

THE INTERNATIONAL
CATHOLIC WEEKLY

THE TABLET

21 NOVEMBER 2020 £3.80
www.thetablet.co.uk | Est. 1840

McCarrick: what happened?

A scandal rooted in hypocrisy about sexuality

By Frédéric Martel



Sara Haslam
Evelyn Waugh's
own favourite novel

Clifford Longley
The questions IICSA
left unanswered

Lucy Lethbridge
Feeling the heat as
Notre-Dame burns

Nicholas Vincent
Edward the Confessor:
a good man in evil times

FAITH AND
POWER

OUR FEUDAL CHURCH MUST REFORM

Two heavyweight blows to the good name of the Catholic Church, in Britain and worldwide, have left painful bruises all over the Body of Christ. The report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has followed its highly critical report on how the Church of England dealt with this issue, with one, no less severe, on the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The Holy See's inquiry into its own mishandling of the case of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, while not independent, does not pull any punches either; every mistake by bishops, cardinals and even popes, is examined in detail. There were plenty of them.

Is there any light at the end of this dark tunnel? Will the many lessons from this devastatingly critical examination of Catholicism in action be readily grasped and fully assimilated? These reports are about the deeds and misdeeds of hierarchs, men ordained to high office. They are not "the Church", only part of it. The harm they did was done to ordinary Catholics – the other, greater part, who are best described in the language of the Second Vatican Council as "the People of God". Unfortunately, despite the reforms generated by the Council, they remain largely voiceless and powerless.

It is that bruised body that Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster is addressing when he asks for "forgiveness" for any actions of his that have contributed to the harm done to it. Forgiveness asks for a response, otherwise it remains unrequited. Forgiveness in the Catholic understanding of it requires contrition, a "firm purpose of amendment", and a willingness to undo the harm done. Cardinal Nichols cannot be forgiven unless there is some other voice able to reply – a voice able to say, if it so decides, "No, you are not forgiven"; or, "Yes, you are". Without that, this is just hollow window dressing. And it is clear from the angry and indignant letter signed by the 23 victims/survivors of clerical abuse published in last week's *Tablet*, that their forgiveness is still a long way off. *The Tablet* stands resolutely alongside them, as should the whole Catholic community.

This points to an extreme structural problem in the modern Catholic Church. The tricameral general synod of the Church of England, with its house of laity, house of clergy, and house of bishops, could if it wishes pass a motion of confidence in its leadership, signifying a renewal of trust despite the critical judgement of IICSA. But to earn that renewed trust and confidence, the Anglican leadership knows that it has to convince clergy and laity that it has not just said "Sorry", but has put in place real reforms. There is no similar body in the Roman Catholic Church, no way cardinals and bishops can be called to account, made to explain themselves or challenged for failing to do so. A human entity without such safety valves is not a healthy one. Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

It is time, therefore, for the leadership of the Catholic Church to revisit what the Anglican-Roman

Catholic International Commission said long ago – that a primatial system of government, where control is exercised from the top down, needs to be balanced by a synodal system, where the voice of the people can be heard and heeded. Wisdom will emerge from the interplay of the two, not from one side alone. Cynics will say that no body with power ever gives it up without a struggle. But that struggle is now on.

The victims and survivors of clerical sexual abuse are central to this, for their frequently disgraceful treatment was the inevitable product of their disempowerment at the hands of the Catholic system. There is a common thread here which links the McCarrick report with that from IICSA, which is the way the system prioritises the predator's welfare over that of his prey, which is clericalism at its worst. Clericalism is essentially about power and how it is exercised in favour of one set of interests in preference to another. It is discriminatory; it thrives in the absence of checks and balances, and the lack of accountability downwards. What the McCarrick report proves is that accountability upwards – to Rome – is not an effective brake on the abusive exercise of clerical power. McCarrick could have been stopped, but – aided by his reputation as a superb fund-raiser and generous donor – he slipped through.

Until now, the experience of being a member of the Catholic Church has been quite unlike experience in the secular world – of citizenship, for instance, or a taxpayer, or of being an employer or employee. In every case there are laws to limit the abuse of power, and those who exercise that power are accountable for it. Every Catholic above school age is also a voter and participant in democratic processes. MPs face their constituents, Ministers answer to Parliament. Every Catholic is a consumer protected by consumer protection legislation; every department of national life has its regulator, from Ofcom to public health inspectors. There is a legal system for the righting of wrongs, available to all.

An expectation in every secular institution is that leaders take the rap for failures. They all accept the concept that "bringing xyz into disrepute" is a sackable offence – an idea manifestly absent in a Catholic context. This daily experience is what forms and shapes Catholics as citizens, a world where they are treated as grownups, and which therefore forms and shapes their expectations as Church members. Meanwhile the Church, still feudal in many ways, simply ignores them. The experience is like being two people at once, trusted adults in the secular domain yet still powerless children in Church.

Thus the immense good done in the name of the Gospel by many in the Church is being systematically undermined by clericalism, ideological division, unelected leadership, bad management, and a willingness to turn a blind eye to vice. But change is in the air. Pope Francis knows this, as do many others. Catholics are no longer prepared to allow the good name of the Church – their Church – to be dragged through the mud. This must stop.



25

Catholics gathered outside Saint-Sulpice in Paris to protest against the ban on Mass and church closures during lockdown

COLUMNS



Christopher Howse's Notebook

'Yes, books can be washed. They unpick the binding and give them a good old soak' / 5



Sara Maitland

'I am finding – to my genuine surprise – that I very much miss the singing at Mass' / 13

REGULARS

Word from the Cloisters	14
Puzzles	14
Letters	15
The Living Spirit	16

CONTENTS

21 NOVEMBER 2020 // VOL 274 NO. 9378

FEATURES

4 / Sex, lies and the Church

The finger of blame for the rise of Theodore McCarrick should not be pointed at Pope John Paul II / BY FRÉDÉRIC MARTEL

6 / Waugh's favourite heroine

Helena is the least-known of Evelyn Waugh's novels – but he always insisted it was his best work / BY SARA HASLAM

8 / Abuse: learning the lessons

Why did the Church pay so much attention to its reputation, and to the support of the priests who abused children, and so little to victims? / BY CLIFFORD LONGLEY

11 / Repairing our common home

If we are to restore a broken world to wholeness, governments and agencies must recognise that religion is part of the solution / BY PATRICK WATT

12 / Loss and gain

The woman who founded the first female retreat house was born 400 years ago. She provides a spiritual model for our turbulent and uncertain times / BY VICTORIA BIGGS

NEWS

23 / The Church in the World / News briefing

24 / Bishops call for immediate ceasefire in Tigray region

26 / View from Rome

27 / News from Britain and Ireland / News briefing

28 / Cardinal and diocese to be sued over abuse case

30 / Obituary: Baron Sacks of Aldgate

ARTS / PAGE 17

Television

The Night Notre-Dame Burned
LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Radio

Catholic women and the US elections
D.J. TAYLOR

Theatre

What A Carve Up!
MARK LAWSON

Music

Stile Antico
ALEXANDRA COGHAN

BOOKS / PAGE 20

Nicholas Vincent

Edward the Confessor: Last of the Royal Blood
TOM LICENCE

Pamela Beasant

Grimoire
ROBIN ROBERTSON

James Moran

That Old Country Music
KEVIN BARRY

Sue Gaisford

The Magic Hour: 100 poems from the Tuesday Afternoon Poetry Club
CHARLOTTE MOORE

COVER: STEPHEN REID

The investigation into the disgraced former cardinal has led to the finger of blame being pointed at Pope John Paul II and his closest advisers. But the author of a best-selling exposé of the culture of cover-up at the Vatican argues that the scandal was the result of hypocrisy about sexuality / By FRÉDÉRIC MARTEL

Sex, lies and the Church

POPE JOHN PAUL II lies sprawling across a ceremonial red carpet, still clutching his ceremonial papal cross, struck down by a meteorite. As the sculptor Maurizio Cattelan explained, *La Nona Ora* ("The Ninth Hour"), first exhibited in 1999, represents the Holy Father crushed by the sins of the world. It's an image that has been haunting me this week, as a series of dramatic events has raised questions about the judgement of Pope John Paul II, and threatened to sour the legacy of his papacy.

Two weeks ago, Polish television channel TVN24 broadcast *Don Stanisław: The Other Face of Cardinal Dziwisz*, a documentary by Marcin Gutowski. It aroused immense emotion across the country. Karol Wojtyła had appointed Stanisław Dziwisz as his private secretary in October 1966, when he was Archbishop of Kraków; Dziwisz and Wojtyła travelled together to the papal conclaves of August and October 1978; and Dziwisz served as John Paul's private secretary throughout his 27-year pontificate. He was created a cardinal in 2006.

In Gutowski's documentary, Dziwisz is denounced for having helped cover up several cases of sexual abuse throughout the world. It alleges that Dziwisz had full knowledge of the appalling child sex abuse offences committed by Marcial Maciel, the Mexican founder of the Legion of Christ, yet failed to act. Millions of Poles have been scandalised by these revelations, which also cast a dark shadow on the character and judgement of "their" Pope, a national saint.

THE DAY AFTER the Dziwisz documentary was broadcast, Archbishop Luigi Ventura, the Vatican's former ambassador to France, was tried *in absentia* on five counts of alleged sexual assault. Ventura, who like Dziwisz has repeatedly denied wrongdoing, had produced a doctor's note saying it was too dangerous for him to travel from Rome to Paris. One of his accusers testified that he had been thrown out of his seminary after reporting to the police that he had been groped repeatedly by Ventura when celebrating Mass in December 2018. The prosecutor asked for a 10-month suspended jail term for the former nuncio. The court will deliver its verdict next month.

And on the same day, the Vatican released the now infamous McCarrick Report, named after the disgraced former American cardinal who was laicised in February last year after having been found to have sexually abused minors, young men and seminarians over



PHOTO: FRED ROMERO

several years. In excruciating detail, the report describes how Theodore McCarrick rose through the ranks to become, first, an auxiliary bishop, then a diocesan bishop, and finally, in 2000, an archbishop, with his red hat coming the following year – all this in spite of concerns being repeatedly raised by some senior figures about McCarrick's sexual misconduct. The report makes it startlingly clear that a *laissez-faire* attitude to rumours of sexual misdemeanours pervaded the Roman Curia in the autumn years of the John Paul II papacy.

Having been one of the official witnesses in the Ventura trial in Paris, having been one of the talking heads in the TVN24 documentary, and having described in lurid detail the inner workings of the Vatican in the McCarrick and Marcial Maciel and many similar cases in my book *In the Closet of the Vatican: Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy*, I couldn't help having a sneaking feeling of vindication – and at the same time a sense of deep anxiety.

In each case, the cavalier appointments and lethargic failures to act that led to the perpetrators of abuse and assault being quietly allowed to continue to wreak havoc can – alas – be traced back to a handful of figures in the immediate entourage of John Paul II. The name of Stanisław Dziwisz is cited 45 times in the McCarrick Report. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State from 1991 to 2006, consecrated Luigi Ventura a bishop in 1995 and appointed him nuncio to Chile in 1999; and in my view Sodano played the key role in McCarrick's appointment to Washington. Others close to John Paul II include the

Maurizio Cattelan's *La Nona Ora* ('The Ninth Hour')

Colombian Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family who fulminated against the evils of homosexuality yet would sleep with male prostitutes and then beat them.

IN MY BOOK, I describe Trujillo as "one of those men who seek power in order to have sex and [have] sex in order to have power". As for Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former nuncio to the United States, who rages colourfully against Pope Francis as a protector of McCarrick, and much worse, the full investigation he had clamoured for reveals him to be a key figure in the McCarrick cover-up. *C'est l'arroseur arrosé* – which might be very roughly translated as "hoist by his own petard".

It is clear that it was Dziwisz and Sodano, John Paul II's right-hand men, who were twisting the Pope's arm. Their names tend to crop up whenever the victims and survivors of abuse – whether from Chile, Mexico, Ireland, France, Austria or the United States – launch lawsuits or write open letters of protest. For a long time, this political couple have been gossiped about, attacked by the press, excoriated by victims of sexual abuse and portrayed by numerous writers as the arch-villains of Vatican chicanery and skull-duggery throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, voices are being heard calling for nothing less than the "de-canonisation" of John Paul II. In Mexico, Chile, but also in the

United States and France, many are coming to believe that John Paul II was a “bad Pope” who was complicit in dozens of cases of the sexual abuse of minors. I am not convinced. There is no evidence, at this point, that John Paul II did not sincerely believe McCarrick’s and Maciel’s protestations of innocence. I have always thought that John Paul II’s health was waning as early as the 1990s, that he no longer had the energy – or perhaps the interest – in the management of day-to-day affairs and that control of the Vatican had effectively passed to Sodano and Dziwisz.

This is why I think it is so important, while these two cardinals are still alive, that their behaviour is properly investigated. This would allow them to explain their silences and denials, and to defend their alleged complicity in dozens of cases where known abusers were protected or promoted. This is not to presume their guilt. “Who am I to judge?”, as the saying à la mode goes. It is only a thorough and transparent investigation of the role of his closest advisers that will save the legacy of the Polish Pope as “John Paul the Great”.

RESPONSIBILITY for the McCarrick debacle – and related scandalous errors of judgement – does not rest solely with a coterie of advisers. McCarrick, Sodano, Dziwisz, those US bishops who are chastised in the McCarrick Report for failing to give an honest reply to Rome’s questions about McCarrick’s suitability for promotion: it is not a matter of a few bad apples, or because this or that prelate didn’t tell the truth, or hid what he knew.

The reasons are deeper, and systemic. Among others are fluidity with the truth in the name of protecting the institution; clericalism and its culture of secrecy; and of course routine political and financial corruption as depressingly rampant in the Vatican as in every other institution.

But one systemic flaw fuels and amplifies all others. It is dishonesty about homosexuality that has led to the culture of cover-up which has extended so catastrophically to the sphere of abuse of minors. The large majority of the people making these decisions were (are) dishonest gay men playing according to the rules of the game whereby they protect each other’s dishonesty and only “know” what they have to know in order to make decisions in such a way that it doesn’t put their own secrets and lies at risk. The problem is not, as conservative Catholic commentators tell us, “homosexual priests”. The problem is dishonesty, the impossibility of gay men serving as Catholic priests to be honest about who they are – and the institutional demand to lie to survive.

This is the key that unlocks the puzzle behind all these cases. Unless the Church is brave enough to seize it, the brave and holy St John Paul II will not be the last Pope to be unjustly crushed under the sins of the world.

Frédéric Martel is a university professor and a French broadcaster, writer and journalist. His most recent book, *In the Closet of the Vatican: Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy*, was published last year by Bloomsbury.

Yes, books can be washed. They unpick the binding and give them a good old soak



IT SAID “hole to Kent” in the catalogue. These things happen. But the volume of Camden’s *Britannia* translated by Philemon Holland (second edition, 1637) was still expected to fetch £1,500.

To me the catalogue was very exciting. I do like books, and the 300 lots sketched a history of bookish interest in Britain from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Not just Bede via Thomas More to Dickens, but the *History Against the Pagans* by Paulus Orosius, which King Alfred translated.

Orosius was a pupil of St Augustine and got his retaliation in first against Edward Gibbon’s anti-religious narrative, by showing that the fall of the Roman Empire wasn’t the Christians’ fault. The copy on sale was printed in 1482, in Vicenza, and was estimated to sell for £800. But it had been washed. Yes, books can be washed. They unpick the binding and give each spread of pages a good old soak. The trouble is that they come out of it dull and the marginalia from old scholars look like they were written in gravy. Never mind.

These books were being put up for sale by Rugby School. Durandus (1230-96) on liturgy, Jacobus de Voragine (1230-98) on the lives of the saints, Bartholomew the Englishman (1203-72) on every subject in his immensely influential encyclopedia (yours, perhaps, for £6,000). These were incunabula, early printed books. But why would the school want to sell them?

“They deserve to be preserved, stored and enjoyed – in specialist conditions,” said Peter Green, the executive head master of the “Rugby Group”, in a special preface in the catalogue. Perhaps, but if bought by dealers and private collectors, there is not much likelihood of that. “Secondly, the school is committed, as a registered charity, to use its resources to benefit current and future students.”

Had the books been at the school since its foundation as a grammar school in 1567? They had not. Most of them had been given to the school by Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, who was a boy there from 1813 to 1821. His school career was undistinguished, but he must have loved the place. It was Bloxam who gave the world the concept of Norman, Early English or Decorated periods of church styles in his *Principles of Gothic Architecture* (1829). Cardinal Newman

was given a later edition by Bloxam’s younger brother John. John Bloxam had been caught up in scandal in 1839 when it was reported that he had bowed to the host during the celebration of Mass during a visit to Alton Towers, the seat of the Earl of Shrewsbury. He had to resign his curacy at Littlemore.

Matthew Bloxam built himself a house within sight of the school. He would attend services at Rugby chapel. He gave prizes on sports days. On his own birthday each year, he would make a gift to the school. He left his library of rare books and manuscripts to the school.

So what do the executive head and his friends do? Sell them. Cash is a charitable commodity. Gratitude doesn’t show in the accounts. What should a school be doing with works of learning, after all?

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR, the railway historian, has published an introduction to London termini called *Cathedrals of Steam*. London’s dozen termini outnumber those of any city in the world.

Since the demolition of the roof 100 feet above ground at Charing Cross, which made it a “cathedral of brick, glass and iron” in the words of John Betjeman, the most cathedral-like has been Paddington. It has a nave and two aisles with iron columns and arches. Two transepts cross these.

But, for this terminus of the Great Western Railway, Brunel had instructed his architect Matthew Digby Wyatt to follow the pattern of the Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton, the gardener from Chatsworth. Wyatt made the capitals of his iron pillars in a Moorish idiom, under the influence of Owen Jones, the designer who popularised the Alhambra in Britain. So it was a funny kind of Islamic greenhouse of a cathedral for the worshippers of steam.

THERE’S A windy corner opposite the theatre at Victoria that would be showing *Hamilton* if it was open. I gave in to the temptation to advise the homeless implicitly not to sit there. A woman was sitting there begging the other day and I said: “This is a windy corner.” She replied: “It’s the only place they’ll leave me alone.” She won that exchange.



