his goodness, his being so decent, would keep him with us”. Likewise,

Adichie’s mother’s incredulity that her husband would have died without telling her first is incredibly moving.

Perhaps the most heart-rending passage in *Notes on Grief*, however, is in Adichie’s exploration of the word “like”. Alongside loving her father, she tells us, she also *liked* him. The miraculous emphasis on the word throughout is wonderful, and draws out the power of that simple verb. “I liked his luminous, moderate faith”; “I liked that his response to power was to shrug”; “I liked to call him ‘a gentle man and a gentleman.’”

Adichie is never self-pitying, but rather ruthless in her excavation of the contradictions of grief. “I am unprepared for my wretched, roaring rage. In the face of this inferno that is sorrow, I am callow and unformed.” Unafraid of this anger and rage, the book doesn’t seek to comfort, but to articulate. Paradoxically, it is this that makes it comforting. Adichie is most moving when she considers the inadequacies of language, and just how much our experience of grief isolates us into a pre-verbal, often irrational world. “You learn how much of grief is about language, the failure of language and grasping for language.” How lucky, then, that in this book Adichie has given us that language, that way of identifying some commonality in an experience that is, as with all our deepest emotions, both unique and universal.

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THE
TABLET
SINCE 1840

Hail Mare

HBO's new Pennsylvania-set crime drama is a masterpiece of Catholic writing in the tradition of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, writes **Mark Lawson**

PHOTO: © 2021 HOME BOX OFFICE, INC



TV'S LATEST standout heroine – predicted to win multiple awards for Kate Winslet, who plays her – is often misidentified. When TV announcers began to say the name on Sky Atlantic in the UK and HBO in the US (where demand for the final episode crashed the broadcaster's website), many viewers probably envisaged a political drama, a small-town version of *The West Wing* perhaps, called "Mayor of Easttown". In fact, it's *Mare of Easttown*, with Winslet as Mare Sheehan, a detective sergeant in Pennsylvania, investigating disappearances and a murder of young women.

Even in the community, strangers still sometimes mishear the cop as "Mary", rather than the Irish version of the name with which she was baptised. The writer, Brad Ingelsby, a movie screenwriter (*Run All Night*, *American Woman*) whose first TV series this is, has said that the soundalike with "mayor" was accidental – some viewers have seen it as an in-joke about Mare's desire to control her community – but

the shadow of the name "Mary" (including its highest Catholic rank) feels clearly deliberate.

D.S. Sheehan is a church-going member of a large working-class Irish-American Catholic family; her cousin, Father Dan Hastings, is parish priest of St Michael's, Easttown. In an interview with Ben Dowell for *The Times*, Ingelsby revealed that the non-police aspects of the story draw closely on his own Pennsylvania family background; his father got up at 6 a.m. each day to attend Mass before work, and, like Mare, he had a priest-uncle.

During that conversation, Ingelsby told Dowell "Catholicism was such a big part of my life growing up" and a common consequence of exposure to its doctrines encouraged him towards psychological and crime stories: "The Catholic guilt thing ... there's so much of it that goes into everything. I write without even knowing it."

Mare feels guilty about many things: the death of a son (its circumstances slowly revealed); a failed marriage; the dysfunctional

Kate Winslet takes the lead in the gripping police procedural *Mare of Easttown*

relationship with her ex-husband; and the disappearance of a local girl that has been unsolved for a year as the story starts.

Winslet gives the most vocally, physically and emotionally detailed TV performance since Alec Guinness' 1979 portrayal of John le Carré's haunted spy George Smiley in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (currently being repeated on BBC Four/BBC iPlayer). Like Guinness, Winslet, in the hardest task of acting, conveys the intelligence and emotions (pain, love, hope, self-hatred) shifting behind a silent close-up.

There has been much coverage of the actress' attitude to her face and body. Rarely has a mid-life character looked so authentically exhausted, vanity-abandoning and falling-apart (Mare limps through the early episodes with an injured ankle). Winslet says she declined an offer from the director, Craig

Zobel, to edit out an unflattering profile showing a “bulgy bit” of flesh. She also asked for airbrushing to be removed from her image on the official series poster.

Those are very admirable rejections of industrial assumptions and pressures. But the greater achievement of the performance – and writing – is their portrait of a soul.

Negative aspects of Catholicism are referenced, as, journalistically, they should be: Father Dan’s curate, Deacon Mark, was moved from a parish where he was suspected of inappropriate sexual behaviour, and soon seems to have another dark secret in Easttown. However, across its seven episodes, the storyline is as shaped by Scripture and theology as Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* or novels by the American Midwest Catholic writer, J.F. Powers (1917-99), such as *Morte D’Urban* and *Wheat That Springeth Green*.

With a show that many will not yet have seen – as five-star reviews and word of mouth encourage viewers to catch up – it is vital to avoid plot spoiling. But the drama’s extraordinary final scenes – in which Mare finally understands what happened in the unsolved murder – starts with a sermon from Deacon Mark about what he sees as the real message of Christ’s teaching (a speech Pope Francis would be likely to applaud).

Ingelsby and Zobel knowingly mine Catholic iconography. Recurrent images of Mare and other characters cradling in extremis people they love invoke the *Pietà*, the tableau of Mary holding the Crucified Christ. Regardless of its actual soundtrack, *Mare of Easttown* is narratively and emotionally underscored by *Stabat Mater*, the thirteenth-century Latin hymn set across the centuries by composers including Vivaldi, Pergolesi, Dvorak and Sir James MacMillan. The opening stanza Anglicises along the lines: “At the Cross her station keeping / stood the mournful Mother weeping.”

Mare is mourning a son and, in the pivotal scene, another mother is separated from her boy. Remarkably, the closing image of the show even has Mare standing beside a length of wood that had a terrible significance in her child’s life.

Viewers who don’t spot these references still enjoy a sublime crime drama; for those who do, there is a wrenching extra level. This is also true of the political context. The fictional community of Easttown lies in Pennsylvania’s Delaware County and, as the name suggests, is situated close to the state of Delaware. It shares the river that christened both county and state, and another key waterway – the Brandywine.

The setting lends the series another powerful resonance. This northeastern blue-collar belt is the spiritual home and political power base of America’s 46th President. Joe Biden represented Delaware as a senator for 36 years, living in Wilmington, where Biden’s

first wife and their daughter and a son from his second marriage are all buried in the cemetery of St Joseph’s on the Brandywine.

Fiction sometimes mystically chimes with the times: the BBC drama *House of Cards*, about a post-Thatcher Tory party premiered in the week the prime minister resigned. With its driving themes of the neglecting of working-class America, the inner drive that cruel bereavement can bring, and the shaping power of Catholic faith, *Mare of Easttown* feels uncannily apposite to the Biden presidency.

A few weeks ago I wrote here about the defining Catholicism of Chief Superintendent Ted Hastings in *Line of Duty*. While I understand the suspicion that my viewing of TV drama is through Rome-coloured glasses, it really is the case – objectively and narratively – that the two most talked about dramas of 2021 feature investigators who are believing Catholics in a manner crucial to their character and actions.

Why should this be? One explanation is that Ted and Mare come from areas – Belfast/Pennsylvania-Delaware borders – where the faith has weight and consequence. But, during both shows, I also thought of the comment by Graham Greene, the high priest of modern Catholic writing, that the faith framework is helpful to fiction because “the stakes are so high”.

Greene, especially in *The End of the Affair* and *Brighton Rock*, was fascinated by the posthumous jeopardy of eternal damnation. But, in *Line of Duty* and *Mare of Easttown*, Catholicism operates as a ballast to the secular relativism of contemporary society, politics and policing. Both Mare and Ted believe in “justice” and “truth” as moral absolutes and are willing to destroy respectively a close friend’s family and their own career in pursuit of them. What Mare does to close the case is a perfect illustration of the legal maxim, “Let justice be done though the heavens fall”, although enacted, in this case, in respect of heaven.

More broadly, the ideal fictional investigator is in some sense priestly, even when not, like G.K. Chesterton’s Father Brown, literally so. George Smiley, as a classic scion of the English establishment, is notionally Anglican, but describes espionage as a “priesthood” and, estranged from his wife, is celibate. Both Mare and Ted are divorced. Great sleuths seem to tend towards the condition of holy loner.

The genre of “Catholic fiction” no longer has the meaning and coherence of when Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark and David Lodge were writing novels to which practice and theology were central. But the form has resurrected, unexpectedly, in peak-time TV crime drama. *Mare of Easttown* is a masterpiece of Catholic literature.

All episodes of Mare of Easttown are available on Sky Atlantic, Amazon Prime and Now TV.

RADIO

A direct line to pre-Christian culture

Getting to grips with Aramaic

D.J. TAYLOR

The Forum: Aramaic: an imperial language without an empire

BBC WORLD SERVICE

BRIDGET KENDALL’s first task in steering this symposium on a 3,000-year-old language (10 June) was, naturally, to encourage the members of her scholarly panel to speak some Aramaic. Professors Holger Gzella and Alison Salvesen and Dr Alinda Damsma duly obliged, with selections from various dialects spoken over the millennia – and the result was uncannily distinctive. A little like Arabic in some places, less like it in others, and on occasion almost seeming to reproduce the cadences of Tolkien-style Elvish.

Aramaic’s great days turned out to belong to the pre-Christian era, where it was the lingua franca of a vast swathe of the Middle East and beyond, and, on its eastern frontiers, getting as far as modern-day Afghanistan. Its 22-character alphabet not only gave it a welcome simplicity but made it useful for administrative purposes, and the conquering hordes who headed west to found the neo-Assyrian, Babylonian and Achaemenid empires ended up adopting it as their imperial language.

All this gave Aramaic an unprecedented geographical-cum-historical reach. Kendall’s team quoted a fifth-century BC divorce settlement; there are traces of it in *The Thousand and One Nights*. As for its connection to Scripture, Israelites borne off to Babylon after the fall of Solomon returned from their captivity to include elements of it in the Old Testament. The original Book of Daniel, for example, sticks to Aramaic in its folkloric early chapters – including its hero’s incarceration in the den of lions – while switching to Hebrew for the more “sacred” episodes that follow.

Eventually superannuated by Greek as the official language of the Middle East, after the triumphs of Alexander the Great, Aramaic survived as a widely spoken demotic. All that remains of it in the New Testament are what one of Kendall’s expert witnesses called “crumbs”, tiny fragments that obtrude into the Greek text, such as “talitha cumi”, the invocation with which Jesus resurrects the dead child in St Mark’s Gospel.

Come the fall of the Roman Empire, the language had largely metamorphosed into Syriac. Even then it had a profound influence on the preservation of ancient Greek texts. Somewhere between one to two million speakers remain in parts of south-eastern Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Very few “living” languages with a direct line to pre-Christian culture endure. You left Aramaic convinced that every effort should be made to help this one survive.

Winslet gives the most physically and emotionally detailed TV performance since Alec Guinness

MUSIC

Pop and personality

St Vincent's avant-pop, Rory Graham's follow-up and a classic collection

BRIAN MORTON

St. Vincent – *Daddy's Home*

LOMA VISTA

Rag'n'Bone Man – *Life by Misadventure*

COLOMBIA

Mose Allison – *The Complete*

Atlantic/Elektra Albums 1962–1983

STRAWBERRY



ANNIE CLARK was raised Catholic in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her roots are Irish and Jewish and there was a Unitarian influence after her parents divorced and remarried. She's known professionally as St. Vincent, and she has a reputation for edgy, clever avant-pop, a dramatic stage presentation that falls the right side of Lady Gaga, and a knowingness that always gives the impression that she's reviewing her own song.

Daddy's Home is her seventh album, a steady run of work since 2007's *Marry Me*, which included the wry New York wink of the single "Jesus Saves, I Spend". Clark's father did, indeed, come home last year, after a prison sentence for conspiracy and wire fraud, but the title tune doesn't exhaust all the references and influences, for she seems to be making a record that explicitly references her dad's record collection. She seems fascinated by

the effect of pop stardom on personality. Did David Bowie and his ilk actually turn into all those Ziggys and lads-insane? Was Elton John, who started out as a quiet, monochrome songsmith, really Captain Fantastic, or did he hurt inside like everyone else? On "The Melting Of The Sun", Clark provides a list of "confessional" artists and admits that she doesn't have anything similar to offer: "I never cried / To tell the truth, I lied". You wonder.

As with previous St. Vincent albums, the music is jangly, the "dance" tracks never truly danceable, the mood often dark, as when she slows up Sheena Easton's feminist-enraging hymn to domestic bliss, "Nine to Five", and turns it into the hook of "My Baby Wants A Baby". Clark likes to pose as the girl the local boys' mothers warn them about, but you sense it's her intelligence and tongue rather than her libido that they fear. Opening track "Pay

Your Way In Pain" confirms *Daddy's Home* as her best and most coherent work yet.

St. Vincent could probably afford a quieter, consolidating album at this stage. Not so Rory Graham who as Rag'n'Bone Man sold shelfloads of his debut *Human* four years ago, but left the distinct suspicion that he might be a one-trick-pony. His new album *Life By Misadventure* is, however, carefully positioned to head off any impression of *Human II*. It begins with surprisingly delicacy (he's a big lad and sings accordingly) and the tone throughout is emotionally wounded and vulnerable, perhaps the fall-out from selling a million copies of your debut. There's a rollicking crowd-pleaser in the old manner, "All You Ever Wanted", a duo with Pink ("Anywhere Away From Here") to rope in that demographic, but the chastened sophistication starts to flag over the span. There's a half-decent LP here, but at 14 songs it's overcooked and Graham starts to rely on belting his lyrics as he loses confidence in them.