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

Evelyn Waugh would read *Helena* – his fictional account of the quest of Constantine’s mother to find the True Cross – aloud to his children before bedtime. It is the least-known of his novels – but the one he always insisted was his best work and his favourite / **BY SARA HASLAM**

Waugh’s favourite heroine

“Gradually getting the smell of the *Daily Mail* out of my whiskers. Spending four days penance for the shame of the last four months in intense discomfort at Franciscan Monastery. Moving to hotel on Xmas day. Tomorrow night at Bethlehem. I half hate Jerusalem. For me, Christianity begins with the Counter-Reformation ...”

Evelyn Waugh to Katharine Asquith, 23 December 1935, Jerusalem.

“Dear Katharine, I wrote you a post card and said I half hated Jerusalem. Well that is all over and I love it dearly.”

Evelyn Waugh to Katherine Asquith, 28 December 1935, King David Hotel, Jerusalem.

THE DRAMATIC transformation in Evelyn Waugh’s view of Jerusalem over Christmas 1935 was the germ for a novel he finally saw published in 1950. *Helena*, his account of the life of the mother of Emperor Constantine and her quest to find the True Cross, was Waugh’s only historical novel, and demonstrated a crucial shift in his view of when Christianity began.

The Council of Nicaea (AD 325), convened by Constantine and riven by debates as to whether Jesus and God the Father were of the “same” or a “similar” substance, would become the backdrop of Waugh’s intellectual and spiritual terrain. (In Dorothy L. Sayers’s popular phrase, Nicaea “split the Church for an iota.”) Later religious gatherings, like the first synod of the restored Catholic hierarchy at which Cardinal Newman preached his famous “Second Spring” sermon in 1852, also permeate *Helena*. Newman’s imagery of the death and rebirth of Catholicism is adopted by Waugh as a structural device.

Later in that second letter to Katherine Asquith, Waugh also laid down a native Englishness for his future heroine that vast reading for the novel would leave intact. The war and *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) delayed this work, but by 1946 Waugh was deeply immersed in the ancient world, recording in his diary (12–26 January) scenes featuring the fall of Palmyra, and the philosopher Longinus, as well as burgeoning frustration with an essential source: Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the*



Evelyn Waugh with his son Septimus

Roman Empire (1776–1789). Waugh’s interviews with Vatican officials and his audience with Pope Pius XII in the spring of 1945 following his army assignments in Yugoslavia had provided a further defining context.

One of his biographers, Martin Stannard, notes that Waugh “relished his role as [an Edmund] Campion figure, working under cover for the secret and glorious aims of the Faith”; the mission, to set out as clearly as possible to the Pope the suffering of Roman Catholics under Tito and the Partisans, a task Waugh believed he had accomplished.

My own turning point came not in Jerusalem, but in Texas, at Easter in 2018. I had been at work, less secretly (and certainly less gloriously) than Waugh in 1944–45, editing *Helena* for Oxford University Press’ “The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh”. Courtesy of an Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, I was about to embark on a fortnight in the Waugh archives at the Harry Ransom

Center at the University of Texas in Austin. I would be able to focus, properly, on the novel. (I didn’t yet know about the giant local bat colony, a fascinating natural science distraction for anyone new in town, or how excellent the live music scene would be.) I was looking forward to it hugely.

During the flight from London I highlighted on a hard copy of my draft the 900 remaining “illegibles”, the Waugh project’s term for words or phrases I had been unable to decipher in the digital version of his handwritten manuscript. The majority of my research had been spent in very close study of that document, tracing the variants between it and the published versions of the novel, and creating a narrative about Waugh’s authorial journey between the two.

The work had been laborious – detailed, difficult, frustrating. What had happened to the missing typescript that might explain parts of that journey I could not plot? Where had the pages cut out at the margin of the hard-bound copy been stored? Why did Waugh scribble over his deletions so furiously? And perhaps of particular interest to my readers here, did the early section published in the 22 December 1945 issue of *The Tablet* have his oversight (“St Helena Meets Constantius: A Legend Re-Told”, which, revised, became chapters 1–3 of the novel)? These were the vital questions acting as my guides but, at home in my study, they offered limited inspiration. Texas changed all that.

My other in-flight task was to re-read the novel (it’s short), and this was a happy reminder of the laugh-out-loud common sense and straightforwardness of one of Waugh’s finest female protagonists. “Nonsense” is a favourite word, and, as Empress, she’s not afraid of directing it at Church elders and local prefects. Or Emperors. “My dear boy, what on earth have you got on your head?” she asks Constantine at their first meeting for 20 years. (The answer is a green wig: one of the many striking details Waugh took from Gibbon.) More impressively still, after

Constantine has his son Crispus murdered, she comes, furious, daily to the Palatine, “demanding” to see him. He hides inside.

Re-discovering *Helena*’s humour was the perfect bridge to renewed engagement with the text, and I found myself listening for it, struck by its effectiveness. When her pilgrimage to Jerusalem begins, *Helena* has concerns about the commodification of any material remains that she might discover. But, in keeping with a level-headed assessment of her faithful task, she does not mock or judge Constantine when he superstitiously forges relics from her horde into a bridle for his

‘Nonsense’ is a favourite word, and, as Empress, she’s not afraid of directing it at Church elders and local prefects

horse. She giggles, rather, and quietly so, bringing her audience directly alongside in her understanding of what she has found and what it means. There have, after all, been simple and uncontentious questions guiding her journey:

“Where is the cross, anyway?” she asked [Pope Sylvester].
 “What cross, my dear?”
 “The only one, the real one” (p. 94).

[And later] “What sort of wood was used for crosses three hundred years ago?” (p. 104).

In their largely monosyllabic form and preponderance of Old English roots, these questions also came to offer one way, I thought as I pored over the illegibles, of creatively justifying Waugh’s choice of an Anglo-Saxon heritage for Helena – however stark the contrast with authentic history.

Her questions, furthermore, underline the material nature of what she believes she has found in the cross, a “solid chunk of wood” against which to knock heretic heads: gently again, I’m sure. Helena is excited by, and deeply thankful for, her find but both the thrill and gratitude are gracefully understated. Waugh expected his readers to fill in the gaps, here and elsewhere in his book. One relevant context for his contemporary audience was

the momentous 1947 discovery by a Bedouin shepherd of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The most valuable archival resources open to me were, in addition to the manuscript, Waugh’s diary and the vast, though uncatalogued, collection of his agent A.D. Peters’ correspondence. The texture of Waugh’s struggle to write – interruptions, distractions, travel, books that might make more money – is well-illustrated by his diary, as is the Catholic calendar he had always in the back of his mind to govern and inspire progress on what was a deeply personal and devotional text. The Peters papers offered an additional selection of routes to a greater understanding of this book.

The materials on *Edmund Campion: A Life* (1935), an earlier work, and its adoption by the Catholic Book Club, provided a fascinating introduction to the idea of “dual readerships” for *Helena*. I became intrigued by how far Waugh’s bleak assessment of its likely reception was bred of the sheer weight of his spiritual ambition for the text.

This particular story reached a marvellous conclusion. After my detailed work on the edition had ended and I was deep into checking the proofs, Mrs Harriet Dormont, Waugh’s daughter, graciously agreed to a telephone interview to explore what to me was an electrifying memory. She recalled her father reading

Helena aloud to her, her older sister Margaret, and their mother. It was the only one of his own works that he read in this way. (Other after-dinner highlights included Dickens’ works, *The Turn of the Screw* – just before bed! – and *Tristram Shandy*.) Waugh had an aim as he declaimed *Helena*, one that not only defined the year immediately after publication but has persisted since. Harriet knew that her father was making as sure as he could that

Helena and her story would be fully understood by his audience. He read, he stopped, he questioned, he explained. Harriet doesn’t remember feeling frustrated by the interruptions, only interested, in the book, in Helena’s character, in her father’s desire to bring her to life.

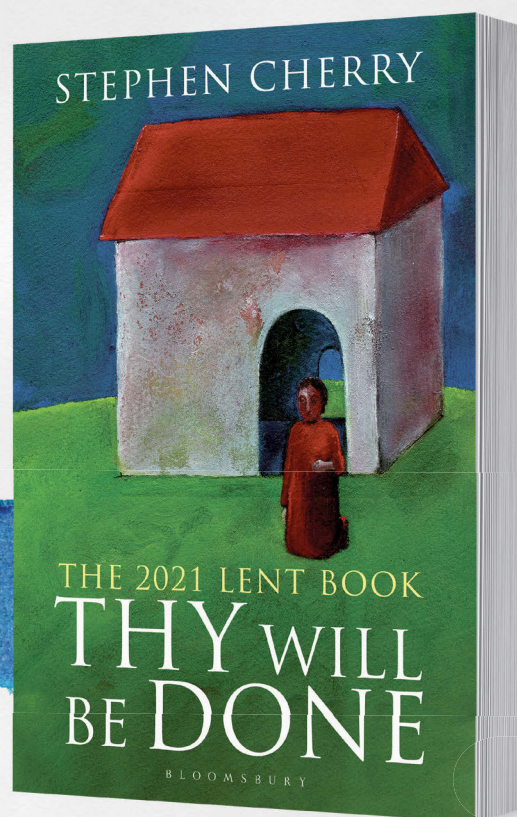
Our discussion reanimated all I’d read in Waugh’s letters to close friends about his fears for his novel and its reception. It gave me a further understanding and appreciation of the magnitude of Helena’s task as he saw it, of a protagonist he idolised. Unlike most of his reviewers, he thought *Helena* was his best book.



Sara Haslam (inset) is professor of twentieth-century literature at the Open University. Her annotated edition of *Helena* is Volume 11 in *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*, published by Oxford University Press at £65.

The very best spiritual guidance with THE 2021 LENT BOOK

Order now at
Waterstones.com



BLOOMSBURY CONTINUUM

Why did the Church pay so much attention to its reputation, and to the support of the priests who abused children, and so little to victims? Why did abuse peak in the 1970s and then taper off? A veteran commentator investigates some of the questions raised by the IICSA report / By **CLIFFORD LONGLEY**

Abuse: learning the lessons

HARROWING accounts of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests continue to make the headlines. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has completed its hearings into the child safeguarding measures inside the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and its report, published last week, is scathing. As 23 survivors wrote in a letter published in *The Tablet*: “So many lives have been ruined and some tragically ended, not just because of horrendous sexual, physical, psychological and spiritual abuse, but by appalling cover-ups and a lack of action to protect us and others in the Church’s care.”

Everywhere it looked, IICSA has identified serious failings in safeguarding systems and procedures in various institutions in the Catholic Church. Just over a year ago, IICSA published its report into abuse by monks at Ealing Abbey and teachers at the school attached to it. After an exhaustive investigation, Professor Alexis Jay, chair of the inquiry, said: “For years, a culture of cover-up and denial meant children at Ealing Abbey and St Benedict’s School suffered appalling sexual and physical abuse.” This had followed IICSA’s report into abuse at two other Benedictine abbeys and schools, Ampleforth and Downside, and a separate inquiry into child safeguarding measures in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. They were all devastating.

The public could be forgiven for thinking that the Catholic Church is riddled with paedophiles, and has done little to weed them out. But this is an issue where almost nothing is as it seems. While IICSA found that the leadership of the Catholic Church in England and Wales repeatedly failed to recognise and

address the serious harm done to victims and survivors of sexual abuse by priests, the evidence suggests that the incidences of child abuse by priests passed its peak long ago. In spite of a massive amount of research, particularly in the United States, nobody really knows why it started, why it peaked when it did, and why it tapered off so sharply – and why it now stays at the same much lower level it was at before the extraordinary rise in the 1960s and 1970s. There are theories, but that is all.

More cases of abuse are still being discovered all the time, and priests are still being convicted and jailed. This gives the impression that the problem is as bad as it ever was. One revealing piece of research reported by IICSA lists the average interval between an episode of abuse, and the case coming to light. Between 1990 and 1994, it found, the average number of years from when the abuse began to a complaint being made was 11. In the period between 1995 and 1999, it was 17. In 2015, it was 34 years. That is to say, the typical complaint recorded in 2015 referred to events which occurred round about 1980, and that is approximately true in all the other years listed.

IICSA DID not look closely at this phenomenon, and allowed the impression to be given that both the complaints still being reported, up to 100 a year, and the abuse which gave rise to them, are contemporary. To some extent the data supplied to it by church bodies failed to dispel that misunderstanding, as the time the abuse began or happened several years earlier is often not recorded, for understandable reasons (see Table 1 below).

This shows up in court reports of convictions for clerical abuse. Those being prosecuted for clerical abuse today are often elderly, and their victims often middle-aged. None of this diminishes the abhorrence of these appalling crimes.

And while survivors are often describing abuse that happened in the 1970s and 1980s, they are teaching us a lot about the long-term effects of child abuse, where the psychological damage only fully manifests itself decades afterwards. Immediately after the traumatic events, it may look as if the trauma has been dealt with, leaving no long-term consequences. The mind seems to try to bury it quickly, even brush it off, only to find the struggle to cope with the memories more and more difficult as the years go by. It is like a kind of emotional cancer – slow to develop, mild or even symptomless at first, but ultimately devastating. The trauma was made worse by the failure of the authorities, church and civil, and sometimes even by teachers and parents, to take complaints seriously, and to deal with survivors with empathy and compassion. This compounded the emotional damage. “I was abused as a child by the Church,” as one survivor put it, “and now it is using its power against me again.”

Research for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York, published in 2011, showed a sharp decline in cases in the US Catholic Church after 1985. (See Table 2 below.) This means many of the clergy involved in the abuse of children were receiving their seminary training at or shortly after the time of the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1965.

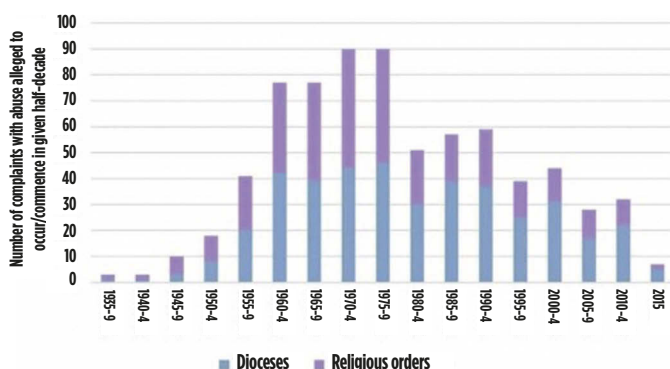


Table 1. From “Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales Between 1970 and 2015: A Statistical Summary” by Stephen Bullivant (2019)

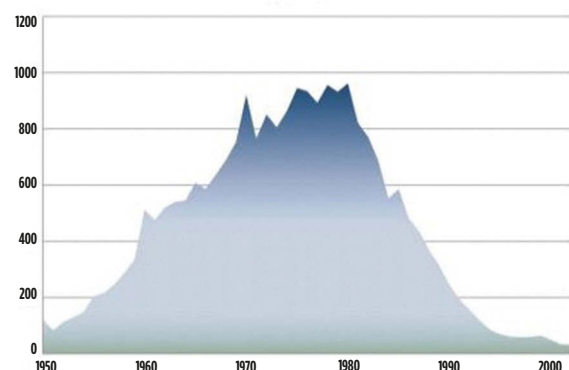


Table 2: Incidents of Abuse by Year of Occurrence: 1950 – 2002, from “The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010”, by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice

A POOR RESPONSE to a survivor coming forward with their story of abuse can have a “devastating” effect, in the words of Baroness Sheila Hollins, former president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. One reason for that 25-year time lag between incidents and the reporting of them may be precisely that, at the time of the abuse, the church authorities

One possible link between priests of that generation who left to marry and their contemporaries who abused adolescent boys is a fundamental lack of adjustment to the demands of clerical celibacy, which in turn suggests a failure in clergy training and also in the selection of candidates for such training. The formation of priests, members of that

IT IS ALSO true that those church officials addressing the new and extremely disturbing phenomenon of clerical child abuse on a large scale had very little insight into what they were dealing with. The sexual abuse of a minor presented itself to them as a sin against the sixth commandment – “thou shalt not commit adultery” – which had been developed over the centuries as a catch-all offence that included such things as the evils of contraception, masturbation, oral and anal sex, and even the avoidance of “wilful motions of the flesh”: allowing oneself to become sexually aroused by sexual thoughts and images. In



St Mungo's

Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

Lockdown Homeless Emergency Appeal

Once again, the government guidance is simple: stay home. But many of those who are most at risk from coronavirus don't have a home.

St Mungo's staff are on the frontline of this crisis, working day and night to ensure that homeless people are not forgotten.

In the first six months of the pandemic, we supported nearly 3,000 people experiencing homelessness into hotels to self-isolate safely. But in this second lockdown, as winter sets in, many others need our help.

Your gift of £25 could help us move more people into safety and warmth, today.

**All information stated is correct at time of printing*

Please donate today:

Online at mungos.org/covid-appeal
or return the form as part of your daily exercise.

Yes, I would like to support the work of St Mungo's and I enclose a cheque/PO/CAF voucher made payable to St Mungo's for £..... or please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/CAF

Card number Maestro only

Start date Exp. date Issue No. (Maestro only)

Signature..... Date

Title.....First Name.....

Surname.....

Home Address.....

Registered with  Postcode.....

Don't forget to include your name and address to allow us to claim Gift Aid.

Registered Charity No 1149085, Company No 8225808, Housing Association No LH0279

Gift Aid makes every £1 you give worth 25% more. *giftaid it*

☐ **Yes** – I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and would like all my donations to St Mungo's made now, in the past four years and in the future to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax in any tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify St Mungo's if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax.

We would like to keep in touch with our latest news and everything we are doing to end homelessness. Please let us know how you would like to hear about our projects and services, raising funds, campaigning and volunteering.

I would like to be contacted by: ☐ Email ☐ SMS
☐ Telephone ☐ I would prefer not to receive post

We will only contact you in the way you ask us to and we will never sell or share your details. You have the right to ask us to stop processing your personal data at any time. To manage your preferences please contact us on 020 8600 3000 or supporter.care@mungos.org

For further information please see our privacy policy at www.mungos.org/privacy-policy.