Sustaining interest over one full-duration CD is an achievement. To grip you over six, all of them made more than forty years ago, is a signal achievement. Mose Allison is one of the great songwriters and *The Complete Atlantic/Elektra Albums 1962–1983* is an unalloyed joy from start to finish. Mose could give Rag'n'Bone Man lessons in world-weariness and vulnerability, but he also knew how to skewer both the clichés of blues singing, the banalities of commercial pop and the pretentious claptrap of liberals whose minds are on vacation but don't know how to shut up.

CINEMA

Forget me not

Moving study of a proud man sinking into dementia

ISABELLE GREY

The Father

DIRECTOR: FLORIAN ZELLER

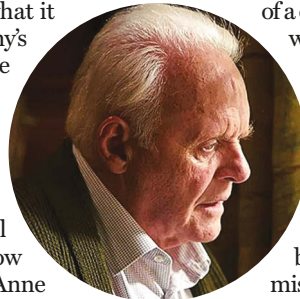
THE OPENING minutes of *The Father*, Florian Zeller's adaptation of his 2012 award-winning play *Le Père*, suggest several possible genres: family drama; a thriller in which eightysomething Anthony (Anthony Hopkins, inset) is being gaslit by his daughter Anne (Olivia Colman); horror; or even black comedy. But then something unexpected starts to happen.

Wasn't there a window in the kitchen? Has the layout of the hallway changed? Time, too, seems to be playing tricks. We the audience are caught off guard and risk losing our bearings amid the tiny disorientations that no one on screen seems to notice. But then so many bigger things are happening all at once that there's no time to work out what we might or might not have seen in the background. Maybe those anomalies weren't there after all.

"I'm just me in the situation that's changing around me," Hopkins says of shooting the film. "I let the set do the work." Writer-director Zeller, his co-writer Christopher Hampton and production designer Peter Francis have subtly and skilfully created an enclosed narrative space in which the audience becomes painfully aware of what it must be like to be inside Anthony's mind as he struggles to make sense of a world that threatens to overwhelm him.

Anthony inhabits an elegant London flat that he believes to be his home of many years, yet Anne and her husband Paul (Rufus Sewell) insist that he's now staying with them. But does Anne still have a husband? Isn't she divorced? And who is this other woman (Olivia Williams) who says she is Anne? Or are she and the man who seems to be Anne's husband care home staff? There is indeed "something funny going on" as what ought to be safe and familiar shifts alarmingly. The audience grows steadily more anxious without quite being able to put a finger on the source of confusion.

Hopkins deservedly won both Bafta and Academy Awards for his portrayal of a proud man sinking into dementia. The character of



Anthony, clearly a clever and combative personality before his decline, confronts his vulnerability with belligerence and suspicion, through which his daughter helplessly discerns his frustration, fear and ultimate despair.

Olivia Colman's movingly understated performance explores the emotional dilemmas

of a daughter-turned-carer for a father with whom she's always had a difficult relationship. She cancels a holiday after he drives away yet another person she's employed to look after him, but for how long can her own life be on hold? Enough of his old charm remains to believe that his behaviour could be deliberately mischievous, and his outbursts still have the power to wound her. Deciding on quite how far to make allowances for his illness requires a delicate balance between anger, self-preservation and compassion.

Zeller provides no ready answers. The film's power lies in the empathy he creates through the delicate yet relentless experience of becoming unmoored. Anthony's final need for childlike comfort and reassurance makes absolute sense.

The Father is in cinemas now.

NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

The Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), has reported that Catholic nuns are being raped and abused amid growing military brutality in the northern province of **Ethiopia's** Tigray region. A local source, who cannot be identified for security reasons, told ACN that the military were deliberately targeting the young and women, including nuns, in atrocities which the source said amounted to genocide.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto has again attacked the **Nigerian** government's inability to halt killings. Speaking at the 1 June funeral in Kaduna of a priest killed by gangsters, he said: "Those who govern us are allowing this killing of citizens ... because they have no blood in their hearts." Fr Alphonsus Yasshim Bello, 33, was murdered in Katsina on 21 May. Fr Joe Keke, 75, who was abducted the same night Fr Bello was killed, was released on 3 June after Bishop Kukah took personal charge of negotiations.

The Archbishop of Lagos, Alfred Adewale Martins, last month urged the federal government to declare a state of emergency in Nigeria due to "looming anarchy" and said the government of Muhammadu Buhari had failed "at all levels" to address the root causes behind increasing insecurity.

Muslim communities in the eastern Machinga district of **Malawi** have given Mpiri Catholic parish a 21-day ultimatum, demanding that the Church vacate the "Muslim territory" after a decision by public schools – including Catholic schools – to ban female students from attending school in a hijab.

Muslims in Machinga, which is one of two majority-Muslim districts in the country, are reported to have sent a letter – seen by the *Nyasa Times* – warning that they will use "whatever means" to force the Church to move its parish from the area. The general secretary of the Catholic bishops' conference, Fr Henry Saindi, has called for calm and referred the issue to Malawi's Public Affairs Committee.

PHOTO: ALAMY/EFE, JORGE TORRES



In the lead-up to presidential elections in **Nicaragua** in November, President Daniel Ortega, who is seeking a third consecutive term, has cracked down on opposition leaders. Cristiana Chamorro (pictured), a leading opponent as Ortega, is under house arrest. Another candidate, Arturo Cruz, was also detained this week. Nicaraguan clergy have denounced the repression.

The US Archdiocese of **Milwaukee** has refused a request from the Wisconsin Attorney General to turn over documents related to clergy sex abuse of minors. It contends that the documents were sealed as part of its 2012 bankruptcy settlement. Wisconsin is one of 22 US states to have begun investigations into clergy sex abuse.

The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported that the number of permanent deacons in the **United States** continues to decline: 410 deacons retired from active ministry in 2020 and an additional 378 died, compared to 587 who were ordained. There are 14,722 deacons in active ministry.

The Archdiocese of Seoul, in **South Korea**, has sent US\$1 million to the Vatican to promote equal access to Covid-19 vaccines for poor countries and communities. Funds were raised by 234 parishes and Catholic organisations.

Speaking at the end of the **Ugandan Martyrs** Mass at the Shrine of Namugongo on 3 June, Bishop Joseph Anthony Zziwa of Kiyinda-Mityana, president of the bishops'

conference, urged the 500 attendees to pray for the country in the face of "murders, land conflicts, corruption and torture" and the detention of political prisoners. Charles Lwanga, one of 22 Catholic Ugandan martyrs, is the patron of youth and Catholic action in most of tropical Africa. He protected his fellow pages, aged 13 to 30, from the sexual advances of the Bagandan ruler, Mwanga. For refusing to submit to Mwanga's demands and for his efforts to protect his friends, he was slowly burned to death at Namugongo on 3 June 1886.



The Lahore High Court in **Pakistan** acquitted a Christian couple last week of allegations of blasphemy. Shafqat Emmanuel, who is disabled and in poor health, and his wife, Shagufta Kausar (pictured), have been held in separate prisons since 2014 after being convicted of sending text messages insulting Muhammad. Both pleaded innocence, pointing out that they are illiterate. Saif ul-Malook, the Muslim lawyer who defended them and who overturned the blasphemy conviction of Asia Bibi, has appealed to the international community to help him relocate to an English-speaking country, saying: "I can't survive any more in my country."

Coptic Christians and Muslims in **Egypt** have joined a week of Covid-restricted festivities at the Marian monastery of Jabal al Tayr, in the Coptic Orthodox diocese of Samalut, a site the Holy Family are said to have visited during their exile in Egypt. According to tradition, they settled in the cave incorporated into the ancient church.

Seven Catholic churches across Hong Kong held memorial Masses to remember protesters killed in **Tiananmen Square** in mainland China on 4 June 1989. Cardinal Joseph Zen, Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, celebrated one and said in his homily that, "We refuse to be pessimistic in the remembrance of the dead – those killed 32 years ago" and "our prayer is also for the Lord to lead the rulers to walk on the path of justice and peace". Last week, police detained Chow Hang Tung, one of the few remaining prominent democracy activists not already in jail.

Pope Francis acknowledged the dedication of the month of June to the Heart of Jesus with a Tweet saying: "During this month of June ... we can repeat this simple prayer: 'Jesus, make my heart resemble yours'. In this way, our own hearts will slowly but surely become more patient, more generous, more merciful."

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



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“Those who govern us are allowing this killing of citizens ... because they have no blood in their hearts.”

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto, Nigeria, speaking at the funeral of murdered priest Fr Alphonsus Yashim Bello. (See page 25)



GERMANY / Archbishop assumes personal responsibility for clerical failures

Marx offers to quit, saying Church is at a ‘dead end’

CHRISTA PONGRATZ-LIPPITT

THE ARCHBISHOP of Munich, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, one of the most senior figures in the German Catholic Church and head of the bishops’ conference from 2014 until 2020, has offered his resignation to the Pope in an explosive move triggered by the Church’s “institutional and systemic failure” in its handling of child sex-abuse scandals.

In his letter to Pope Francis dated 21 May and released on 4 June, Marx says: “It is important to me to share the responsibility for the catastrophe of the sexual abuse by church officials over the past decades.” He states that the reputation of bishops in the Catholic Church has possibly never been lower.

The cardinal says that there are many reasons for the crisis in Germany and the whole world. “However, this crisis has also been caused by our own failure, by our own guilt. This has become clearer and clearer to me, looking at the Catholic Church as a whole, not only today but also in the past decades. My impression is that we are at a ‘dead end’ which, and this is my paschal hope, also has the potential of becoming a ‘turning point.’”



PHOTO: ALAMY/DPA

Cardinal Marx

Marx assured journalists at a press conference in Munich on 4 June that he was neither “weary of office nor demotivated”. Asked whether he expected other German bishops to follow his example and take personal responsibility for the “catastrophe” of priestly sexual abuse, Marx

replied that his resignation was his personal decision. “Everyone must assume responsibility in whatever way they think right.”

He firmly believed in a new epoch of Christianity. The German synodal path for Church reform “will come about more easily if the Church learns its lesson from the [abuse] crisis. It is a matter of renewal and of reforming the Church”, he said.

Until Pope Francis reached a decision as to his future, he would remain the Archbishop of Munich and carry out his usual duties. That and the publication both of his letter and a “personal explanation for the letter” had been agreed with the Pope. Marx underlined that he is assuming responsibility for the failure of the Church as an institution.

German bishops’ conference

■ The paragraph applying to women’s ordination in the revised code of canon law released on 1 June was a “slap in the face” for women, the German Catholic Women’s Association (kfd) said in a statement published on 2 June, writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt.

Paragraph 3 of canon law 1379 now states: “Both a person who attempts to confer a sacred order on a woman, and the woman who attempts to receive the sacred order, incur a *latae sententiae* (automatic) excommunication reserved to the Holy See; a cleric, moreover, may be punished by dismissal from the clerical state.”

“The intention is to cement the prohibition of women’s ordination more firmly and make it permanent,” said Agnes Wuckelt, the kfd’s deputy chairwoman. The kfd has about 400,000 members in 4,000 parishes.

president Bishop Georg Bätzing said he regretted that Marx had asked the Pope to accept his resignation, but had great respect for his decision.

In a statement published by the Archdiocese of Cologne, Archbishop Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki recalled that in December 2020 he had written to the Pope and asked him to assess how he, Woelki, had handled priestly sexual abuse in his archdiocese. He had “trustingly laid his fate in the Pope’s hands”, he recalled. Many of Germany’s 68 bishops said they respected Marx’s decision. The head of the Central Committee of German lay Catholics (ZdK), Thomas Sternberg, with whom Marx initiated the German synodal path for Church reform in 2019, told the *Rheinische Post* that he was “shattered” by Marx’s resignation.

The French bishops’ conference president, Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, told *La Croix* that Marx’s letter to the Pope “gives the reason for his decision – but it is his aloneness that impresses me”.

Fr Mark Butaye OP, general secretary of the commission for migration in the Belgian bishops’ conference, has written an open letter to Francis begging him not to accept Marx’s resignation and to allow him to continue with the German synodal path for Church reform. Fr Butaye had the “full support” of the Czech theologian Fr Tomas Halik, winner of the 2014 Templeton Prize, and of the Austrian pastoral theologian Fr Paul Zulehner.

AUSTRALIA

Media companies hit with hefty fines over Pell trial reporting

AN AUSTRALIAN court has imposed hefty fines on some of the country’s biggest newspapers, websites and radio stations for their coverage of Cardinal George Pell’s now-quashed conviction in a sexual abuse case, writes Mark Bowling.

In all, 12 media groups were fined a total of A\$1.1 million (£600,000) after admitting they breached a legal order in 2018

banning them from reporting the verdict at the time. Victoria Supreme Court Justice John Dixon rejected arguments that the news reports – even though they did not name Cardinal Pell – were in the public interest.

Cardinal Pell, Australia’s highest-ranking Catholic, previously a senior Vatican figure and a close adviser to the Pope, turns

80 this month and is now living in Rome, putting back together a life upended by criminal trials and more than 400 days in jail.

Nine Entertainment, publisher of Melbourne’s *The Age* newspaper and the owner of Channel Nine, was fined more than A\$600,000; Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation was fined about \$430,000 for reports on its news.com.au site, and in its newspapers.