Post to: Freepost St Mungo's (TA00-01)

1819-PKS-BAW-GU01-01

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

the minds of bishops and vicars general and seminary rectors, all the attention was directed to the priest, the sinner, who had put his immortal soul in jeopardy by committing a grave sexual sin. In their minds, the abused child had barely a cameo role in the story. And here perhaps lies the root of the most terrible aspect of the child abuse crisis in the Church: that for so many victims and survivors, the trauma of the abuse was followed by the second trauma of their treatment by the Church, the feeling of being a sort of “non-person”.

In the mind of his bishop, the young man whom he had approved for seminary training, and who had been through the same priestly formation process as he had done himself, ought to have emerged from it holier than when he went in, a prayerful and morally upright individual able to set an example to the laity. So the easiest assumption for him to make when such a man was found to have abused a child was that he must be in some way mentally ill. This is why a large proportion of known clerical abusers were referred for some sort of psychiatric treatment, and why there were doctors and clinics who specialised in it.

WITHIN THE professions of psychiatry and clinical psychology, however, sexuality is a highly contested area, with a variety of conflicting theories and schools, and where theories widely assumed to be plausible in one decade are wholly discredited in the next. There are plenty of theories about abusers, the most common one being that they suffer from deep psychological immaturity. But deep psychological immaturity does not by itself make a man a child abuser. There is something else at work, and nobody really knows what it is.

Some sexual abuser treatment programmes set up by medical specialists in certain UK prisons have had to be wound up when the evidence began to emerge that attendance at them, far from delivering a cure, made some abusers more likely to reoffend. It is now understood that an abuser will be at risk of abusing again more or less throughout his lifetime. But 30 years ago bishops were only too happy to be told by psychiatric professionals that, following treatment, a priest could safely be returned to his duties – perhaps with restrictions as a precaution.

There was little room in the Church’s doctrinal framework of the time for concern for the interests of the victim. For instance, the most common form of abuse recorded by the John Jay researchers was the “fondling of victims’ genitals over clothing”. In the moral framework set by the sixth commandment, was this even seen as a sin at all? Perhaps only if the priest became aroused by it. Yet for the young man concerned, the experience could be both confusing and terrifying. He might himself become aroused. He might be overwhelmed by feelings of shame, guilt and worthlessness. Or he might have been groomed to the point where he saw his rela-



Professor Alexis Jay, who chairs IICSA, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

tionship with the priest as a sincere friendship, and did not realise the extent to which he was being exploited by someone in a much more powerful position than he was. At the time, the authority-gradient between laypeople and priests was a steep one.

Adolescent boys are likely to struggle to adjust to their awakening sexuality at the best of times. Such an experience could be beyond their capacity to handle, even if it did not then lead on to more serious sexual contact (though it often did). It is unfortunate that this adolescent vulnerability was not more widely known, but preoccupation with the state of the priest’s immortal soul rather than with psychological damage to the victim was a natural consequence of the way sexual ethics was taught and practised.

It is also a consequence of the bishop-priest relationship, with the bishop having a paternal care for the well-being of the priest, to whom he traditionally stands as his “Father in God”. It is alarming to hear senior figures in the Church, even today, say they have only just started to appreciate fully the true horror of a victim’s experience of abuse, something most parents have known instinctively all along.

FACED WITH similar incidences of child abuse by priests in different places, the investigator’s natural inclination is to look for a common cause or even a conspiracy. It is well known that the scandal of child abuse in the Catholic Church was poorly tackled by the Church itself. It took the intervention of outside agencies to give it the attention it needed – the courts, investigative journalists, official inquiries like the Royal Commission in Australia, or IICSA in England and Wales. And the Church’s response to these outside interventions was not always welcoming.

At times, journalists and the police – as in the recent case of Carl Beech, known as “Nick” – have been willing to believe the worst, far further than the evidence justifies. The issue of paedophilia does sometimes seem to unbalance the sanest of minds. There was a time

when the intense concentration by some journalists on the story of abuse by priests came close to a witch-hunt, and when many in the Church saw every journalistic enquiry or investigation as an attempt to “get us”, which had to be resisted as roughly as possible. This was at play in the misjudged attempt by the Church to try to prevent the BBC airing the episode in the documentary series *Kenyon Confronts*, which had tracked down a priest who had fled to the US to escape allegations of abuse. In the programme’s wake, he was extradited and convicted. It struck me that this was a collision between two proud and august institutions, each of which regarded the other as acting improperly and in bad faith. As a neutral observer who has looked into the matter closely, I would say neither of them was. Mutual incomprehension, more likely. And it was the BBC, in its exposure of the case of a priest abuser who had been appointed Catholic chaplain to Gatwick Airport, which persuaded Cormac Murphy-O’Connor to commission the groundbreaking Nolan Report.

I personally experienced both aspects. A regular broadcaster myself, for a time I seemed to have become the BBC’s “go-to man” for comment on child abuse stories in the Church, especially when the Church itself refused to comment. The biggest problem I encountered was the sheer ignorance of religious matters on the part of BBC producers and reporters. They were inclined to give credence to the most unlikely rumours. When an interview I gave to BBC radio was unfairly cut, I complained, and received an apology – an event deemed so rare that *The Daily Telegraph* remarked on it in an editorial.

IT IS VERY difficult to deal with a story like child abuse in the Catholic Church, when it remains mysterious why cases of abuse rapidly escalated 40 years ago, and it remains equally mysterious why cases declined even more rapidly some years later. That timeline is clear from the evidence, though it has received almost no attention in the media. And while “clericalism” might explain the inept and clumsy way some bishops responded to the scandal, and the extreme difficulty victims often had in being believed when they tried to raise the alarm, it is hard to relate clericalism to the rise and fall shown by the timeline. Was clericalism suddenly so rife in the 1960s, and if so, why did it retreat so fast in the 1980s?

There is more to this than meets the eye, and some serious questions still need answering. There remains something fundamentally awry in the Church when a survivor of abuse can say of her experience of safeguarding: “The Church’s treatment of me has traumatised me again and again”. But for the moment at least, it seems to me that the factors which led to the abuse of children and vulnerable adults by Catholic priests, whatever they were, are no longer present. Whether that is because the Catholic Church now has excellent child safeguarding procedures in place, or whether they have in fact made no great difference one way or the other, I honestly cannot say.

If we are to restore a broken world to wholeness and justice after the pandemic, governments and agencies must recognise that religion is part of the solution, not part of the problem / **By PATRICK WATT**

Repairing our common home

EFFORTS TO end global poverty are at a crossroads. Covid-19 is the biggest setback to international development in a generation: the economic downturn it has triggered could plunge 150 million more people below the extreme poverty line of \$1.90 a day, according to the World Bank. Hunger and unemployment is rising, 11 million girls may never return to education after school closures, and new divides are opening up, over access to digital technology in a world of lockdowns, and to life-saving vaccines. Covid has laid bare and deepened inequalities in a world that was already failing to provide a social floor for millions of people, while simultaneously breaking through the environmental ceiling of our common home.

The pandemic is also creating massive social and political fallout. Governments have been sorely tested, civic space has been squeezed, and assumptions about the steady march of progress have been shaken. A summer of protest over racial violence raised searching questions about whether the arc of the moral universe really does, in the words of Martin Luther King, “bend towards justice”. It has also generated a challenge to those working in international development, with a growing clamour for the aid system to “decolonise” and shift the centre of power from the offices of development agencies in Europe to people living in poverty.

A PUBLIC conversation is under way about how to “build back better” from the pandemic, and not return to a world that – in its levels of inequality and environmental destruction – was never “normal”. So this feels like a good moment to revisit deeply held views that have dominated approaches to tackling poverty, and in doing this, to ask whether there is such a thing as a “Christian” approach to development, and if so, how it can offer a more positive vision for the future.

The origins of development theory can be traced to European Enlightenment ideas about the rationality and perfectibility of human beings. They told a story of a linear, if complex progression towards a better world. As European economic and cultural dominance grew, a mythology of power developed around it that buttressed the colonial enterprise and often drew on explicitly racist ideas. If modern theories of development share with



PHOTO: CAFOD, THOM FLINT

A woman in Uganda being trained as a water-pump mechanic

Christianity a teleology – a sense of history’s final destination – they depart from Christianity in placing that destination firmly in this world. Economically and technologically advanced societies in Europe and North America were “developed”, with other, less developed societies involved in a game of catch up.

International development is full of such spatially and temporally loaded ideas – from language about people who are “left behind” and “hard to reach”, to ideas of “under-development”. For many, religious belief and practice form part of this account, as a symptom and cause of under-development. They believed that as societies became richer, religion would wither, to be replaced by more rational world-views.

THIS HAS LED to strange tensions in international development. There is a recognition that in poorer countries religion is a fact on the ground, which profoundly shapes people’s thoughts and actions, and with which development actors need to engage. It’s also the case that faith-based organisations play a disproportionately significant role in efforts to tackle poverty. But the idea that religious approaches might offer a fuller approach to human development and flourishing receives little attention. As Sabina Alkire has put it,

there’s more openness to Christians doing development, than there is to doing Christian development.

Yet international development could profit from deeper engagement with Christian thought. First, there is the fundamental question of how we conceive of progress. Mainstream approaches to development are dominated by a focus on consumption and growth that is environmentally and socially destructive. Rather than seeing development as a process of accumulation and acquisition, we would do better to approach extreme poverty as a struggle for justice, that has to be renewed in every generation. From a Christian perspective, this chimes with a view of development as *being* more, not *having* more. Development sorely needs a more realistic account of what it is to be human, which reclaims virtues like love, equality and solidarity. As Anna Rowlands wrote in a recent essay on Pope Francis’s encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, we should not only ask the question, “Who is my neighbour?”, but, “How can I be a neighbour?” At its heart, poverty and injustice are a manifestation of broken relationships, between people, and between people and God. Only by acknowledging the need to restore relationships, and recognising our radical equality as created in the image and likeness of God, can we undergo the personal and political change needed to end poverty.

THIS LEADS to a second challenge, of how we build the common good, both at the community and political level. One test of whether we’re living in deep relationship is whether we’re able to identify, and contribute towards the common good. Yet we live in a world of such disfiguring inequalities that we are often unable to articulate what it is that we value collectively. Those same inequalities prevent many people from being able to participate in the creativity, generosity and productivity that underpin the common good. Pursuing it hinges on a prior level of equality, and a balance between state, market, and civil society, in which each plays their proper role and none dominates.

Finally, both the idea of mutual flourishing, and the common good, rest on a foundational idea, set out in Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’*, of the world as our common home. When we set ourselves apart from the created order, we are liable to forget our dependence on God, and the vocation to live in harmony with creation for the sake of this generation, and for future generations. An environmentally sustainable approach to development demands that we rediscover that vocation, and offer a world beset by ecological and social crises a hopeful vision of the future that can unite all people of goodwill.

Patrick Watt is Christian Aid’s Policy and Campaigns Director. This article is a shorter version of the 2020 Las Casas Lecture, delivered at Blackfriars, Oxford on 19 November.

The woman who founded the first female retreat house was born 400 years ago. Meeting setbacks in her life with faithfulness, flexibility and creativity, she provides a spiritual model for these more contemporary turbulent and uncertain times / By VICTORIA BIGGS

Loss and gain

IT WAS 21 October 1673. Dusk was falling over the Breton town of Vannes, and candles were flickering into life in the refectory of a spacious house. Rows of women's faces were discernible in the half-light. They were turned attentively towards a painting so large and vivid that it dominated the room. Then a woman's voice began to speak.

This was the first retreat house for women, and it had been founded by a woman, Catherine de Francheville (inset). She left few letters or other personal writings behind. Her story has dissolved into that of the religious community that grew out of her work, La Retraite. But what we do know of her life has particular relevance in the turmoil of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was



characterised by uncertainty, frustrated beginnings, and unexpected forks in the road. Francheville's story captures the value of the uncertain and the unexpected when they are met with faith and imagination.

She was born into a wealthy aristocratic family on 21 September 1620. Grinding poverty and wars of religion had left Breton society in tatters. Francheville was well educated and brought up with a strong faith – her father had arranged for Mass to be celebrated in the family's chateau – but most local people were receiving little to no education or pastoral care.

When Jesuit missionaries arrived, they opened retreat houses that offered eight-day programmes grounded in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. One of them, Fr

Vincent Huby, became Francheville's spiritual director and staunch friend. The retreats used colourful "moral pictures" to illustrate theological points, whose meaning a priest would explain each evening after supper.

Breton religious culture had a strong emphasis on the visual, so the Jesuits were rekindling a familiar way of prayer as well as teaching Catholic doctrine. The pictures "clarify the truths we want to make known", wrote Fr Huby, "and the impression is much clearer than if [people] only heard it. Everyone is enriched, the knowledgeable as well as the ignorant." But "everyone" referred only to men. If the idea of women taking eight days away from home for prayer and renewal even occurred to any of the Jesuit fathers, it is not recorded.

Franchville took a deep interest in the Jesuits' work of renewal, but she did not become personally involved until grief struck. Her mother died in 1655, and her father the following year. Shortly afterwards, 35-year-old Francheville agreed to marry René Rogier, a Breton aristocrat. Perhaps her decision to enter into a relatively late marriage sprang from loss and a desire for a family of her own, or perhaps she had fallen in love. She set out to meet her fiancé in Rennes, but as she reached the gates of the city, she encountered his funeral cortège.

MARRIAGE OR monastic life were the only two paths in life available to women in the seventeenth century. Francheville was not drawn to either. She moved to Vannes and embraced a life of prayer lived out in her own home, taking care of a niece who had been entrusted to her, and making regular visits to prisoners, and sick and housebound people. Restless for something more, she was struck low by discouragement and doubt. But she was comforted by the words of a friend who was an Ursuline nun, who told her: "There is one thing that you will never need to repent, and that is to have served God too late."

Any lingering melancholy was transformed into a purposeful zeal on Ash Wednesday 1661. "You say that you are Christians," one of the Jesuit priests told the congregation. "Show me your faith by your works."

Franchville embraced a more austere life, cutting her hair and giving away her jewellery. She prepared meals for the sick and hungry. She used her wealth to care for orphaned children and young Irish refugees who had fled Cromwell's persecution. But in the middle of her intense activity and prayer, her thoughts went frequently to the women she knew –



SAVE 50%

ON 12 CRAFT WINES

PLUS FREE DELIVERY TO YOUR DOOR

Virgin Wines are delighted to offer readers a **massive HALF PRICE** saving on 12 luxurious wines from around the world! Normally worth up to £11.99 each, these are yours for **just £5.49 a bottle**, complete with **free express delivery** direct to your door!

Boasting silky-smooth reds, crisp, refreshing whites, and even a luxurious bottle of bubbly, this offer also acts as the perfect introduction to Virgin Wines'

WineBank service which allows you, as a member, to earn 20% interest on the money you save, giving you big discounts on the wines you want... and all with free express delivery as standard.

Luxury Mixed Selection
12 bottles | Was £130.88 - NOW £65.88
Plus FREE delivery

TO ORDER: Visit www.virginwines.co.uk/VC2822
or call 0343 224 1001 quoting VC2822

Terms and Conditions: Please allow between 1-3 working days for delivery, however 85% of orders are arriving next working day. New customers only. UK Delivery only. You must be 18 years of age or over to buy alcohol. Strictly one case per customer. Not to be combined with any other promotion. By redeeming this offer you agree to try the Virgin Wines WineBank. WineBank uses easy monthly top-ups to save for your wine and rewards you with £1 for every £5 you deposit, plus free delivery on all future purchases. There's no obligation to buy any more wine. Your default monthly payment is £25 which you can change on Virgin Wines' website. You can cancel your WineBank membership at any time and withdraw any funds you've added. Offer is unavailable to existing WineBank members. Wines described are subject to availability and may be swapped for a similar wine of equal or greater value. Images for illustration purposes only. For full terms and conditions, visit <https://www.virginwines.co.uk/terms>

women of all social classes, both educated and illiterate, with a common spiritual hunger. Why should there not be a retreat house for women?

Her Jesuit friends pledged their services as preachers. Francheville gathered a number of women in sympathy with her aims, demoiselles, who would assist her in caring for retreatants and providing spiritual accompaniment. And in October 1673 she opened the doors of her own home, and the first retreatants arrived.

ALTHOUGH THE retreats were preached by the Jesuits, the demoiselles gave the evening reflections on the sacred images. As the talks were given by candlelight, with retreatants gazing at the paintings rather than at the speakers, the identities of Francheville and the other demoiselles were subsumed by the spirituality they were bringing to life. They were not nuns, and wore simple, sober clothing of the sort that any devout Breton woman might adopt. Francheville's remarkable flexibility and ability to live in quiet harmony with her surroundings became hallmarks of La Retraite, and ensured the mission's survival.

The women-only retreat house generated controversy, and a year after it opened, the new Bishop of Vannes forbade retreats for women. The following year he reconsidered, and the house opened once again. To safeguard her mission, in 1675 Francheville formally established the retreat house – and with it a community of women consecrated to retreat work. Women began to arrive in their hundreds, testifying to the hunger for the ministry of La Retraite.

Francheville's responsiveness to turbulence has profound contemporary relevance. Many religious communities have shrunk and are winding down; and parish communities are being transformed as a second lockdown has again stopped public worship. The dominant narrative around both these changes has centred on loss.

FRANCHEVILLE WAS not preoccupied with maintaining a particular form of religious life or wedded to an exact formula for the retreats. She did not experience frustrations and difficulties as losses, but simply as invitations to adapt to God's will. This spirituality – “confidence in God who supports the weak” – gave the demoiselles faith that every situation was an opportunity for evangelism, and this conviction became their own place of retreat amid turmoil.

Catherine de Francheville died on 23 March 1689. There are none of the diaries and letters so often left behind by the founders of religious orders. Her most tangible spiritual legacy is her courage, adaptability and faith-filled understanding of loss. As one sister of La Retraite put it: “We're a small community, but we can still give everything, the way she did.”

Victoria Biggs is La Retraite assistant professor in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University.

I am finding – to my genuine surprise – that I very much miss the singing at Mass



I am tone-deaf – and have been since childhood.