The reporting ban, enforced through a legal order, was put in place at the start of Cardinal Pell’s 2018 trial to prevent the possibility

of prejudice affecting a separate trial he was to face on other charges. The suppression order banned journalists from reporting any detail of the sexual abuse case, including his conviction. The High Court of Australia later overturned the guilty verdict against Cardinal Pell on appeal.

The suppression order was lifted in February 2019. But several outlets published reports referring to his case shortly after his conviction. Much of the 2018 coverage criticised the secrecy of the case without specifically naming Pell.

BURKINA FASO / Region 'in shock' over militia massacre

Attack on town leaves 160 dead

ELLEN TEAGUE

POPE FRANCIS has expressed his sorrow for yet another attack in Burkina Faso with at least 160 killed, including 20 children, and more than 40 injured. The massacre and torching of a market and homes followed an attack by gunmen on motor-bikes on 4 June in the small town of Solhan in Yagha province, near Niger.

Pope Francis said: "Africa needs peace and not violence ... I am close to their families and to the entire Burkinabé people who are suffering greatly from these repeated attacks."

The country's Catholic bishops invited Catholics – around 19 per cent of the population – to pray for the victims during Corpus Christi celebrations.

The UN condemned the "heinous attack" and UN secretary general António Guterres (inset) expressed his outrage, calling for renewed international efforts against violent extremism in the region. Describing it as the worst militant attack in Burkina Faso in recent years, the country's government declared a 72-hour period of national mourning.

While no group has claimed responsibility, the area is plagued by jihadists linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State in West Africa's Sahel region. This area is strategic because it connects Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso and the authorities believe the assailants wanted to demonstrate their ability to control the territory. Sources from the apostolic nunciature in Ouagadougou reported Burkina



Faso being "in shock". The country's ill-equipped army has organised self-defence groups, and "with these massacres, the terrorists seem to want to respond to these defence initiatives".

Once a beacon of peace and religious coexistence, Burkina Faso has been embroiled in militia violence since 2016. There are economic motives – Solhan is the site of an informal gold mine that terror groups exploit for funding – and there are religious undertones, although Solhan itself is a diverse town. Last month, a baptism service was attacked, specifically targeting Christians, and at least 15 people were killed. Instability is also affected by climate change and desertification. Armed groups have driven up religious and ethnic tensions between farming and herding communities in the Sahel as a means of increasing their own power.

The latest attack brings the number of civilians killed by militias in the Sahel region to more than 500 since January. Jihadist attacks have increased despite the presence of more than 5,000 French troops heading a counter-terrorism force.

NAMIBIA

German bishops welcome admission of genocide

THE CATHOLIC Church in Germany has praised the German government for "assuming its historical responsibility" for carrying out an early twentieth-century genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples in its former Southern African colony, Namibia, writes Rose Gamble.

"This is an important step forward, a sign that the federal government is concretely assuming its historical responsibility, and this deserves respect," said Bishop Heiner Wilmer, president of the Justice and Peace Commission of the German bishops' conference.

On colonising Namibia in 1884, Germany forcibly stripped the indigenous Herero and Nama peoples of their land and cattle.

The Germans massacred an estimated 60,000 of the 80,000 Hereros and 10,000 of the 20,000 Namas. Many were forced into the desert and later placed in concentration camps. Tens of thousands died in captivity.

Foreign minister Heiko Maas said his country was asking Namibia and victims' descendants for forgiveness.

Mr Maas also announced €1bn in compensation that will be paid out over 30 years through spending on infrastructure, healthcare and training programmes.

Namibia's tribal chiefs deplore the fact that they were not consulted and that it is not clear where "compensation" will end up.

KENYA

Bishops demand elections before planned referendum

CATHOLIC bishops in Kenya are warning against using a controversial referendum to postpone next year's general elections, as politicians continued to tangle over the government-backed Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) that aims to rewrite the constitution, writes Fredrick Nzwili.

In a major embarrassment to President Uhuru Kenyatta, five High Court judges last month ruled the BBI "irregular, illegal and unconstitutional".

"We demand that the August

2022 elections proceed as provided for in the constitution, and no thought of postponing it to a later date should be entertained," said Archbishop Martin Kivuva of Mombasa, the new chairman of the Kenya conference of Catholic bishops.

BBI's critics say it is a means of confining power to Kenya's political elites. The rising violence and insecurity in the country is also a major concern for the bishops. In Kapedo area in Baringo County, attacks by bandits have left scores

of people dead and displaced hundreds of others, they say.

"The government has an obligation to provide security to all citizens," the archbishop said. "The state of anarchy must be stopped.

"The extrajudicial killings, kidnapping and dumping of bodies in forests and rivers is abhorrent. We risk perpetuating a culture of intolerance and death."

According to a report compiled by 18 Kenyan civil society organisations, 157 people were killed or disappeared in 2020.

RWANDA: On the feast day (3 June) of St Charles Lwanga, one of the Ugandan martyrs, Cardinal Antoine Kambanda, Archbishop of Kigali, opened the 52nd Eucharistic Congress at the diocesan level, writes Francis Njuguna. Speaking in Karoli Lwanga Parish in Nyamirambo, named after the martyr, the cardinal, a Tutsi, said the Eucharist could help national healing, still needed 27 years after the 1994 genocide in which 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.

The Eucharist as a source of love is the "key to unity and reconciliation" as Rwandans recover from "our history of genocide", Cardinal Kambanda said. The congress will run from 15 to 18 July at the national level, before the global congress takes place in Hungary in September.

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MEXICO

Obrador keeps his majority but can't change constitution

MEXICANS voted in the country's largest election in history on 6 June, with more than 20,000 posts to be decided, *writes Martha Pskowski*.

Races included about half of the country's governors, many mayors and the lower house of Congress. Initial results indicated that the Morena party, led by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and allied parties would maintain a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. However, Morena will not obtain a supermajority, which would have allowed constitutional changes.

Mr López Obrador won a resounding victory in 2018. Since then, his popularity has remained strong, despite persistently high levels of violence and a high Covid-19 death toll. He has campaigned on fighting corruption and eliminating wasteful government spending. The PRI, which governed Mexico for decades, joined forces with former foes, the PRD and PAN, to run coalition candidates for Congress to challenge Morena. Archbishop Rogelio Cabrera, president of the bishops' conference, called for Mexicans to "remain alert to the fulfilment of promises made during the campaign".

PERU

Presidential poll too close to call

PERUVIANS voted for president on Sunday, choosing between right-wing Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori, and left-wing teacher and union leader Pedro Castillo, *writes Martha Pskowski*.

On Monday the race remained too close to call. Ms Fujimori, representing the Fuerza Popular party, is making her third bid for president on a platform of pro-business policies. Her father is in prison for human rights abuses.

Mr Castillo attracts strong support among Indigenous Peruvians. He campaigned against the Lima political elite and in favour of more state intervention in the economy. The Peruvian bishops' conference has warned against the danger of Communism as well as "savage capitalism".

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb



CARDINAL Reinhard Marx is not the kind of person you would expect to voluntarily offer his resignation. Whenever I met him, he came across as determined and confident, happy to slam his fists on the table when making a point he felt passionately about. As the reform-minded "panzer cardinal", he wielded great influence as the leader of the German bishops' conference, a member of Pope Francis' council of advisers and coordinator of the Holy See's council for the economy. When in the same room with him, it felt as if I was in the presence of a German chancellor or foreign minister.

All of this made his decision to step down as Archbishop of Munich and Freising, eight years before his retirement age, a real shock. The bombshell has been interpreted in Rome in various ways. Some see it as a strategic move aimed at freeing him up for an appointment to an even more senior job in the Vatican; others as a pre-emptive strike ahead of damaging revelations into his handling of clerical sexual abuse in the past. Some friends pointed out that Marx is tired, and wants a break.

These reactions miss the deeper point that behind this decision lie several months of soul-searching. People close to Marx say he has come to believe that the changes the Church needs go beyond the cosmetic, administrative or even legal. Last year, the cardinal stood down as president of the German bishops' conference while also donating €500,000 of his own money to a centre dedicated to survivors of abuse. Now he's told the Pope he wants to step down to take responsibility for the Church's institutional failings over abuse.

At the root of his resignation is a concern about the credibility and mission of the Church. Fr Hans Zollner, the Jesuit child protection expert who has worked closely with the cardinal, told me he thinks Marx's resignation comes from a realisation that these are of "greater importance than his personal position". By resigning, the cardinal is hoping to give impetus to the synodal reforms in Germany, which are modelling a less clerical, top-down model of the Church – and it is clericalism and the abuse of power which is the root cause of the abuse crisis.

Similarities could be drawn between Marx stepping down and Benedict XVI's decision to resign the papacy, a move which opened the way for the transformative Francis pontificate. The cardinal is sending a stark message to his fellow church leaders: credible leadership means taking responsibility for institutional failure, and the glittering prizes come second to the proclamation of the Gospel. Might other cardinals and bishops also discern that now is the time to allow new leaders to breathe life into the programme of

reform? Marx told the Pope that these words of Jesus guided his decision: "Anyone who wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will find it."

SPECULATION has been rife that Francis is preparing a ruling which could "rescind" or severely restrict the permission given by Benedict XVI in his 2007 apostolic letter, *Summorum Pontificum*, for more frequent celebrations of the liturgy in the Extraordinary Form – the so-called "traditional Latin Mass" or "Tridentine rite". But Francis does not want to inflame the "liturgy wars"; nor will he "undo" legislation issued by his predecessor.

Nevertheless, it looks as though a document clarifying the rules over celebrations of the liturgy in the Extraordinary Form is on the way. Last year, the Vatican conducted a worldwide survey looking at how the existing guidelines were being followed, to gauge the pastoral need. One concern has been the use in recent years of pre-1955 liturgical books during Holy Week, something not authorised by Benedict. Permission had been given for the use of pre-1955 books by the Ecclesia Dei Commission, which used to oversee traditionalist groups and which the Pope has since suppressed. Another concern is how far the Extraordinary Form is being celebrated in response to requests for it from the faithful, and to what extent it is promoted by individual priests. In 2011, an instruction was issued by the Vatican on how to apply *Summorum Pontificum*; an update is necessary. The Pope doesn't want to start a battle with those attached to the Extraordinary Form, but he's insistent that the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council are "irreversible".

THE POPE'S next visit abroad, to Hungary on 12 September, could prove awkward. Francis says he'll go to Budapest for the 2021 International Eucharistic Congress, "but just for the Mass", and not as a state visit. Yet there will be pressure on him to meet Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán: a nationalist, populist leader who claims to run a "Christian" government. Orbán's anti-migrant policies are difficult to square with the Jesuit Pope's vision. In *Let Us Dream*, Francis says a Christian should love and serve their country but "cannot be merely a nationalist", and he's even said populist-nationalist leaders today remind him of the 1930s. Some read the Pope's words as applicable to Orbán. For Francis, the aim of the visit to Hungary is to celebrate Mass and meet the Hungarian people. He'll want to avoid anything that looks like a papal blessing of the Orbán government.

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The task of announcing new Church of England bishops will fall to a minister other than the Prime Minister following **Boris Johnson's** Catholic marriage to Carrie Symonds in Westminster Cathedral last week.

Mr Johnson, who was baptised Catholic, has been described as Britain's first Catholic prime minister, which means that under the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829 he may no longer advise the monarch on episcopal appointments. The role – now mostly ceremonial, as appointments are agreed by the Crown Nominations Commission and passed to the Queen by Number 10 – will most likely be taken on by the Lord Chancellor, according to *The Times*.

The Catholic Union has written to the Faiths Minister, Lord Greenhalgh, calling on the Government to partner with faith groups over **post-Covid recovery**. The letter notes that faith groups were not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, despite the role they have played in helping communities survive the pandemic. Among the Catholic Union's suggestions is an enhanced Gift Aid scheme, and calls to encourage local authorities to work more closely with faith groups.

The current shortage of **vocations** to the priesthood and



■ An Ordinatee priest in Scotland who converted his summer house into an oratory dedicated to St Joseph has made it to the finals of the Cuprinol Shed of the Year contest. Fr Len Black (pictured) live-streamed Mass from the oratory in Inverness throughout lockdown.

religious life could be discerned as God calling for change in the Church, Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin has said. In his homily on the Feast of St Kevin at Dublin's Pro Cathedral, the archbishop said: "Perhaps the Lord is indicating that it is time to make the necessary choices to build new models of ministry."

He underlined that a decreasing number of priests cannot limit themselves to an ever-increasing number of sacramental celebrations. "This situation requires decision and discernment to know what we bring with us from the past into the future." It also implied "a different role and a new self-understanding by those of us in ministerial priesthood" and that there must be an appreciation

that all the baptised share this mission. Archbishop Farrell stressed that the new face of the Church must be one where women and young people have a different visibility.

An online conference due to take place today [12 June] will consider whether Catholic schools are worth keeping in **Northern Ireland**. The conference, hosted by the Iona Institute, will hear from Professor Francis Campbell, vice chancellor of the University of Notre Dame Australia, a former UK ambassador to the Holy See; Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry; Marie Lindsay, award-winning former principal of St Mary's College, Derry; and Professor Peter

Finn, principal of St Mary's University College, Belfast.