To be precise, I am not 100 per cent tone-deaf, but I cannot accurately or reliably tell the difference between two piano keys less than about four or five tones apart and grew up believing that the black keys on the piano were a “cunning trick” by grown-ups to make playing more challenging (like Latin irregular verbs).

I went to the sort of girls' school where learning an instrument was compulsory, but when I was about 14 my music teacher's termly report read, “Alas, poor Sara”. And both my parents and the school gave up the doomed endeavour to instruct me. The natural consequences of this “disability” is that music conveys very little to me emotionally and good manners dictate that I should not sing in public (I do sing alone in my house, and particularly in my car).

Nonetheless, I am finding – to my genuine surprise – that I VERY much miss the singing at Mass – presently cancelled as part of the “Covid safe” response to the pandemic. I want to be clear: I understand the health reasons for making this decision and accept and even “agree” with them. I do not believe that singing increases the “validity” of the sacrament or even necessarily the unity of the body. I have never felt that Mass without singing was in any way “deficient”. But I miss it.

I have been trying to work out why this should be. And one thing I have been noticing is just how full of rather noisy music the Bible is: the psalms instruct us to praise God not just on the “well-tuned cymbals”, but on the “loud cymbals” as well.

And also that we should “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord ... make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.”

Because of the variety of translations, I have found it extremely difficult even to try and work out just how many different musical instruments are mentioned in the Bible, but it is a surprisingly large number. And that is before you start on singing – and not just human singing: the angels are at it constantly, “unceasingly” we are told (though quite how they play harps and

trumpets while singing unceasingly is a mystery).

This relationship between music and worship, music and public prayer, is not in any way a specifically Judaeo-Christian thing. It seems to be a more or less human thing. As far as I can find out, every society that anthropologists, archaeologists and historians have studied, has a ritual use of singing or instrumental music (or both) embedded in their religious practice. (Strict practices of Islam do not use instrumental music, but do have unaccompanied singing.) Percussion instruments (drums, rhythm makers) appear to be the oldest – along with the human voice – but they are surprisingly quickly followed by both string and wind instruments. Bagpipes were originally developed by the Hittites before 1000 BCE.

So perhaps missing music and singing at Mass is simply an atavistic response, a throwback. What makes it curious in my case is twofold – first, as I explained at the beginning, I do not have the usual response to music either emotionally or aesthetically. And secondly, I have a high level of commitment to silent prayer – though some traditional practices permit or even encourage instrumental music as a background to meditation; and the more silent of the Catholic enclosed religious communities tend to be more committed to the singing of the Divine Office.

However, there is a far less grand and high-minded explanation of my sense of loss. The music in my parish church is rather exceptionally joyful. We do not have an organist, or even an organ. We do not have a piano. We do not have a choir. We have a little band – it is guitar-led but anyone who wants to play any instrument at all is apparently welcome. It has a kind of joyous casualness about it (although I know it must be hard work really). A rather ecclesiastically conservative friend of mine came with me to Mass once, and afterwards he said, “That's the sort of Church music that I usually hate – and it was lovely – it was such fun.”

Perhaps the angels and saints sing unceasingly because they find it fun. That would be most encouraging.



Sara Maitland is a novelist and writer.

Super Mario

FR PAUL GRAHAM OSA, an old friend of *The Tablet*, now lives in the Augustinians' headquarters in Rome, where he is a member of the Prior General's team, helping oversee the global work of one of the great religious orders.

There are about a dozen in the community, and they have a few spare rooms. They had a call last year from a diocesan bishop of a small country who had been asked to take up a job in the Roman curia. Could he stay with them until the Vatican sorted out his accommodation? "He's still with us," Fr Paul tells me. "He joins us for prayers, meals and recreation; he even joined us on some of our summer hikes in the Apennines. He is affable, easy company, serves at table and clears away the dishes."

One Sunday morning last month, he joined Fr Paul at a nearby hostel for the homeless to serve breakfast and say Mass for the residents. Afterwards he slipped off to the Jesuits down the road for a coffee. The Augustinians live just across the street from St Peter's Square, and on Sundays they go up to the roof to hear the Pope deliver his midday message and recite the Angelus.



"The speaker system is excellent, so we can hear him clearly," Paul says. "That Sunday, Francis announced he would create thirteen new cardinals. To my astonishment, the first name he called out was Mario Grech. Our house guest!"

When he turned up for Midday Prayer before lunch, the Maltese cardinal-to-be, who only a few weeks earlier had succeeded Lorenzo Baldisseri as the secretary general of the Synod of Bishops, had an air of stunned surprise. Had Pope Francis told him beforehand? "Not a word." On his way back from

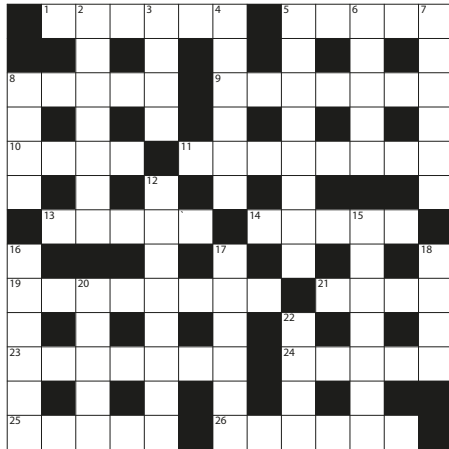
the Jesuits, somebody recognised him in the street and offered him congratulations. That was the first he'd heard of his nomination as a cardinal.

"A POPE OF SURPRISES" was Fr Paul's immediate reaction to the news of Bishop Mario's elevation. "My hope is, Francis will surprise us with a female cardinal one day. Mario's story puts flesh on the bones of Pope Francis's promise to 'go to the periphery'. The other nominations include the first African American; a vicar apostolic from Brunei; a parish priest; and a Franciscan in charge of the shrine in Assisi. As Karl Rahner famously said, God's grace is at work everywhere in the world, but not everyone recognizes it. The Church exists *for* the world; it embraces the world in its arms, sinners and all, powerfully symbolized by Bernini's colonnade in St Peter's Square, which I walk by every day."

Mario Grech will receive his red hat next Saturday, along with the other new cardinals. "I will pray for Mario and for all of them," Fr Paul says, "and remember that red is not just a flashy colour that looks impressive in shimmering silk. It is the colour of human blood that flows from real wounds."

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 733 Enigma



Across

- 1 A PhD is not wanted by fruit growers (6)
5 This book *The Christmas Five*, is a work of fiction (5)
8 One of those in Yorkshire, the lowest in rank, is Doctor Who's enemy (5)
9 A city-dweller; he is palindromic and pale (7)
10 A theologian who is holy puts two and two together (4)
11 There may be health benefits in frequenting these bars (8)
13 With the dawning of knowledge, a slippery customer will prepare to pray (5)
14 One taking a terrible risk with a drug goes downhill rapidly (5)
19 Where the good news is concerned, an evangelist is one (8)
21 little weight given to one student

in a knockout (4)

- 23 Come back, sir! One from 9 Across needs food (7)
24 Decorate for a party for some British sailors (5)
25 Why did that toad dare to steal the abacus? (2,3)
26 Throw cold water on study about electrical measurement (6)

Down

- 2 A friend brings uproar in Charlemagne's court (7)
3 Seeing a clumsy sister is annoying; not the beginning of the end (4)
4 "Seek not the centre; love not the English"; a European's cryptic writing (6)
5 Ingratitude? I won't accept it! (2,6)

- 6 One of the five makes a solemn promise to the Spanish (5)
7 Poor Nelly, having nothing, feels unwanted (6)
8 Shakespeare's return was colourless (4)
12 Return to discourage the judge who searched so diligently (8)
15 Sending the wretched pie in my direction was the most typical example (7)
16 A brass band is heard returning from Noah's destination (6)
17 Make a note: start reviving the Latin creed (6)
18 It's the bit in front that makes it valuable (4)
20 In the Italian dictionary, this dish brings us up to the letter "B" (5)
22 We need a bit of a hand! The pious person left during the prayer (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 21 November, *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 Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

■ We cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.

Prizes kindly donated by

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com

SUDOKU | Tough

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

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

Solution to the 31 October puzzle

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

Solution to the 31 October crossword No. 730

Across: 7 Hiatus; 8 Joseph; 10 Chekhov; 11 Remus; 12 Ankh; 13 Elegy; 17 Mitty; 18 Slur; 22 Torah; 23 Onassis; 24 Isaiah; 22 Canice.

Down: 1 Choctaw; 2 Pavelka; 3 Rushy; 4 Courage; 5 Germs; 6 Ghost; 9 Evolution; 14 Rich man; 15 Plastic; 16 Crested; 19 Stoic; 20 Priam; 21 Sarah.

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.

Vanier's victims

● I want to thank you for the detailed article on Jean Vanier ("A double life", 7 November). As a victim, now survivor, of sexual abuse perpetrated by someone also considered to be a "living saint", I appreciated the care and candour in Ronan Sharkey's article.

It is hard to explain the suffering that such abuse causes: if some traumatic events in life could be described as disturbing an internal "compass" so that one is not sure of where to go next, this kind of abuse crushes the internal gyroscope, so that one is not even sure any longer which way is up. Typically, a clear-eyed appreciation of what has happened takes more than 20 years to surface – in my case it took nearly 40.

I ask everyone to be cautious about high-energy charming individuals, especially those who will brook no contradictions and think that rules are for other people. Both Jean Vanier and my abuser (not a Catholic) were talented people with a message to share with the world. Both left behind wounded and betrayed Christians whose life and faith will never be the same.

(DR) RACHEL NICHOLLS
CAMBRIDGE

Nichols must go

● The IICSA report makes clear the leadership of the Catholic Church in this country betrayed the vulnerable and that emissaries of the Vatican were complicit.

The report is highly critical of the leadership of Cardinal Nichols, but one searches in vain for any admission of personal responsibility in his statements on the matter.

Instead he apologises repeatedly on behalf of the Church for its failings. He says the Church is deeply sorry. He keeps saying "we". For 20 years, first in Birmingham and then in Westminster, he personally led and shaped a culture that took the part of perpetrators against victims.

For Nichols to say "On we go" adds insult to injury. Catholics who wish to make a break with this sordid chapter should be loud and clear in saying "Off you go." Nichols' departure will not on its own change the culture but it is a necessary first step.

CYRIL COOPER
BIRMINGHAM

● Catherine Pepinster's article ("Voices of suffering and survival", 14 November) powerfully conveys the feeling of survivors of abuse in the Catholic Church, and I hope their voices will be heard. But equally striking has been the absence of comment on the issues raised by the IICSA report from the leadership of

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Abuse scandals disgrace the Church

THE IICSA REPORT on child abuse and the Vatican report on the McCarrick case in the US have, once more, brought to the fore the appalling way child abuse has been dealt with in the Catholic Church.

A Canon Law instruction from 1922 stated that the investigation of abuse by a priest should be subject to the "Pontifical Secret" and dealt with in-house. Part of the purpose of this secrecy was to prevent "scandal to the faithful", which might undermine their faith.

Well, that has been a success, hasn't it? It was rescinded by Pope Francis only last December. He, at least, has tried to put things right, but his predecessors have a lot to answer for. The damage done to so many people is shameful to all of us who still practise our faith, but especially to the institutional Church.

Other victims are the many faithful clerics who have lived up to their vocation and yet have been tarred with the same brush. One of these is named in Catherine Pepinster's article ("Voices of suffering and survival", 14 November) as Archbishop Bernard Longley of Birmingham, who, as one of the victims said, was "kind, humble and understanding".

You may be tempted to think that the Church was a boys' club that closed ranks to protect their own. I wonder if things would have been different if there had been more women in the Church with influence and power. Pope Francis is trying to address this, but is hampered by conservative

factions. The failure of the papal nuncio to accede to requests by IICSA to give details of what was known is a disgrace. Only mandatory reporting of such crimes will suffice in future; "Rome" still has a lot to answer for.

GAIL BROWN
KIDDERMINSTER,
WORCESTERSHIRE

I ACT AS communications officer and website administrator for our parish. Last week I was forbidden by the parish priest to put a link (only a link) to the IICSA report – a public document – on the parish website. The reason given was that "the sort of people [sic] who want to read this sort of document know perfectly well how to find it. The whole business is leaving me somewhat suicidal. I therefore wish to exercise my veto."

It is astounding that such censorship should still be applied, for it replicates the very behaviours the report condemns – lack of openness, and preservation by those in authority both of the institution and of themselves.

It is equally concerning that the word "suicidal" should be used. If it is meant, then steps must be taken to help someone in a pastoral role who is so obviously fragile. If it was not meant, then it is particularly distasteful, in that some of the victims did indeed kill themselves.

Are lessons really being learned?
NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED

the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The attitude of most of the Catholic hierarchy seems to be that if they stay silent, the problem will go away. I can assure them that it will not. Survivors are determined to ensure that the hierarchy is held to account. Their courageous campaigning will continue, and church leaders will not escape accountability by hiding from public view.

RICHARD SCORER
HEAD OF ABUSE LAW, SLATER AND
GORDON, MANCHESTER

● Cardinal Nichols insists the Pope has asked him to remain as Cardinal Archbishop. It is not clear if the request to stay in post

was related to the IICSA report or his reaching the age of 75.

Nichols and the hierarchy are now irrelevant to many Catholics in England and Wales. The utter failure to address sexual abuse only serves to highlight the staggering incompetence of bishops and the institution of the Church in this country.

More discussion among these men will not succeed. They are shuffling deckchairs on the *Titanic*, oblivious to the truth that the ship is sinking fast. For a person like me who has been a Mass-going Catholic for a lifetime, the end has come. I am heading off in a lifeboat, away from a corrupt institution that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

looks to its own interests rather than those of the people it was called to serve.

IAN MCKAY
LEICESTER

● I fail to understand why Cardinal Vincent Nichols has not resigned following yet further scathing comments from IICSA.

I was the executive producer of a BBC television documentary, highlighted by IICSA, that exposed the cover-up of paedophile priests in the Archdiocese of Birmingham while he was archbishop there. Disgracefully, Nichols chose to attack the messenger rather than hang his head in shame, as reported by *The Tablet* ("The Archbishop and the BBC", 24 August 2019).

It matters not one jot if, as claimed, the Pope has recently rejected his offer to go. If Cardinal Nichols had a shred of integrity he would have stood down. He has done incalculable damage to the Church, with many now questioning their faith.

PAUL WOOLWICH
PRODUCER, KENYON CONFRONTS,
GOUDHURST, KENT

● The scope of the IICSA report which covers four decades is bound to produce anomalies. Cardinal Nichols was not even a bishop when many of these deeds were perpetrated.

In the early days of the abuse scandal, neither the Church nor

the criminal justice system knew just how widespread the iniquitous practice of abusing children really was. Had the Church acted with due diligence when the full scope of the problem became apparent and handed the whole matter over to the police, there need never have been an initial Nolan report.

BERNARD CARTWRIGHT
STOURBRIDGE, WEST MIDLANDS

Power to the laity

● It is unlikely that the Catholic Church will succeed in reforming its handling of sexual abuse allegations unless it dramatically reforms the way it is led.

The laity must have the courage to find its own voice and it is impossible to do this through the existing structures. Pastoral councils whether parish or diocesan, are advisory only.

Bishops have a duty to care for the priests in their diocese but their chief duty should be the welfare of their whole flock. They are not a variety of trade union leader for the clergy. We should sweep away the system of secrecy that encourages clergy to reach conclusions about themselves by themselves.

The laity should have a part in these decisions right up to the very top. Why is the Pope elected only by cardinals?

DAPHNE BAGSHAW
ROTHERFIELD, EAST SUSSEX

● The Holy Spirit seems a long way from the Church as it is. There needs to be a council of the faithful nationally and internationally, laity, Religious and clergy, to look at issues of accountability and a bold rethinking of how to relay the Gospel in 2020. We cannot continue as we are.

JOHN MEACHAM
HAYLING ISLAND,
HAMPSHIRE

Hall of mirrors

Who will say "The buck stops here – with me?" Any secular organisation whose members had perpetrated such wide-scale abuse of its vulnerable stakeholders would surely have been subject to rigorous judicial investigation. Its directors would have been made accountable.

If for "directors" we substitute "bishops" the problem comes into focus, for neither priests, bishops nor cardinals are employees. They are members of a collegial body, the "Church", which will only restrain or remove when gross scandal threatens.

Anyone who has tried to protest about the abuse of power in the Church may find themselves thrashing about in a bewildering hall of mirrors where the location of power and responsibility is impossible to find.

PETER FELL
MANCHESTER

Future priesthood

● *The Tablet* is to be congratulated on its coverage following the publication of the IICSA report. Both the editorial ("The Church stands shamed again", 14 November) and Catherine Pepinster's article offer a frank and honest assessment of disturbing predatory activity within our Church. We owe the victims of abuse more than hollow words of "sincere apology".

The establishment of a national commission to examine the future pattern of priesthood would begin to show that we are serious in seeking reform. We can no longer hide from the implications of the celibate life as a necessary condition for ordination.

CHRIS McDONNELL,
MIKE KERRIGAN
MOVEMENT FOR MARRIED
CLERGY, LITTLE HAYWOOD,
STAFFORDSHIRE

FA 1, Church 0

● The chairman of the Football Association resigns for a very poor choice of words. Cardinal Nichols does not resign for his inaction which has caused great distress to so many. Who would have thought that the Football Association would have a greater moral compass than the Catholic Church?

CHRIS WILCOCKS
GRAVESEND, KENT

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

O God that art the only hope of the world,
The only refuge for unhappy men,
Abiding in the faithfulness of heaven,
Give me strong succour in this testing place.
O King, protect thy man from utter ruin
Lest the weak faith surrender to the tyrant,
Facing innumerable blows alone.
Remember I am dust, and wind, and shadow,
And life as fleeting as the flower of grass.
But may the eternal mercy which hath shone
From time of old

Rescue thy servant from the jaws of the lion.
Thou who didst come from on high in the cloak of flesh,
Strike down the dragon with that two-edged sword
Whereby our mortal flesh can war with the winds
And beat down strongholds, with our Captain God.

BEDE

FROM *MORE LATIN LYRICS*, TRANSLATED BY HELEN WADDELL, EDITED BY DAME FELICITAS CORRIGAN (GOLLANCZ, 1976)

The body possesses this defect – the more you give it, the more it requires. It is wonderful how fond it is of comfort, and what pretexts it



will offer to obtain it, however little needed; it deceives the unfortunate soul and prevents its making progress.

Remember how many poor people are ill and have no one to complain to – poverty and ease do not go together. Think, too, of the number of married women there are, many of them, as I know of good position in life, who, lest they should annoy their husbands dare not speak of the serious problems and poignant trials from which they suffer.

ST TERESA OF AVILA
FROM *A MONTH WITH ST TERESA OF AVILA*
EDITED BY RIMA DEVEREAUX (SPCK, 2018)

CALENDAR

Sunday 22 November:

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe (Year A)

Monday 23 November:

Feria or St Clement I, Pope and Martyr
or St Columban, Abbot

Tuesday 24 November:

St Andrew Dũng-Lạc, Priest,
and Companions, Martyrs

Wednesday 25 November:

Feria or St Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin
and Martyr

Thursday 26 November:

Feria

Friday 27 November:

Feria

Saturday 28 November:

Feria

Sunday 29 November:

First Sunday of Advent

♦ ♦ ♦

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

When hell came to Paris

Lucy Lethbridge is enthralled by an epic new documentary that tells the minute-by-minute story of the night France's greatest cathedral caught fire

PHOTO: BBC/GETTY IMAGES, AZIZ ARY NETO



Notre-Dame cathedral burns on the evening of 15 April 2019

WAS IT ONLY last year that the world watched, horrified, as flames tore through the medieval fabric of Notre-Dame, France's greatest cathedral, a jewel of European culture? It was early evening on Monday, 15 April 2019 – the beginning of Holy Week – when a fire alarm picked up a tiny indication of heat just as the bell had rung and the congregation assembled for the 6.15 p.m. Mass.

First shown on Monday in BBC4's *Storyville* series and now available on iPlayer, *The Night Notre-Dame Burned* is a documentary by Jules and Gédéon Naudet. As exciting as a thriller and as moving as the grandest epic, it picks up the unrolling events through the memories of those who were there, from the Mayor of Paris to the schoolchildren in

the pews at 6.15 who thought that they could smell burning. Firefighters, including first-time recruit Marie-Ange, were just packing up at the nearby fire station of Poissy, checking their equipment was in top working order. "Save or Die" is the fire service motto: "It reminds us of our vulnerability," said General Gallet, the service chief. Monsignor Chauvet, the engaging, bespectacled rector of the cathedral, was going home, stopping ("like any good country priest") at every bistro on the way to have a little drink and catch up on his parishioners' news.

At the first alarm, the building was rapidly evacuated – but security couldn't find any trace of fire. Aurélien, the technical director, and a colleague climbed the wooden stairs to the dense thicket of ancient timbers ("1,400 trees") below the cathedral's "forest", as its

huge roof is known. They were confronted by a churning mass of flames, 15ft high, fast devouring a structure that had stood for nearly a thousand years. Inside the cathedral, "an immaculate silence" reigned – but outside in the square, onlookers gasped as acrid clouds burst from the roof. Over at Poissy, the fire chief knew he had to "call in the biggest back-up that a firefighter can ask for".

The topmost roofs and towers of Notre-Dame, 150ft above the ground, are accessible only via two slender spiral staircases on the north and south transepts and newbie Mari-Ange, carrying 80-90lbs of equipment, was among those sent to enter the forest, the boiling heart of the fire. "It was so hot, so hot," she remembered. So hot, in fact, that the team's helmets changed colour, indicating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

that their protective gear had reached the limit of its resistance. Looking back at the moment when they faced the flames, the firefighters describe the fire as a living, breathing enemy, “a monster coming at us with its mouth wide open to devour us all”. “For us,” said Jeremy, a sergeant at Poissy, “this fire is alive”.

Below them, Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who was raised a Catholic but is now a self-proclaimed atheist, had rushed to the cathedral just as the spire, like a red hot dragon, crashed into the roof, throwing up a noxious plume of ochre smoke. She and Monsignor Chauvet fell into each other’s arms. “I cried out in prayer to God,” said Fr Chauvet. “What is it that you want? And why?” Gruff fire chief General Gallet, overwhelmed by the decisions he was having to confront, was impatient with the priest who had almost collapsed in shock. “I think I glowered,” he says now, ruefully.

President Macron swiftly arrived at the scene; by now, Paris had stopped. The riverbanks were lined 10-deep with crowds, many singing hymns, watching flames billowing into the night sky and tiny figures high above on ledges and parapets risking their lives to save France’s greatest monument.

Meanwhile, the wind had changed and General Gallet and his brigade feared the battle might be lost. If they could only keep the fire from getting into the wooden innards of the north tower and stop the great bells crashing down there was a chance they’d save the facade, they reckoned. The testimony of the two young firefighters who crawled into the burning bell tower is absolutely terrifying.

The race now was to rescue the cathedral’s treasures – particularly the Crown of Thorns, housed in Paris since 1248. Captain Franck, the firefighter charged with entering the blazing interior of the cathedral, triumphantly emerged at the sacristy door bearing it in his arms – only to learn that he had saved the replica. The real Crown was kept in a safe, the three doors of which could be opened only by password. “It is a treasure that transcends humanity,” said Antoine-Marie Préaut, regional curator of historic monuments, who was desperate to enter the cathedral. Which was all very well, thought Franck, but should we risk human life to retrieve it?

It became clear that, despite their acute reluctance, the firefighters would have to take Préaut and Laurent, the general manager of the cathedral, with them; only Laurent could open the safe. They gave them helmets and they entered the white-hot gloom, “not able to see an inch ahead”, groping their way along the outer walls. They led the firefighters to a room of keys, thousands of them, each one unlocking a tiny door, a portion of this huge edifice. In the middle of the room was a safe: Laurent knelt to open it and “suddenly my mind went blank”. (Man of action Franck

The race now was to rescue the treasures – particularly the Crown of Thorns, housed in Paris since 1248



Rector of Notre-Dame
Mgr Patrick Chauvet

rolled his eyes magnificently at the recollection.) He’d forgotten the password. An agony of waiting, a telephone call to someone outside, and finally the safe was open. Inside were the most precious objects in Notre-Dame: a nail from the Crucifixion; a piece of the wood of the Cross; the tunic of St Louis; and the Crown of Thorns. The men put them in their pockets and under their coats and staggered outside.

“It was the first piece of good news,” said Gallet of the saving of the Crown, while Fr Chauvet saw in it “a sign of hope”. After that, the firefighters charged into the interior and collected everything they could lay their hands on, candlesticks, crosses, paintings. “We experienced something out of time,” remembered one of them (and firefighters really do emerge as the natural poets of this piece). “In our uniforms we resembled monastic ants, working, working, working.”

This is an extraordinary documentary, a testament to unifying human courage and the deepest and rawest of shared emotions. Any doubt about the power of religious symbolism in a secular age should be surely dispelled by the burning of Notre-Dame: an intense, transcendent awe seems to characterise all the different experiences related here. I was struck by the “sketcher”, an artist employed by the French fire service to document their work (do British firefighters have sketchers? I hope so).

Wherever the action was, high in the roof, along the stone parapets, in the smoke-filled interior, there was Laurent, whose modesty belied his bravery. And while thousands of phones took pictures of the blaze that night, surely none can match the power of the sketcher’s watercolours. These are images – a shower of crimson cinders falling into the apse, the rose window glowing with terrible colour, the rapaciously flaming “forest” – by one who was literally feeling the heat.

PHOTO: BBC/PROPAGATE CONTENT

RADIO

A woman’s right to choose

Four Catholics give the female perspective on the presidential race

D.J. TAYLOR

Heart and Soul:
Catholic Women and the US elections

BBC WORLD SERVICE

MUCH, NATURALLY, has been made of the incoming American president’s Catholicism, by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and Twitter has been abuzz with news of the phone call he exchanged with Pope Francis. If Biden is only the second Catholic tenant of the White House, then it is exactly 60 years since the election of the first, and only 30 or so before then that the devout Catholic Democrat hopeful, Al Smith, was blown out of the water by Protestant bigotry.

Clearly assembled in no end of a hurry and beamed out from Minnesota, *Catholic Women and the US elections* (13 November), assembled four representatives of this influential demographic. As might have been expected, they split 50-50, with Sr Emily and the African-America Janee plumping for Biden and McKinsey and Malorie rooting for Trump. Faith had clearly been crucial to the way the campaign had been fought, their compère Angela Davis assured them, and in the aftermath it was going to take a whole lot more faith to heal America’s wounds.

UNSURPRISINGLY, the debate turned on the question of abortion: pro-life versus a woman’s right to choose. Here again, the Democrats were on one side and the Republicans on the other, the right-to-choose argument being neatly summarised by Sr Emily, who maintained that the primary challenge was to reduce the rate of abortion and that it was futile to expect that this could be brought about merely by criminalising it. Change could only come from society itself.

After that it soon became apparent that the abortion debate was only the symbol of a wider divide. Broadly speaking – for these were nuanced conversations conducted with great courtesy – the Democrats believed change had to be promoted by federal policy, while Republicans thought it could only begin in the home. Whatever the respective merits of the arguments, it was hard to ignore Janee’s point that 70 per cent of terminations in the US are the result of economic factors, with expectant mothers deciding that they have insufficient funds to raise a child.

One thing everyone agreed upon was the need for unity. Whatever the fear of what one Republican called “socialist situations”, political opponents had to listen to each other. So no doubt about it, Biden has his work cut out.

THEATRE

New horizons online

Pandemic hones digital drama

MARK LAWSON

What A Carve Up!

WWW.WHATACARVEUP.COM

THEATRES ARE shut again, although many venues are selling tickets for a planned post-2 December reopening – a defiant optimism that threatens a serious confrontation between industry and government if the second lockdown creeps beyond its currently announced end date.

A consolation is that the second death of live drama coincides with the release of an online play bringing together everything theatre-makers have learned about the artistic possibilities of digital techniques during the pandemic.

With a starry home-recorded voice-cast – including Derek Jacobi, Celia Imrie, Stephen Fry and Sharon D. Clarke – three regional theatres (the Barn in Cirencester, Huddersfield's Lawrence Batley Theatre and the New Wolsey in Ipswich) have co-produced an online production of Jonathan Coe's 1994 novel *What A Carve Up!*

A dark comedy about the throttling tentacular influence over Britain of the Winshaw dynasty, six of whose members are found mur-



Alfred Enoch stars in What a Carve Up!

dered at their mansion in 1991, it can be seen by choosing a date (until 29 November) and, for £12, receiving a viewing pass that allows 48-hour access.

Adapter Henry Filloux-Bennett and director Tamara Harvey have turned to their advantage current restrictions on dramatic production. Three actors (Alfred Enoch, Tamzin Outhwaite, and Fiona Button) appear on screen (alone or socially distanced), while the rest are audio-only. However, even before infection protocols, a trope of real-life crime podcasts and documentaries (such as Netflix's *Making a Murderer*) was to feature unseen speakers, through archive radio interviews, police tapes, answerphone and voicemail messages.

By invoking this genre to investigate, from the perspective of 2020, the Winshaws' lives and deaths, the feature-film-length piece elegantly excuses its hybrid TV-radio style. But

Harvey cleverly maximises the visual element through devices such as mock TV commercials and corporate training videos. The choice of the actors we can't see – such as Fry as a gentleman publisher, Jacobi playing an eccentric private detective, and Imrie's rather shifty witness – also sensibly favours those with a long training, through radio plays and audio-books, in making us see what is said.

Coe's novel, published in the fifteenth year of continuous Conservative government, excoriated what it saw as Tory greed, self-interest and cruelty, especially in the NHS, the food industry, and media ownership. Coming out during the eleventh year of right-wing governments (two each for Johnson, May and Cameron), the new version has resonances that Filloux-Bennett's script points up.

Using the contemporary framework of a Winshaw descendant giving (Prince Andrew-like) a foolish *Newsnight*-style interview intended to rehabilitate her family, the production also works in references to Dominic Cummings, Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Harvey Weinstein, further NHS "reforms" since Coe's book appeared and, inevitably, but rightly, the coronavirus.

Online drama will never replicate the pleasures of live performance, but makes quality work available to those excluded from theatres for reasons of geography or mobility, and has its own craft and rewards. With playhouses shut, *What A Carve Up!* is not just better than nothing – it's really something.

MUSIC

Polyphony unpicked

The nuts and bolts of choral music

ALEXANDRA COGHLAN

Sunday Evenings with Stile Antico

WWW.VIMEO.COM/ONDEMAND/SUNDAYSWITHSTILE

IF YOU'VE ever found yourself at a choral concert nodding sagely at references to "organum", "alternatim" or "mensuration" without really understanding what they mean, letting them wash over you with the same evocative abstraction as the music itself, then Stile Antico's digital series is for you.

Over the course of four 45-minute episodes, the group pop the hood on renaissance polyphony, inviting their audience to take a look at the complex machinery – social and historical as well as technical – that is the engine of its masterpieces.

Stylishly filmed by the team behind the Live From London digital festival, who make the most of the keen acoustic and graceful interior of Christopher Wren's Church of St Anne and St Agnes in the City, the series blends analysis with documentary and performance.

Some of the ground is well trodden. An episode on Thomas Tallis revisits some of the period's best-known anthems – "If Ye Love Me", "Loquebantur variis linguis", "O sacrum



Members of Stile Antico present the series

convivium", all beautifully sung by the group – but frames them in a persuasive argument: Tallis becomes the Thomas More of music, a "Man For All Seasons" who, as a recusant Catholic, was able to weather the shifting religious regimes of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I rather more successfully than his political counterpart.

As the story moves through the four monarchs we hear the reinventions of a composer working to shifting restrictions and rubrics, now free to produce the florid Latin-texted motets of Mary's reign, now confined to the vernacular, textual-driven clarity of Edward's.

An episode on plainchant – the melodic foundation of all renaissance church music – is more adventurous. Making a virtue of their enforced new digital format, the group display scores in real time beneath performances of music, highlighting individual lines to demonstrate the complex transformations and reinventions of the chant that would be impossible to discern just by ear. It's a technical entry point to works whose human brilliance often gets lost behind an incense cloud of soft-focus spirituality.

The group's members present the series themselves, but unlike rival offerings by the Marian Consort and The Sixteen, the approach is less discussion and more formal lecture. The effect is stiff, the written script stifling both the singers' personalities and their knowledge, overloading the viewer with facts that would slip down far more easily in the back-and-forth of conversation.

Also missing are the details only the performers can give us: what does this music feel like to sing? How do you go about shaping an enormous work like Tallis' incredibly complex *Miserere Nostri*? And above all, how do you go about preparing and performing these works, as Stile do, without a conductor? A bit less dispassionate BBC documentary and a bit more after-hours chat, more rehearsal footage as well as polished performance, would give these episodes the USP they need in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace.

BOOKS

• OUR REVIEWERS •

NICHOLAS VINCENT is professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia • PAMELA BEASANT is a poet and writer based in Orkney • JAMES MORAN is professor of modern English literature and drama at Nottingham University • LUCY LETHBRIDGE is The Tablet's television critic • SUE GAISFORD is a former literary editor of The Tablet

A good man, but no saint

This fine biography of Edward the Confessor is both entertaining and elegiac

NICHOLAS VINCENT

**Edward the Confessor:
Last of the Royal Blood**
TOM LICENCE

(YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 352 PP, £25)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50 • TEL 020 7799 4064

AS WITH the last of every species, the fate of Edward the Confessor's bloodline tends to overshadow any personal details of his life. After him the deluge. As with the Dodo or the Galapagos mouse, of course, Edward's physical remains outlasted extinction. What was claimed to be his crown was used by every subsequent medieval king, surviving into the 1640s when it was melted down to pay for Cromwell's wars. Even then, a jewel or two, and a throne, described as Edward's (in reality of Edward I rather than the Confessor), are used in the coronation ceremony even today. Not only this, but of all the saints of pre-Reformation England, Edward is the only one whose body still rests in its pre-Reformation shrine in Westminster Abbey, more or less intact. This despite disinterment at the command of Henry VIII, reburial under Mary and damage by scaffolding used for the coronation of James II in 1685. Of the few trinkets removed from that latest disturbance most, perhaps all, were lost when James, another dynastic bin end, fled into exile.

Meanwhile, so many myths were woven around Edward, last of the West Saxon line, that almost immediately after death he was transformed from flesh and blood into archetype and make-believe. Whether as staunch patriot, or as feeble stooge of foreign powers, it was Edward whose lack of offspring condemned England to Norman conquest. "Very much liked at first", but "idle", Edward allowed himself and his kingdom to be dominated by others, as readers of *Little Arthur's History of England* were informed in 1835. So pious was Edward, according to the authors of *1066 and All That*, that it was only "with difficulty" that he could be prevented from confessing to crimes of which he was entirely innocent.

Fifty years ago, Frank Barlow published a biography of Edward intended to shatter such preconceptions. Far from a pious dotard, Barlow's Edward was both vigorous and cunning, keener on hunting than on prayer.



PHOTO: PA, BANDEEP SINGH

Accidentally propelled on to a throne that he had no expectation of inheriting, he was then outmanoeuvred by the men who had placed him there: Earl Godwin, and Godwin's sons, the sinister mafiosi Harold and Tostig. Had Edward himself fathered an heir, his posterity might have been secured. Failure to deal with this succession crisis was thus his greatest personal shortcoming.

TOM LICENCE's new life overturns each of these contentions in turn. Far from being accidental, Edward's succession was carefully planned. Edward indeed was a master propagandist, employing ritual, pageantry and the legitimacy of his bloodline to broadcast a new, more splendid, fully Europeanised image of English kingship. In his relations with the Godwins, he was as much the author as the victim of manipulation. Far from leaving the succession to chance, thereby fuelling the hopes of half a dozen rival claimants, Edward very publicly decreed that the throne should pass to his half-brother's grandson, Edgar the Aetheling.