Churches in Cornwall held prayer meetings ahead of the **G7 meeting** this week [11-13 June]. On Thursday, the eve of the summit, an interfaith service was due to be live-streamed from Truro Cathedral, with contributions from the Bishop of Plymouth, Mark O'Toole, Cafod partners, interfaith leaders and Fr Augusto Zampini, adjunct secretary of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Soon after the G7 meeting, a youth walking relay, organised by the Young Christian Climate Network, will set off for COP26 climate talks in Glasgow, arriving at the end of October. Walkers will carry a model boat whose sail is made from fabrics donated by climate-vulnerable communities.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS UK) will mark **Refugee Week** (14-20 June) with a festival celebrating the creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary in Britain. The Open Writing Space Showcase on Wednesday 16 June at 6.30 p.m. on Zoom will highlight the creative writing of refugees. A poetry book, *Home Is a Feeling not a Place*, edited by Laila Sumpton, will be for sale, with all proceeds going to the work of JRS UK.

Compiled by **Liz Dodd**.

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PERSON IN THE NEWS



Archbishop Dermot Farrell on the decline in priestly vocations: “Perhaps the Lord is indicating that it is time to make the necessary choices to build new models of ministry.” (See page 29)

SAFEGUARDING / Children continue to be failed by penal code revision, says Marie Collins

Abuse law overhaul disappoints survivors

SARAH MAC DONALD

ABUSE SURVIVOR Marie Collins has described the Church’s revision of canon law’s penal code on abusive priests as “very disappointing”, criticising in particular its failure to introduce mandatory reporting and zero tolerance.

Responding to the new norms, which place the abuse of minors under the section “Offences Against Human Life, Dignity and Liberty”, instead of the previous title “Crimes Against Special Obligations”, Mrs Collins said: “It looks as though the Church is moving on but when you read it in detail, it is not.”

She pointed out that there is “no mention whatsoever” of bishops or religious authorities having to report offences to civil authorities. “So nothing has changed there, sadly,” she said.

Speaking to Newstalk Radio’s *Pat Kenny Show*, Mrs Collins said that the document was littered with caveats. “It is all emphasising how you can reduce the penalty [for priests]. It even says in one section that if there has been a criminal trial it may be thought that the civil punishment is



PHOTO: CNS, CAROL GLATZ

Marie Collins: ‘It seems that they haven’t learned anything’

enough and no further punishment might be necessary.” Survivors, she noted, have been looking for zero tolerance for decades.

A former member of the Vatican’s Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Mrs Collins pointed to “the fact that priests can be removed from office but don’t necessarily have to be, and the fact that the document constantly talks about remitting the offence, even reducing the penalty if the Religious or the priest is remorseful”.

She highlighted how the document suggested that a priest who has abused a child “can be removed from office or can be laicised, where the case calls for it. That wording to me means that it will be left to a judgement call of individual bishops as to how they punish a priest, which means you don’t have any consistency or standard across the Church. One bishop could decide something is serious while another bishop could decide it is a minor offence. That is where it has always been. There is no change.”

Mrs Collins, who was abused by a Dublin priest in the 1960s, said that zero tolerance was promised at the four-day summit on clerical abuse in Rome in 2019, but had not shown up in the new regulations. “It seems that they haven’t learned anything,” she said.

Though she commended some parts of the document, such as extending abuse to grooming and pornographic images, Mrs Collins also hit out at the attitudes towards child victims in the document and among Vatican officials.

Citing Canon 1324’s reference to those who were “gravely and

unjustly provocative”, she said this showed “a mindset” which still saw children as provocative and a temptation. “We’ve heard it for many years, and I’ve certainly heard with priests of the old school that children often were the temptresses or the ones who actually instigated the abuse. I was hoping that that attitude in the Church was dead and gone.”

She told Newstalk Radio that another aspect of the document that really angered survivors was the fact that child abuse was designated an offence against the sixth commandment.

“To consider abuse against a child as being an offence against the sixth commandment, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’, is offensive to any child who has been abused and to any person who has been abused as a minor. The bishops in England and Wales put in a formal request to the Vatican not to use this language. When the officials were asked at the press conference [last week] why they had used it in the new code, they said it was tradition. That just shows where we are still at with the Vatican. It makes me very angry.”

Scottish bishops outline country’s synodal pathway

THE SCOTTISH bishops have revealed that the Church will participate in its own synodal journey this year as part of preparations for Pope Francis’ synod on synodality, writes Brian Morton.

The president of the bishops’ conference, Bishop Hugh Gilbert of Aberdeen, said: “Last Sunday, the Church celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and our Lady at the very beginning, the birthday of the Church. We gave thanks for the gifts of the Holy Spirit that first Pentecost,

but also celebrated the ongoing gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Mindful of these gifts, the bishops of Scotland welcome the initiative of Pope Francis to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church, to the people of God, to listen to one another, and to make that synodal journey together of communion, participation and mission.

“The Pope has called for a very participative process, engaging all the faithful, which will prepare for this synod. The bishops of Scotland welcome the initiative

for a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission. As the principle and foundation of unity in our dioceses, the bishops look forward to the launch of the synodal journey, a period of consultation and discernment in our local Churches, on Sunday 17 October of this year, and preparations are now being made for this event. We ask all the faithful to pray for the success of this initiative in the life of the universal and local Church, and above all to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and listen to the Holy Spirit speaking through us all in the body of Christ.”

Synodality, the concept of “walking together”, has become a central motif of Francis’ pontificate. In 2018, the International Theo-

logical Commission published “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church”, suggesting that every baptised person had a role in discerning the Church’s mission in the world and the best means of spreading the message of the gospels to the wider world.

The commission stated that “a synodal Church is a Church of participation and co-responsibility. In exercising synodality she is called to give expression to the participation of all, according to each one’s calling, with the authority conferred by Christ on the College of Bishops headed by the Pope. Participation is based on the fact that all the faithful are qualified and called to serve each other through the gifts they have all received from the Holy Spirit.”

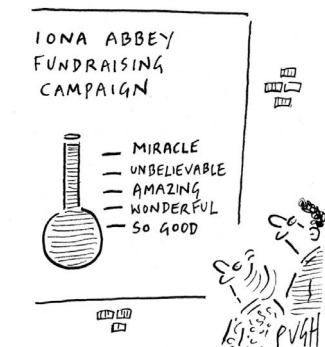
HERITAGE / Faith at work as site refurbished in time for St Columba's 1,500th anniversary

Iona Abbey celebrates 'miraculous' reopening

SEBASTIAN MILBANK

IONA ABBEY reopened this week after an extensive and urgent refurbishment costing £3.75m. The long-planned restoration, which was completed in time for the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of its founder, St Columba, was paid for by an international fundraising campaign organised by the Iona Community, an ecumenical organisation that lives on the island.

The large sum of money needed to restore the historic site presented a significant challenge to the four-person committee charged with finding the funds, and in March 2018 the project seemed badly at risk after it was



revealed that they would have to raise over £300,000 by May of the same year.

According to Christine Jones, coordinator of the appeal: "The guy supporting us in marketing the project said 'you need a miracle in May'. I said we'd never

raise £300,000 in a month. He said: 'If you lot don't believe that, then where does that leave the rest of us?' So we started a campaign called Miracle in May and raised £312,000. We were blessed."