To establish these points, Licence has dug deep into the sources, not least into the so-called *Vita Edwardi*, a contemporary life that

Edward the Confessor depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry

Barlow was the first successfully to translate. As is now recognised, Barlow's translation subtly but deliberately distorted the intentions of an author, identified by Licence as the Flemish monk Folcard of St-Bertin. Folcard's account blended poetry and prose into the flimsiest of narratives, teetering somewhere between history, hagiography and, as Licence demonstrates, a contest between personified moral imperatives borrowed from the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, a contemporary of St Augustine. Licence in turn adopts Folcard as his model, alternating passages of crisp forensic analysis with more rhapsodic flights of fancy. Here the estates of Harold, "Edward's golden boy", spread out across southern England like those of "a great lounging mastiff". Edward himself, freed from the constraints of time, contemplates his legacy, Westminster Abbey, "rising through the mists of the Thames". Not every reader will spot the deliberate evocations of Folcard or Prudentius. But many will be grateful for such interludes, interrupting what would otherwise be a tedious

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



**RECENTLY
PUBLISHED**

Everyday Blessings / ALED JONES / HODDER & STOUGHTON, £14.99; TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99 / Drawing on spiritual wisdom down the ages, the singer and presenter offers daily nuggets of wisdom to take you through the coming year

Longing, love and loss

PAMELA BEASANT

Grimoire

ROBIN ROBERTSON

(PICADOR, 80 PP, £14.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49 • TEL 020 7799 4064

ROBIN ROBERTSON's (pictured) *Grimoire* – “a handbook for invoking spirits” – taps into something ancient, like all the best stories. In this beautifully spare and distilled poetic form, however, these new Scottish folk tales rise from the page like the supernatural beings they give voice to, and stay with you because they seem to come from inside, or from the edge of a dream, or a childhood story you don't quite remember but can't shake off. They are disconcerting and weirdly exciting, because

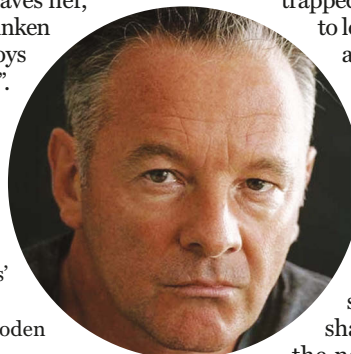
they don't moralise, compromise or explain.

One of the most haunting stories, “At Roane Head”, is narrated by a selkie – a mythological seal who can take human form. The selkie's lover bore him four sons, “each one wrong”, and her human husband leaves her, eventually returning in a drunken rage to kill the beautiful boys who were “as blank as air”. The poetic and narrative economy of the final stanza is truly chilling:

She gave me a skylark's egg
in a bed of frost;
gave me twists of my four sons'
hair; gave me
her husband's head in a wooden
box.

Then she gave me the sealskin, and I put it on.

The poems are full of restless fluidity of state – the supernatural narrators shapeshifting, testing nature or escaping pursuers, never



finding the perfect way to be, but experiencing water, ears of corn, bird flight in a mesmerising narrative of longing, love and loss. In the context of the current, communal state of anxiety and constraint, the shapeshifters seem both trapped and free, expressing the need

to look and to understand that we are part of stronger and stranger forces in the world.

The illustrations, by the poet's brother, Tim Robertson, are like beautifully strange phantoms, but sharp-edged, inky and clear – or artists' mannequins made superhuman, making the shapeshifters visible, enhancing the narrative and expressing the

core emotion of each poem.

This new collection, by a poet/storyteller of extraordinary imagination and insight, is unflinching, brutal and often movingly beautiful. As Val McDermid says in her introduction: “If you think poetry is for softies, think again.” With its wonderful illustrations, bold design and sumptuous production, it's also a gorgeous book to handle and treasure.

Bracing, bold and brilliant

JAMES MORAN

That Old Country Music

KEVIN BARRY

(CANONGATE, 192 PP, £14.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49 • TEL 020 7799 4064

THIS IS Kevin Barry's third collection of short stories, and shows him to be a modern master of the form. Time and again, Barry draws his reader into compelling narratives where great psychological detail and clever plotting are achieved with an absolute economy of language. His west-of-Ireland characters are often misfits and loners, and they say much about their lives through a small gesture, a telling memory, a misplaced word.

Perhaps the best story in the collection is a tale of longing that is in the finest tradition of Irish short-storytelling. James Joyce's celebrated short story “Eveline” revolves around a 19-year-old Irish woman who abortively tries to escape the claustrophobia of her home life for a life with her lover in Argentina.

In *That Old Country Music*, Kevin Barry's story “The Coast of Leitrim” revolves around a 35-year-old Irish man who similarly tries to escape the claustrophobia of his home life for a life with his Polish lover. Barry's story is skilfully told, with plenty of unexpected feints and swerves, as the narrator shows how intense love can come

close to stalking, how revulsion might co-exist with desire and how the notion of the foreign and the notion of home might become intertwined. The story is a miniature masterpiece.

Many of the other tales in the volume portray the loneliness of life in rural Ireland. This means that, as well as summoning Joyce, the book often feels haunted by the figure of Patrick Kavanagh. Kavanagh's wonderful poem “The Great Hunger” depicts an elderly bachelor who reflects, “Yesterday was summer. Who was it promised marriage to himself / Before apples were hung from the ceilings for Hallowe'en?” Barry writes with a similar lyric power about solitude and ageing. For example, when one character, an elderly spinster living in isolation, reflects on events in the wider world, she feels “all of it soon faded again and passed, and did not matter”.

Yet the realm of Barry's fiction, although drawing on age-old archetypes and earlier literary examples, is sometimes jarringly modern. His characters may bear names such as Setanta and Saint Catherine, but they also post their thoughts on Instagram, drink skinny Prosecco and pass the time using Google Translate. As a result, the book provides surprising contrasts and juxtapositions. As one character reflects, “Sometimes I'm not sure what century I've mistaken this one for.” Likewise, although Barry repeatedly conjures an atmosphere of melancholy and loss, that melancholy often coexists with humour and ribaldry. The reader can never relax when reading a Kevin Barry book. His work is bracing, bold and brilliant, and is designed to keep us on our toes.

THE TABLET Bookshop

is run by Church House
Bookshop – one of the UK's
leading religious
booksellers with thousands
of titles in stock.



To purchase any of the books
reviewed in The Tablet this week
call: +44(0) 207 799 4064
or email:
bookshop@chbookshop.co.uk

International P&P charges will apply. Offers
close 2 months after publication date.

Much passion spent

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Sybil Bedford: An Appetite for Life SELINA HASTINGS

(CHATTO & WINDUS, 432 PP, £25)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50 • TEL 020 7799 4064

“I WISH I’D written more books and spent less time being in love,” Sybil Bedford told an interviewer. Certainly, Bedford’s stormy erotic relationships with women were time-consuming. Just keeping up with them is apt to make the reader of this rivetingly entertaining biography reach for a stiff drink. Or maybe a glass of champagne, for Bedford was the most delicious, obsessive chronicler of the sensual pleasures of food and wine.

This is not just an account of a single life but of a whole world – the cosmopolitan, socially cross-referencing, peripatetic, multilingual, intellectual circles of mid-twentieth-century Europe. There is good living in interesting and unusual places, parties, conversation, creativity, intellectual challenge and eye-poppingly flexible attitudes towards monogamy. It’s no wonder that Bedford’s first book, about Mexico, wasn’t published until she was in her early forties: there just wasn’t the time.

Bedford was German (her surname derived from an expedient 1940 marriage for visa purposes to Walter Bedford, a cloakroom attendant at a London club who was paid £100), the only child of an unhappy marriage between a Catholic Bavarian baron and a rich beauty from Hamburg. Her parents’ relationship and a childhood spent buffeted around Germany, France and England were the subjects of Bedford’s best-known novels,

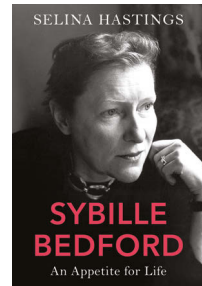
A Legacy (1956) and *Jigsaw* (1989). Selina Hastings quotes liberally from both – for nothing quite captures the spirit of Bedford’s early life as her own glorious, very loosely fictionalised accounts of the upholstered comforts of bourgeois Berlin or the bucolic yet austere rural life in Baden. Her father, Max, Baron von Schoenebeck, was a remote, eccentric figure, kindly but “defeated”, who, despite marriages to two Jewish heiresses, lived a dwindling life with the animals whose company he preferred to humans’ and a vast collection of antiques. “We lived inside a museum that no one came to see,” recalled Sybil. Her mother, Lisa Bernhardt, was a magnetic, clever, promiscuous beauty who came to loathe her husband, abandoning Sybil to run off with a series of lovers before summoning her to France, to a village near Marseilles where she had settled with an Italian 15 years her junior. She hadn’t a maternal bone in her body – and versions of this magnetic, infuriating, charming woman appear in all Bedford’s fictions.

Despite her mother’s own intellectual aspirations, no one gave a thought to Sybil’s education: when, aged nine, she was sent to be educated by Ursulines, the nuns were amazed that she couldn’t write; in her teens she was packed off as a paying guest with a family in Hampstead who sent her to the local school. But she had to grow up quickly (when she was 12, her stepfather took her to the station in Palermo from which she had to find her own way to London via Naples and Paris) and there is something about this unparented

childhood, which was not without affection, that developed her precociously observing eye. What better training for a writer?

Also helpful was the extraordinary array of influential literary figures that Sybil had met and cultivated by the time she was in her mid teens, most importantly Aldous and Maria Huxley. Maria had an affair with the teenage Sybil while Aldous had an affair with Lisa. The Huxleys also both had affairs with Mary Hutchinson, mistress of the critic Clive Bell, who was also for a period a paramour of Lisa’s. Phew! It can be hard to keep up. But these friendships were to prove invaluable: wherever she hung her hat, all over the world, from California to Mexico to England, Bedford found herself at the epicentre of the most interesting literary set in town.

She settled in London where she became a literary grandee and something of a snob, writing not only novels, essays and travel books, but accounts of court cases (she was fascinated by law), including the trial of the serial killer John Bodkin Adams. In old age, Bedford was still entranced by the sensual pleasures of good food and wine (on *Desert Island Discs*, her luxury was a fully functioning French restaurant) as well as Waitrose instant mashed potato. She loved *The Archers* and the novels of Dick Francis. In her nineties, she fell hopelessly in love with her French translator. Selina Hastings’ biography is a wonderful chronicle of one life amid a myriad of other, fascinating, now ghostly, interlocking lives. And it’s a depiction of a small, vivid, condensed world gone forever.



Good afternoons

SUE GAISFORD

The Magic Hour: 100 poems from the Tuesday Afternoon Poetry Club

CHARLOTTE MOORE

(SHORT BOOKS, 304 PP, £12.99)

TABLET BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69 • TEL 020 7799 4064

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

succession of “maybes” and “might-have-beens”.

The problem here resides not with Licence but with his sources: the greater briar patches of Folcard and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* bordering upon an even thornier wasteland of charters and royal writs, the majority of them neither entirely spurious nor wholly authentic. At every point, the historian is obliged to pause, to test the ground, scent the contrary winds and eventually set the reader on a path to plausible speculation rather than to frustrating dead ends. Not all readers will last the journey. For those who do, there are considerable rewards. Not least, they will find themselves riding first class, in the company of an expert guide keen to tell stories that are true as well as entertaining, and in prose that is not merely accurate but on occasion elegiac. Describing a king who was neither saint nor sinner, but a good man obliged to live in evil days, this is a fine biography almost in spite of its source materials.

BESSET BY pestilence and panic, we yearn to escape. When lycra or macramé are non-starters, poetry is an alluring refuge, and it often brings with it a longing to share a newly discovered or beloved old treasure. Charlotte Moore’s Tuesday afternoons provided just such an opportunity. For a couple of hours, before lockdown made it impossible, a widely disparate bunch of people with similar instincts would gather in her old Sussex house, listen to each week’s suggestions – and let rip.

This is a distillation of those stimulating, therapeutic afternoons, a selection of some of the best we read and a few of the responses they evoked, whether learned, emotional, perplexed, outraged or ecstatic. It is an anthology

like no other, rich, varied, unexpected and very approachable. Never patronising, Charlotte’s own commentary is gentle, informative and often droll. She knows, for example, that the legend of Wyatt’s affair with Anne Boleyn is historically suspect, but “I really don’t want any scholarly researcher to disabuse me”. She’ll mention that her favourite punctuation mark is a semi-colon; she’ll slip in a definition of a dactyl “dumdiddy, dumdiddy – since you ask”.

Arranged by theme, her choices range from mesmerising Old English lyrics to such contemporary stars as Alice Oswald, who gives you “that authentic prickle at the back of the neck”. No poet (save Anon) gets more than one entry and few the best-known. There are some terrific discoveries to be made: riddles, lyrics, ballads, sonnets and nursery rhymes; poems of love, grief, despair, celebration and joy.

Here is just one, seasonal example: “A Melancholy Lay”, by Marjorie Fleming, aged 8, written in 1811. An elegy for the stars of a Christmas dinner it begins:

“Three Turkeys fair their last have breathed/And now this world forever leaved.” Marjorie was, said Mark Twain, “the world’s child, she was the human race in little”.

NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Egypt a 'model' of tolerance

Egypt's minister for religious endowments claimed last week that, under the presidency of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt is becoming "a model of religious coexistence". He said that the country is gradually overcoming sectarian discrimination and ensuring full equality between citizens of different faith communities. Muhammad Mukhtar Juma was speaking at a forum for coexistence and mutual respect organised by the Dar al-Hilal Cultural Foundation in Cairo.

Damage from Hurricane Eta was still being assessed even as Tropical Storm Iota neared landfall in Nicaragua and Honduras. In southern Mexico and the rest of **Central America**, many communities remain flooded from torrential rainfall during Eta's passage. At least 159 people lost their lives in the hurricane and the United Nations reports that overall three million people have been affected. Twenty-seven deaths were reported in southern Mexico alone. In Honduras, 88,000 people were evacuated.

In Guatemala, a search was called off last week for victims trapped in a landslide in the town of Queja, Alta Verapaz; 100 people in the Indigenous Poqomchi town are feared dead after their homes were buried. It took days for rescue crews to reach the site, but they decided the search was too dangerous to continue. The Guatemalan episcopal conference called for international solidarity with hurricane victims.

Luis Arce was sworn in as **Bolivian** president on Sunday last week, returning the Movement for Socialism (Mas) party to power. Arce, the economy minister under former president and Mas leader Evo Morales, has said that he is committed to leading Bolivia out of a year of upheaval. Morales re-entered the country the following day, after nearly a year of exile. Arce has assured Bolivians that Morales will not assume any government office.

Head of the bishops' conference, Archbishop Ricardo Centellas, said: "Bolivia

is a country with great potential to develop, but it must work in unity, and responsibly. We ask for one thing from the newly elected government: that is respect for the constitution."

Pakistani police last week arrested the Muslim cleric who celebrated the Islamic wedding of Arzoo Raja, a Catholic minor at the centre of allegations of abduction, forced conversion and underage marriage. The unnamed cleric has denied any illegal action or committing any offence. However, Christian groups have welcomed the arrest, with Sabir Michael, president of the Karachi-based Peace Welfare and Development Association, saying: "There is an urgent need to enforce existing laws and to punish those involved."



The **Ghana** Catholic bishops' conference said it has received "with shock the sad news of the death of the former president of the Republic of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings" (pictured in 1999). Aged 73, Rawlings was a Catholic and former altar boy who considered in his youth becoming a priest. The former military leader was twice-elected president of Ghana and dominated the country's political life for two decades in the 1980s and 1990s.

Peace deal resentment

Many local Christian leaders resent the peace deal, signed last week by **Armenian** Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, that ended hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh – an Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan. More than 4,000 have died in the fighting, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"When weapons are silent

there is always hope, but for many Armenians, the ceasefire agreement represents only a surrender," reflected Archbishop Boutros Marayati of Aleppo.

The deal signed on 9 November involved Armenia ceding territory to Azerbaijan that it had captured in the 1990s, including the town of Kalbajar, many of whose Armenian residents burned their houses and moved their parents' graves before leaving.

Trial opens without Ventura

The trial of Archbishop Luigi Ventura on sexual assault charges opened on Tuesday last week in **Paris**, despite the absence of the former apostolic nuncio to France. Ventura was excused after a doctor said it was too dangerous for the 75-year-old, who is living in Rome, to travel to Paris while the coronavirus is active in France.

Lawyers for alleged victims asked for the trial to be postponed, but the court ruled for the trial to go ahead without the defendant. It heard testimony from several men who allege that Ventura groped their buttocks at public events in 2018 and 2019. Ventura has denied the claims. The former nuncio was tried *in absentia* on five counts of alleged sexual assault and three of his alleged victims were present at the trial. The court said it would deliver its verdict by 16 December.

Catholic bishops in **Indonesia** met government officials last week to express concern about the violence in resource-rich Papua province. They also called for an independent inquiry into

the killing on 26 October by security forces of Catholic catechist Rufinus Tigau, 28. The Justice and Peace Commissions of two dioceses and of the Franciscans and Augustinians also complained last week about human-rights violations in Papua by the Indonesian security forces.



Polish bishops rally round JP II

Polish bishops rallied around the reputation of St John Paul II (pictured left in 2001) on Friday last week after allegations that he rejected reports concerning ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (right) sleeping with his seminarians.

Head of the Polish bishops' conference, Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki, said that John Paul II had been "cynically deceived" by McCarrick as well as other US bishops. Meanwhile, Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz died on Monday at the age of 97, days after the Vatican had imposed sanctions on him over accusations he had sexually abused a seminarian and covered up abuse in another case.

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

Treat yourself or a friend to a 2021 Tablet Calendar - packed full of awe inspiring Catholic images and printed on the highest quality paper

The calendar includes Catholic holidays and other important dates

To order your copy visit The Tablet Shop shop.thetablet.co.uk

Only £9.99 plus P&P

THE
TABLET
SINCE 1840





“It is not about defending an ex-president; it is about defending the essence of democracy ... listening to the people peacefully protesting”

Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno, Archbishop of Huancayo, Peru, speaking as the country hovers on the brink of political chaos (see page 25)

ETHIOPIA / Hundreds die in renewed armed clashes

Bishops call for immediate ceasefire in Tigray region

FREDRICK NZWILI

CATHOLIC bishops in Ethiopia have called for a ceasefire in the semi-autonomous region of Tigray, where intense fighting has killed hundreds and displaced thousands of people.

The fighting between the national army and the forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) started on 4 November when the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a military action against the government in Tigray.

Under Ethiopia's ethnic federalism, states enjoy a high level of autonomy with their own security forces and parliament. In the system introduced in the 1990s, the country was ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition, which was dominated by the TPLF. However, Mr Ahmed dissolved the coalition and has been concentrating power in the new



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered military reprisals

national Prosperity Party, which the TPLF has refused to join. A TPLF decision to hold elections without agreement from the government in Addis Ababa triggered tensions between Mr Ahmed and Tigrayan leaders, and the subsequent military action.

Mr Ahmed, who was last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner following the peace accord he struck with neighbouring Eritrea,

accused Tigrayan forces of attacking a national army base in Mekelle, the Tigrayan capital, and ordered military reprisals.

Archbishop of Addis Ababa Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, speaking as president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia and Eritrea, said his members regretted that tensions between Mr Ahmed and the TPLF had descended into an armed conflict. He urged the two sides to agree an immediate ceasefire and begin peace talks.

According to the bishops, if the armed conflict is not stopped immediately, it will destroy the lives of many innocent people and “turn our country into a failure and create extreme poverty”. They want all the people of Ethiopia to actively engage in initiatives that promote dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

Pope Francis last week added his voice to international calls for an end to the conflict, urging the sides to resist the temptation to resort to arms. He invited Ethiopians to prayers, fraternal respect and dialogue aimed at a peaceful resolution of the discord.

Despite these pleas, on the night of 9 November many scores – possibly hundreds – of people were stabbed or hacked to death in the town of Mai-Kadra in south-west Tigray, according to Amnesty International and other sources. Deprose Muchena, Amnesty

International's director for East and Southern Africa, said the victims were innocent civilians and day labourers who were in no way involved in the conflict. Wounded survivors told the organisation that they were attacked with machetes, axes and knives.

Digitally verified satellite images showed large numbers of bodies strewn across the streets of the town. Earlier in the day the TPLF had suffered losses against the Ethiopian Defence Forces and witnesses said forces loyal to the TPLF carried out the atrocities, apparently as some sort of reprisal. Mr Ahmed has ruled out any peace talks with TPLF.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is appealing for humanitarian access to Ethiopia's Tigray region. “Our appeal is to see that there is a humanitarian corridor to support in the provision of basic and essential supplies to people affected,” JRS director in Eastern Africa, André Atsu, said last week.

Meanwhile, Eritrean refugees living in Tigray are particularly at risk. According to Abba Mussie Zerai, a priest of the eparchy of Asmara, the Eritrean capital, “in Tigray there are thousands of Eritreans who are often hungry and exposed to all forms of exploitation and abuse ... and many minors are on their own”. He called for help from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

SOUTHERN ARABIA

‘Catastrophic’ suffering reported in Yemen

“**THE SITUATION** in Yemen is catastrophic,” according to the Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia, writes *Ellen Teague*.

Speaking on the World Day of the Poor last Sunday, Bishop Paul Hinder said that “with the continuation of the conflict, the problem of poverty has worsened: there is hunger, there is a shortage of food, prices have risen due to the high rate of inflation”. He also reported that “cholera and lack of water afflict the population”.

The war in Yemen has caused more than 120,000 deaths, but the entire population across the southern Arabian Peninsula is suffering the economic impact.

The bishop said that many Christians are leaving the country because they have lost their jobs and “this will inevitably be a severe blow to the whole community”. He said that in the capital, Sana'a, the Missionary Sisters of Charity and other Religious are supporting the sick and most vulnerable.

Yemen has been devastated by a conflict that began in 2014 when Iran-backed Houthi rebels overran much of the country including Sana'a.

The conflict escalated in 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition launched a devastating air campaign aimed at rolling back Houthi territorial gains and restoring President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi's rule.

Houthi forces have used landmines, recruited children, and fired artillery indiscriminately into cities as well as launching ballistic missiles into Saudi Arabia.

Human Rights Watch has documented at least 90 apparently unlawful Saudi-led coalition airstrikes. The fighting has triggered the world's worst

humanitarian disaster, with millions facing disease and starvation.

Meanwhile in Saudi Arabia, a move to ease foreign workers' contractual restrictions has been welcomed by Bishop Ruperto Santos of Balanga, vice chairman of the Philippines Bishops' Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. An estimated 800,000 Filipinos work in the kingdom.

The bishop said he hoped that Filipino domestic workers will be among those covered in Saudi Arabia's easing of its “kafala” scheme which gives employers control over the lives of some 10 million migrant workers.

“It will be a welcome relief and valuable protection for our domestic workers,” Bishop Santos said.

FRANCE / Protesters say religious services are as essential as food

Faithful march to demand public Masses in lockdown

TOM HENEGHAN

CATHOLICS IN at least 20 cities across France openly protested last weekend against a government ban on public religious services during the country's second lockdown against the coronavirus, while church leaders were divided on how to proceed.

Parishioners assembled in front of cathedrals or in city squares, some singing hymns and kneeling in prayer, which is illegal in public spaces. All insisted the Eucharist was as essential to them as was the food that shops could sell or the teaching pupils received in schools.

The government insisted that religious services, even with social distancing, could spread the virus and thus were not currently allowed. Some clergy sided with the protesters, while most urged

understanding for the ban. Paris banned a protest planned last Sunday outside the large Saint-Sulpice church after protesters held an unauthorised meeting there on Friday evening.

The French bishops' conference has accepted the restrictions "with sadness" and urged Catholics to avoid illegal protests. Its spokesman, Vincent Neymon, tweeted: "We are not a rebellious religion."

Interior minister Gérald Darmanin (inset) reacted firmly: "I don't want to send police and gendarmes to issue fines to believers outside a church, of course. But if this is repeated and is clearly against the law, I will do it."

On Monday Mr Darmanin met religious leaders, who are divided because other faiths have not

joined the Church in demanding public services. Houses of worship are open for individual prayer and can hold services without a congregation for broadcast over the internet.

Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort, head of the bishops' conference, has accepted the government's decision but urged it to negotiate the conditions for ending the ban with faith leaders, especially ahead of the Christmas season.

Some bishops have criticised the protesters. "I would prefer that Catholics show they are bearing their share of suffering in these difficult times and that they overcome this feeling of injustice," said Valence Bishop Pierre-Yves Michel.

Around 500 Catholics protested



in the rain outside the city opera in the Atlantic port of Nantes amid shouts of "give us back our Mass" and chants of hymns. In Bordeaux, about 300 met outside the cathedral, some kneeling in prayer.

"If you deprive people of the Mass, you deprive them of the most fundamental thing," a young priest attending the protest said.

Some politicians have backed the protests. Gérard Larcher, the Senate head from the centre-right Republicans party, said that attending Mass was a basic freedom and "the government must be attentive to it".

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen said that religious services were "important support in these moments of great tension and anguish".

Recent events, including the murders of Catholics by a radical Islamist in Nice and an expected law against "Islamist separatism" that might limit freedoms of all religions in France, seemed to feed the apprehension of protesters.

This was evident in a petition to President Emmanuel Macron entitled "For the Mass", which has received almost 106,000 signatures so far.

PERU

Country gets third president in a week

THE PERUVIAN Congress has appointed a new president who becomes the country's third head of state in the space of a week, writes Martha Pskowski.

Congressman Francisco Sagasti, a 76-year-old engineer and academic, will head the country until a presidential election next year, according to reports from the BBC on Tuesday. Many Peruvians, however, no longer trust the legitimacy of any president Congress selects.

Last week Congress removed President Martín Vizcarra from office, and appointed the speaker of Congress Manuel Merino in his place. Mr Merino then stepped down after relentless protests across the country.

When Congress removed Mr Vizcarra on Monday night last week, saying he was "morally incapable" of holding office due to corruption allegations made

against him, many analysts said the move was a form of retaliation for his investigations of corruption among members of Congress. The "moral incapacity" clause that Congress used is merely the latest act in an ongoing power struggle with the executive.

Protests grew during this week and many spoke out against Mr Merino's appointment as president. Two people were killed in Lima over the weekend after police fired tear gas into the crowds and clashed with protesters. It was following the deaths that on Sunday morning Mr Merino stepped down.

"Every day the mistrust, uncertainty, and insecurity that our population suffers irreversibly damages the progress of Peru," the Peruvian bishops' conference wrote in a statement published on Saturday.

"Here it is not about supporting or defending an ex-president, it is about defending the very essence of democracy, which means listening to the people who have been peacefully protesting," said Cardinal Pedro Barreto Jimeno, Archbishop of Huancayo.

UNITED STATES: President-elect Joe Biden, in one of his first policy pronouncements since the projection of his victory, announced that he planned to raise the annual quota for refugees to 125,000, writes Michael Sean Winters.

The policy is a significant change from that of President Donald Trump, who had capped the number of refugees permitted into the country at 15,000 a year.

Mr Biden announced the new quota during a virtual celebration marking the fortieth anniversary of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). "This is a great organisation. [It] was founded to serve the needs of some of the most vulnerable among us,"

Mr Biden said in a video message to the group. "JRS believes that, in the stranger, we actually meet our neighbour and that every society is ultimately judged by how we treat those most in need."

The announcement came on the same day that the president-elect received a congratulatory phone call from Pope Francis.

JRS executive director Joan Rosenhauer praised Mr Biden's policy change, saying: "President-elect Biden has promised to welcome and protect refugees, and we are honoured he has made that commitment to us and to the millions of people who have been forced to flee their homes."

AUSTRIA: Ten days after four people were shot and 23 injured in an Islamist terror attack in the heart of Vienna on the Feast of All Souls, the Austrian bishops' conference called for "dialogue on the danger of politically instrumentalised religion", writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt.

The Austrian bishops wanted to continue an "honest dialogue with Islam", the bishops said at a press

conference in Vienna on 13 November. "We decisively reject all blanket defamation of religion, however," they said, recalling that in 2019 Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, had agreed that God must never be abused to justify murder, expulsion, terrorism or suppression. "Every religious leader is therefore called upon to be a dialogue partner and peacemaker," said the bishops.

BELGIUM

Church funds aid to the poor by selling special beer

TO MARK Pope Francis' fourth World Day of the Poor, St Gilles church in Brussels has decided to fill the coffers of its social service unit with revenues from a sure-fire seller in Belgium – beer, *writes Tom Heneghan.*

The church, located near the Eurostar train station of Bruxelles-Midi, is now selling 12,000 bottles of a specially brewed beer to help finance its soup kitchen, laundry, showers and computer services for those in need.

The pale beer is called “The Doe of St Gilles” after the legend that the seventh-century hermit monk honoured by the parish's name had a pet doe.

The “solidarity beer” was officially launched on Sunday, the World Day of the Poor, at St Gilles, a nineteenth-century church in a mixed neighbourhood that parishioners said was suffering because of the lockdown.

“We wanted to do something to link the parish with the parvis,” said Diane de Talhouët, a member of the pastoral council, referring to the plaza outside the church where cafes are closed and the needy gather.

The beer costs €2 (£1.79) per bottle and is available behind the church, where those in need are received by the parish charities. Crates of 24 bottles are delivered free within Brussels.

LOURDES

Shrine receives national status

THE MARIAN shrine at Lourdes has become a national sanctuary after a vote by the French bishops' conference, *writes Tom Heneghan.*

While this should make no difference to the pilgrims who visit the site in south-west France, it clarifies who is responsible for the sanctuary that had previously depended on the local diocese of Tarbes and Lourdes.

Now the bishops' conference will choose its rector and draw up a council to discuss its development with the local bishop and the rector.

This brings Lourdes into line with similar sites such as Fátima, which is a national sanctuary in Portugal.

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb



IN THE LIBRARY of the Apostolic Palace last Wednesday, Pope Francis bowed his head and closed his eyes for a moment of silent prayer. He had just spoken about the report into the “painful case” of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, and was, once again, pledging “closeness to all victims of every form of abuse and the Church's commitment to eradicate this evil”.

He's right. The 449-page McCarrick report does make for excruciating reading. It is a remarkably candid and comprehensive account of how one man rose up the ranks of the hierarchy despite allegations of sexual misconduct – and no one who read it could fail to see that the process of appointing bishops needs fundamental reform. The document is not just about Theodore McCarrick. It forensically exposes a clerical culture that turned a blind eye to allegations of sexual misconduct and allowed an abuser to rise to the highest ranks of the Church. It is a devastating indictment of how power is used and abused at the highest levels of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking, and telling, detail can be found in the early warnings church leaders received about McCarrick's unhealthy interest in underage boys. The first to raise the alarm was “Mother 1” who had witnessed McCarrick's inappropriate behaviour with two of her sons. Her shock and anger compelled her – sometime in the 1980s – to write anonymously to the cardinals of the United States and the papal ambassador setting out her concerns. Nothing happened. Despite rumours and allegations of misconduct over decades, McCarrick used deceit and charm to manipulate the system.

Francis often talks about the Church as a mother, who nurtures and guides. A mother is also fiercely protective of her children. The Church's failure in the McCarrick case was a monumental betrayal of its own vocation. Since 2018, the Pope has issued a series of laws and regulations designed to stop a future McCarrick. But much more needs to be done. Lay people, particularly women (including mothers), must now be included in the decision-making process for the appointment of bishops. The Congregation for Bishops, the department which recommends who the Pope should appoint to lead dioceses, only has cardinals and bishops as members. At the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples – which oversees bishop appointments in territories such as Africa and Asia – there is just one female member, the superior general of a missionary order of women Religious.

Lay people are often among those consulted in the early stages, but their inclusion is discretionary. No one is expecting a perfect system, but the current one needs fixing. If

the leaders of the Church are to win back the trust and confidence of the faithful, the discernment and gifts of lay people must play a role in their appointment. It is time to apply the principle articulated by St Leo the Great in the fifth century: “He who is to preside over all must be elected by all.”

THE extraordinary irony is that there probably wouldn't have been a McCarrick report if it wasn't for Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò dramatically calling on the Pope to resign over his mishandling of the case in the summer of 2018. Viganò, a former papal ambassador to the United States, made incendiary claims that he had warned Francis about the Washington, D.C. prelate but had been ignored, and that Francis had acted to lift sanctions placed on McCarrick and instead had rehabilitated him as a trusted adviser.

Several bishops in the US, rather than defend the Pope against this attack on him, rushed to attest to Viganò's truthfulness and credibility. The Archbishop of San Francisco, Salvatore Cordileone, even sent a letter to his diocese asserting that “from information I do have about a very few of the other statements Archbishop Viganò makes, I can confirm that they are true”. Embarrassingly for them, the McCarrick report shows that many of Viganò's allegations were misleading or false. Worse, it reveals that Viganò was asked to investigate a sexual misconduct allegation against McCarrick in 2012, but – like so many named in the report – did nothing. Francis did not lift formal sanctions on McCarrick, nor did he use the former cardinal as an adviser.

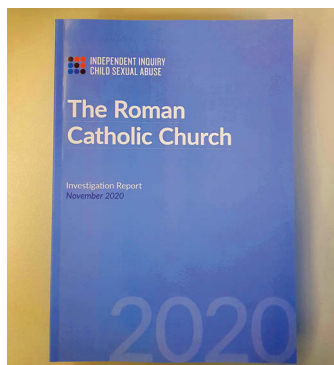
Officials in the Vatican are watching to see what the bishops who sided with Viganò over Francis will now do. After all, the Catechism states that the Pope is “the visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful”. Will the bishops now correct the record? And if they don't, will they consider resigning?

COVID-19 cases in Italy continue to rise steadily. One of those who contracted Covid during the second wave is Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, president of the Italian bishops' conference, who was taken into intensive care in Perugia. He is the fourth cardinal to have contracted the virus. The situation was serious but the 78-year-old has begun to recover. Earlier this week his condition was described as “stable” and “gradually improving”. Last week Pope Francis called Bassetti's auxiliary bishop, Marco Salvi, to assure the cardinal of his prayers and to send this message: “Be strong, be strong, be strong.”

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The bishop for prisons, Richard Moth, has called on the government to do more to protect **prisoners and staff** during the second Covid wave. Bishop Moth called for an extension of the early conditional Temporary Release Scheme to reduce the pressure on overcrowded prisons and warned of the impact of lockdown on prisoners' health.



The Bishop of Plymouth, Mark O'Toole, and the Archbishop of Southwark, John Wilson, have reflected on last week's critical **IICSA report** (pictured). In his homily for Mass last Sunday, Archbishop Wilson said the report makes for "sombre and shameful reading ... I – we – apologise. We must change."

A new initiative by the National Churches Trust, launched this week, explores the hidden **Catholic heritage** of England and Wales by showcasing six of its most beautiful and historic churches and chapels. The

buildings, chosen from a shortlist compiled by former *Tablet* deputy editor Elena Curti in her new book, *Fifty Catholic Churches to See Before You Die*, are profiled online at www.explorechurches.org/a-hidden-catholic-heritage

Challenge to Covid restrictions

Leaders representing more than 100 mostly Evangelical and non-denominational congregations have mounted a legal challenge against **Covid restrictions** that prohibit public worship. They also include Gavin Ashenden, former honorary chaplain to the Queen, who was received into the Catholic Church last year.

Five Catholic institutions, including the Society of the Sacred Heart (England and Wales Province) and the Mill Hill Missionaries (British Province), have divested from **fossil fuels** as part of a global movement in response to the climate emergency.

Thousands of young people are at increasing risk of harm and abuse as a result of the economic impact of Covid, according to the youth homelessness charity **Depaul UK**. In a new report, "Danger Zones and Stepping Stones: Phase Three", the charity warns that, without a home, young people frequently end up becoming victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.



Caritas Salford's Advent Appeal will take place online this year after Covid restrictions dented the income from church collections that the charity needs to support more than 1,500 people experiencing homelessness this winter.

Cold Feet actor John Thomson (pictured) provides the voice-over for the appeal film, #MiracleofKindness, about three families who have been helped out of homelessness with the support of Caritas. The video is online.