The power and beauty of the abbey's setting, a place with a 1,400-year history of worship and contemplation, moved many former visitors to donate.

Most of the offerings were small, including one donation from a small boy who sold a toy to raise the money. Overall, more than 2,500 people gave money.

Of the donations, over £1m came from the generosity of American donors, many of whom may have never even set foot on the island.

Ruth Harvey, leader of the Iona Community, said of the successful campaign: "You can't discount the very dedicated and visionary volunteers who spent a remarkable amount of time, effort and shared wisdom to make this happen."

"The mystery of faith is evident in the sheer hard work and determination of individuals ... The whole thing has been miraculous."

Iona Abbey is perhaps the most important religious site in Britain next to Canterbury, founded by St Columba in AD 563. The island monastery would go on to become the intellectual and moral centre for much of Christian Britain, a school for princes and a burial place for kings.

After its destruction in the Scottish Reformation, it would remain ruined until it was revived and rebuilt by the modern Iona Community, an ecumenical organisation founded by Church of Scotland minister Revd George MacLeod, dedicated to reviving monastic practice and life in the modern world.

Charities criticise 'devastating' foreign aid cut ahead of G7

CHARITIES including Cafod and Christian Aid have said that cutting UK foreign aid last year caused "devastation" that could undermine the UK's credibility at the upcoming G7 summit, writes *Ellen Teague*.

They told Prime Minister Boris Johnson last weekend that there was "no justifiable economic need" for a reduction of almost £4bn a year. The government had said it would not meet the 0.7 per cent target in the coming financial year

and spending would be reduced to 0.5 per cent of national income. Chancellor Rishi Sunak reported that the cut is a "temporary" measure to cope with the deficit caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and made a vague commitment that the 0.7 per cent target would return. This week, in Parliament, Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle blocked a vote on the topic that would have been binding.

Cafod said: "This is a missed opportunity for the government

to show what global Britain leadership looks like, ensuring that some of the world's marginalised and vulnerable communities, struggling to cope with the impacts of this pandemic, survive."

The Archbishop of Canterbury posted on Twitter that he was praying the aid cut would be reversed. Justice and Peace Scotland tweeted: "UK spent more than £8,000 every minute on nuclear weapons in 2020 whilst cutting aid to the poorest worldwide." Fr Denis Blackledge SJ, parish priest of St Francis Xavier Church in Everton, went on hunger strike for 24 hours, stating: "Ahead of the UK hosting the

G7 and COP26, cutting our aid budget is the wrong action to take."

The agreement by G7 countries to make it harder for the world's largest companies to avoid paying taxes does not go far enough for many. Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Human Development, tweeted his congratulations to G7 finance ministers for supporting a new corporate tax system but said, "15 per cent is woefully low".

Christian Aid said: "We call on governments to raise the rate and ensure the design of any new system delivers significant tax payments to lower-income countries in particular."



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Closing date: **Monday 5th July 2021**



Party time

ROSE PRINCE

IF YOU are one of those persons who loves to host a party, you will be desperate to be unleashed. That is, if there is no last-minute decision to maintain the current restrictions. Unbox the party glassware that has lain dustily hidden under the stairs for 15 months; begin to draw up those lists, finalise the menu and order the ice – a party can at long last have a fluid invitation list that allows more than the dreaded “30”.

Thirty was a terrible, absolutely bound-to-offend number of guests to choose. For many people, 30 just about got all the aunts and uncles on to the list, never mind 29 of your closest friends. I’m not sure there was much point anyway in a party that had rules, including a ban on hugging, so I am looking forward hugely to throwing my first. Our past bashes have always been designed around our friends’ working and family life. We liked the kind of do where people would arrive at random times in the evening. I’d reckon on serving food up until nine. Anyone who comes later than that must surely have eaten dinner? If not, that’s tough. Our home is not a canteen.

I have been wondering about the ethics of parties, since running an ethical kitchen is the purpose of this page. It’s hard to go wrong when giving; to welcome and nurture guests is always generous and kind. Who cares if a host is good or bad at it, so long as they are nice enough to invite you and they do their best (though everyone hates a show-off).



Apart from one species of monkey, humans are unique in that they prepare and give food to others purely out of joy

I once wrote a book about entertaining and discovered while researching it that apart from one species of monkey, humans are unique in that they prepare and give food to others purely out of joy. The only unethical element in party-giving is making too much of a din without (a) warning the neighbours so they can get out of the area or (b) inviting them so they can join in the racket.

I am also looking forward to when we no longer have to argue over the dubious ethics of neighbours reporting neighbours for the crime of wanting to feed each other. I know gatherings increase the chance of infection, but we need to emerge from all this, for social

sanity’s sake. Let us hope we will soon all be heaping a pilaf on to dozens of plates.

JEWELLED PILAF

SERVE 6 (DOUBLE UP AS YOU PLEASE)

4 tbsp light olive oil
3 medium onions, finely sliced
1 cinnamon stick
2 cloves garlic, minced
300g basmati rice, washed in several changes of water
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp cumin seeds
Pinch of ground allspice
1 bay leaf
1 tsp ground coriander
4 dessertspoons golden raisins
4 dessertspoons flaked almonds
2 tbsp melted butter

For the yogurt dressing: **6** heaped tablespoons thick Greek yogurt; **1 tsp** sugar, beaten together. Add finely chopped dill and parsley. Serve with crisp roast chicken thighs on the bone or slow-roasted lamb shoulder.

Put the oil, onions, garlic and cinnamon stick in a large frying pan. Simmer very slowly until the onions caramelize. Set aside when golden and spoon out excess oil. Add back the onions, rice, salt and spices with the raisins and almonds, cover with water and simmer until the rice is tender. Stir in the butter and serve with the meat and yogurt dressing.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

A NEW COUPLE have moved into the village. They have long ears, shaggy coats and like to bellow. The moment one of them starts to bray, the other joins in until their cacophonous duet resounds over the fields and gardens. I can hear them in the bathroom, and when I’m writing at my desk. Even when I’m a mile away watching badgers at the local sett, their braying reaches me. Yesterday, as I was staring up the chimney trying to work out if we had a feral honey nest in the flue, I couldn’t hear any buzzing but I could hear the donkeys.



Donkeys are very vocal, and call out for a number of reasons. As herd animals, they get lonely without a companion and will try and summon one. But this pair were

great friends, so why the frequent hee-hawing? Being intelligent, donkeys are highly attuned to dangers, and will bray to warn of threats – shepherds once used them to help guard their flocks against predators. But there are no wolves in North Yorkshire. The likely reason why our village pair are braying so often is because they’re happy. They enjoy hearing the acoustic of their own voice in this new place. And they keep calling, just in case any other donkeys might be wandering lost looking for a herd.

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