Stained-glass windows from Anglican churches in England appear on the Royal Mail's **Christmas stamps** this year. The windows depict the Madonna and child and other Nativity scenes.

Pope Francis' recent remarks in support of **civil unions** for gay couples did not change doctrine but was still a radically challenging stance, a former spokesman for the Bishop of

Waterford and Lismore has said. Writing in his column in the *Waterford News and Star*, Fr Liam Power said the Pope's comment marked a shift in attitude with "major pastoral significance", adding: "Church doctrine needs reformulation in a way that comes to terms with [a modern psychological understanding of sexuality]."

Marking the World Day of the Poor, the **Bishop of Limerick**, Brendan Leahy, expressed solidarity with those who have been "robbed of the security of work", and deprived of friendship or education by the Covid pandemic. Meanwhile the Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown, said that he worried about "a form of Catholicism that talks more about our rights in the lockdown than they do about those who are suffering most because of the pandemic".

Martyrdom marked online

An online service will take place on 2 December to mark the fortieth anniversary of the **martyrdom in El Salvador** of four Catholic missionaries from the United States. The four are among over 75,000 civilians who died at the hands of government forces during the civil war in El Salvador between 1979 and 1992. The service will be livestreamed at 7 p.m. from the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hayes, west London.

Compiled by **Liz Dodd**.

EDITORIAL

Editor: Brendan Walsh

Editorial Consultant:

Clifford Longley

Assistant Editor (Foreign News):

James Roberts

Production Editor: David Harding

Chief Subeditor: Iain Millar

Online Editor: Ruth Gledhill

Home News Editor: Liz Dodd

Rome Correspondent:

Christopher Lamb

Arts Editor: Joanna Moorhead

Literary Editor: Maggie Fergusson

Religious Books Editor: Alban McCoy

Letters Editor: Guy Keleny

THE TABLET

www.thetablet.co.uk

1 King Street Cloisters,

Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY

Tel: +44 (0)20 8748 8484

Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk

THE TABLET TRUST: CHARITY NO. 1173924

DISPLAY, RECRUITMENT CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING & INSERTS

Lisa Ottway

Email: lisa@ottwaymediasolutions.com

Tel: +44 (0)1903 534041

Mob: +44 (0)7958 046147

COMMERCIAL, MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Chief Executive Officer: Amanda Davison-Young

Marketing Manager: Ian Farrar

Email: ifarrar@thetablet.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 8222 7358

Fundraising and Events Officer: Sarah Beattie

Email: sbeattie@thetablet.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 8222 7374

SUBSCRIPTIONS

www.thetablet.co.uk/subscribe

Tel: +44 (0)1858 438736;

Email: thetablet@subscription.co.uk

DIRECTORS

Mike Craven, Chair; Ben Andradi KSG, Jimmy Burns OBE, Amanda Davison-Young, Cathy Galvin, Luke Hughes, Katherine Jeffrey, Carmel McConnell MBE, Catherine Simon, Paul Vallely CMG, Brendan Walsh, Sarah Walsh.

PERSON IN
THE NEWS

Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry: "I'm worried about a form of Catholicism that talks more about our rights in the lockdown than about those who are suffering most because of the pandemic."

IICSA / Victim launches legal action for personal injury after safeguarding failures

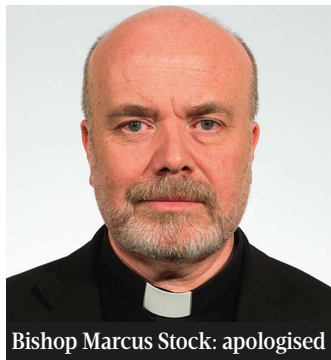
Cardinal and diocese to be sued over handling of abuse case

CATHERINE PEPINSTER

AN ABUSE survivor is to sue the Diocese of Westminster, including its archbishop, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, for personal injury because of the way she was treated when she asked to have access to her own safeguarding files. The claim is believed to be a highly unusual action.

The decision by A711 came as the bishops of England and Wales were due to meet on Wednesday for an all-day discussion on the highly critical report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) on the Catholic Church, published last week. It said that the Catholic Church had betrayed its moral purpose in its neglectful handling of abuse cases and the way it treated survivors. The inquiry singled out Cardinal Nichols in its report, saying that he showed "no acknowledgement of any personal responsibility to lead or influence change" and failed to be compassionate to victims.

Cardinal Nichols said in television news reports that he had tendered his resignation to Pope Francis who had asked him to stay on. But the resignation was caused by him reaching 75, the date for



Bishop Marcus Stock: apologised

episcopal retirements, rather than the comments made about his handling of the abuse crisis.

According to A711, it was Cardinal Nichols' response to the report that was "the last straw" for her and led to her decision to press for damages. "The fact that he resigned because he is 75 not because of the report has made me think there must be some sort of accountability, and I hope that's what this action will bring about," she said.

When A711 asked to see documents relating to her case of abuse, disparaging emails from Westminster diocesan staff were discovered and efforts to see further documents were blocked until recently. Requests to speak to the cardinal went unheeded

until a newspaper reported on her case. "I have catalogued a long list of problems about the way they have treated me over the last four years," she said. "They retraumatised me. They can't keep treating survivors like this."

A711's solicitor, Richard Scorer of Slater and Gordon, has informed Westminster diocese's lawyers, Kingsley Napley, of the forthcoming claim. "A711 has reached this point because of Cardinal Nichols' failure to take responsibility," said Mr Scorer. "The case we are making is that the diocese caused A711 personal injury. It is about harm, not just lack of care, because of the way they behaved towards her. And she feels that harm is as bad as, or worse than the original abuse."

Other victims of abuse have made successful claims for damages against the Catholic Church but most of these concerned the actual abuse. This case is believed to be unusual in focusing on the treatment of a survivor by the Church.

The claimant, A711, was one of 23 signatories to an open letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church, published in *The Tablet* last week, that described the trauma they endured because of

abuse and "how the Church perpetuates an adversarial culture in its dealings with us".

The letter was sent to all the bishops of England and Wales and at least 11 have replied, including the Bishops of Hallam and Nottingham. In his lengthy letter, Marcus Stock, the Bishop of Leeds, apologised for victims' suffering and pledged that he would do "all I can to put into action the 'real and lasting changes' identified in the IICSA report and to ensure that those who, like you, have been hurt by abuse are protected, cared for and supported".

Cardinal Nichols replied with a three-sentence email which said: "I understand that you have sent this same request to each of my fellow bishops. As bishops we are meeting together this coming week to consider our practical response to the IICSA report. Personally I will play my full part in this particular response."

In an interview on BBC Radio 4's *Sunday* programme, Baroness (Sheila) Hollins, who was a member of Pope Francis' Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and has advised the bishops of England and Wales on child sexual abuse, backed independent oversight of the Church's safeguarding. Asked whether Cardinal Nichols should resign with immediate effect, she said: "I'm not always convinced that somebody has to go but we have known that the Church has actually done much too little, too slowly, and new leadership is required to change the Church's dealing with abuse."

Alessandro to step down from Pax Christi

THE DIRECTOR of Pax Christi in England and Wales, Theresa Alessandro (inset), is to step down amid changes to the organisation's executive committee, writes Liz Dodd.

Ms Alessandro, who took up the role in March 2019, has led the organisation through the current pandemic, including its

recent online training in non-violence, its work for, and response to, the recent ratification of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and the visit to the UK of Kate Hennessy, author and granddaughter of Dorothy Day.

In a statement Pax Christi said: "The executive committee is sorry to report that Theresa Alessandro is standing down as director of Pax Christi in England and Wales, as from 4 December 2020. We very much value what Theresa has brought to Pax Christi and we are very sad to see her go. There will

also be some changes in the executive committee, which is managing the way forward."

The announcement came as the organisation unveiled a winter timetable of events as part of its FaithJustice initiative, a new youth network supported by groups including Pax Christi, the Passionists and the Columbans.

The network launched in 2020 as a way of helping young Catholics to reflect on and engage with social justice issues, and has

focused its activities online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Events so far have included an online festival exploring issues such as solidarity and migration, an August gathering about a Christian response to the climate emergency, and a weekend about the arms trade.

Its forthcoming online gathering, A Winter Pause, in partnership with the Jesuits in Britain, will offer a week-long retreat rooted in the Christian mystical tradition.



PUBLIC WORSHIP / Faithful may have to register for Mass during festive season

Archbishop fears curbs may be imposed on Christmas services

SARAH MAC DONALD

THE FAITHFUL in Ireland may have to register in advance if they wish to attend Christmas Mass in their parishes, according to the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin.

Speaking on RTE News, the archbishop said he welcomed indications from the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, that religious services would be allowed to go ahead during Christmas week.

However, Archbishop Martin highlighted that Advent and preparation for Christmas are also important moments in the life of all the Christian Churches, saying: "Our aim is to ensure that people can celebrate Christmas safely. We have put a huge amount of effort into preparing our churches in such a way that they can be places where [people] can safely come to worship."

He said that extra Masses may be added to schedules to try and cater for numbers, but stressed

that this would not be easy because parishes had to ensure there was ample time to clean and sanitise churches between services and to ensure there was no congregating by the faithful before or after services.

"Another possibility would be to encourage people to attend Mass over a particular period of time, not necessarily on Christmas Day," the archbishop said.

Referring to moves in the United States to register in advance for Christmas Day, he

commented: "That isn't an easy thing to impose on people."

He appeared concerned that public worship would be restricted just to Christmas week or Christmas Day and said if a longer period of time was given, it would be easier to ensure that people could get a sense of Christmas safely.

Archbishop Martin was responding to the Taoiseach's comments on RTE News when he said: "I think the churches will be open in Christmas week."

Currently, no public religious services, aside from funerals and weddings with tightly restricted numbers, are permitted in the Republic of Ireland under Level 5 restrictions. These restrictions are due to be lifted on 1 December.

The Taoiseach has indicated that public worship may return under modified Level 3 restrictions in early December. He said the government will decide about public worship for Christmas at the end of November.



Religious prejudice is the 'final frontier' for diversity

A LANDMARK study into religious and ethnic diversity in England and Wales has revealed a complex pattern of attitudes towards multiculturalism in Britain, with Catholics among the most uncomfortable about the idea of welcoming a Muslim into their family, *writes Liz Dodd*.

The research by the Woolf Institute, which surveyed 11,701 adults in England and Wales, explored attitudes towards diversity on a societal and a personal level – including asking respondents how they would feel about a close relative marrying someone from a different background.

Religious people are more likely to be comfortable with religious diversity in England and Wales – they are 21 per cent less likely to express discomfort than people

with no religion. Almost two thirds of all respondents said that the number of migrants in Britain has increased too quickly in the past 10 years. Religious people are more likely to have friends from other faiths.

But the research also found that Christians are among the most likely to express discomfort at the idea of a relative marrying a Muslim, at 53 per cent, and Catholics – particularly men – are among the most uncomfortable of all those polled.

This is despite the majority of Christians saying they felt comfortable about a relative marrying a Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Sikh or person of no faith.

"In other words, Muslims were singled out by both Christian and Jewish respondents," the report

states. "Religious prejudice, rather than racism or xenophobia, is the 'final frontier' for diversity."

Women appear to be more positive towards diversity. Female respondents were 31 per cent less likely to be negative towards ethnic diversity than males and 30 per cent less likely to be negative towards religious diversity.

POVERTY

'Communities need more than emergency hand-outs'

CARITAS Westminster has launched a new programme called "Road to Resilience" designed to equip schools and parishes to move beyond the emergency provision they have offered communities during the pandemic. It will train staff and volunteers to offer housing, benefit and immigration support, *writes Ellen Teague*.

Meriel Woodward, assistant director of Caritas Westminster, said: "As we mark this year's World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis invites us not just to offer hand-outs to those struggling, but also a hand-up out of poverty and 'Road to Resilience' will equip projects with the tools and support needed to do this."

Training and resources will focus on five key areas: food poverty, getting into work, homelessness, social isolation and finance.

Over the months of the pandemic, Caritas Westminster has supported feeding programmes for thousands who have lost income. However, project leaders are increasingly concerned about people being forced into long-term poverty by uncertainties and restrictions caused by the circulation of the virus.

Catholic churches and schools in Westminster have been involved with 356 food relief projects during the pandemic, and a recent study into 25 of these projects showed 95,946 meals and food parcels were distributed between July and September.



The Tablet meeting space

Is your faith important to you?

Would you like to meet with a similar-minded person to share friendship and companionship?

Start that journey here at The Tablet meeting place.

To place a listing and find your ideal partner or friend email lisa@ottwaymediasolutions.com or call +44 (0) 7958 046147 for more details

Jonathan Sacks, Baron Sacks of Aldgate

Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth for 22 years, he was committed to interfaith understanding and to bringing Jewish ethics to bear on contemporary issues

NORMAN SOLOMON

IT WAS IN the late 1970s that I first met Jonathan Sacks. At that time he was a “bright young star” shortly to be appointed Rabbi of the Golders Green Synagogue in London. I had invited him to give a talk at my own synagogue in nearby Hampstead, and he captivated his audience with ease, at once demonstrating his abilities as educator and communicator. At a personal level we had much to share; we had both, if at an interval of 15 years, read philosophy at Cambridge, reacted against it, turned to Orthodox Judaism and entered the rabbinate.

By 1990, Jonathan was the obvious choice to succeed Immanuel Jakobovits as Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, a post he occupied from 1991 until his retirement in 2013. He dedicated himself to Jewish education within the community and to interfaith co-operation and the promotion of religion-based morality beyond; few in Britain were unmoved by his skilfully presented “Thoughts for the Day”, in which he sought, through the BBC, to bring Jewish ethics to bear on contemporary issues.

His commitment to interfaith understanding and co-operation (the citation for his knighthood in 2005 was for “services to the Community and to Interfaith Relations”) was expressed not only through personal relationships with leaders of other faiths in Britain but in his books. In *The Dignity of Difference* (2002), he wrote: “God has spoken to mankind in many languages: through Judaism to Jews, Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims ... No one creed has a monopoly on spiritual truth; no one civilisation encompasses all the spiritual, ethical and artistic expressions of mankind ... In Heaven there is truth; on Earth there are truths ... God is greater than religion. He is only partially comprehended by any faith.” This statement aroused the ire of the more conservative Orthodox, in deference to whom he toned it down in a hastily produced second edition (though the first was not withdrawn).

Sacks was perhaps less successful in intra-faith relations within the broader Jewish community; despite personal friendships and a degree of communal co-operation he had difficulty, at least at an institutional level, in accepting the “authenticity” of non-Orthodox Jewish denominations. This occasionally

caused deep offence, as with a leaked remark in a private letter after the death of the Reform Rabbi Hugo Gryn in 1996, whose funeral he had declined to attend, though I can myself testify that at a personal level they had enjoyed a perfectly amicable relationship (I recall meetings at which both were present). Clearly, there was tension between Sacks’ personal convictions and the demands of office.

The individual’s relationship with God, Sacks stressed, was through community, and central to that relationship was communal prayer. Probably his most lasting contribution to the Jewish community consists in the series of comments on the weekly Torah readings (*Covenant & Conversation*) he maintained almost until his death, and through his translations and commentaries first, on the daily prayer book (the *Siddur*) and then in an innovative series of festival prayer books (*Machzorim*) published by Koren, completed around 2016. His translations are distinguished by aesthetic sensitivity and elegance of language.

In translating Psalms and other biblical passages he is guided by Jewish tradition and theology rather than by current biblical scholarship; the commentaries aim to demonstrate the relevance of Jewish tradition not only to personal concerns but to contemporary issues.

Here, also, Sacks negotiates carefully between private conviction and institutional requirements; Orthodox tradition is not openly questioned, historical criticism is sidestepped and optional American and British (“minhag Anglia”) editions are available, catering for minor differences in Orthodox sensibilities on either side of the Atlantic.

Did Sacks ever truly reveal his private convictions? If anywhere, it was in his moral philosophy, and most notably in his last book, *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times*, published earlier this year by Hodder &

Stoughton. He tells us that this book is the culmination of a journey he began when, as an undergraduate, he discovered to his dissatisfaction that leading philosophers of the time held that moral judgements were unverifiable, hence meaningless, “the mere expression of emotion”. He found refuge from moral relativism within his own tradition of Judaism, which “has had an almost unbroken conversation on the nature of a good society since the days when Abraham was charged

to teach his children ‘the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just’ (Genesis 18:19)”. He offers the book as a meditation on a lifetime of experience with constant concern as to the nature of the moral life.

His main target appears to be individualism, “The Solitary Self”, as encouraged by Enlightenment philosophies. As Sacks saw it, the Enlightenment moved from “we” (responsibility to society as a whole) to “I” (concern with the individual self). This in turn generated the nineteenth-century Counter-Enlightenment in the form of nationalism, racism and Marxism. In the 1960s, an escape began from group identities into individualism, and since the 1980s there has been a counter-reaction in the form, first, of multiculturalism, and then of identity politics, leading in our own times to the abandonment of traditional codes of morality by which society was governed and through which it maintained stability.

Power and economics, he argues, cannot guarantee stability without a third element, civil society, the locus of morality, in which we all share. “*By being what we uniquely are, we contribute to society what only we can give.* That is a way of being Christian or Hindu or Muslim or Jewish while being proud to be English ... If there is no such thing as a national moral community, if civil society atrophies and dies while all that is left are the competitive areas of the market and the state, then liberal democracy is in danger,” he wrote.

I can think of no more suitable epitaph for Jonathan Sacks than that last sentence. He was limited, as we all are, by the conflicting demands of public office and inner conviction, of group loyalty and loyalty to society as a whole, perhaps even of intellect and passion. But above all he *was* deeply concerned with the moral values of the society in which he lived, and he was fully committed to playing his part to bring about the civil society through which those values could be implemented.

He will be greatly missed throughout the Jewish world and far beyond. May his memory be a source of blessing!

Rabbi Lord Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom 1991-2013; born London, 8 March 1948; died London, 7 November 2020.

Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon is a professor and scholar in the field of Jewish studies and Jewish-Christian relations.



‘God is greater than religion. He is only partially comprehended by any faith’

THE TABLET WEBINARS

Webinar with Mary McAleese and Ed Stourton



The Tablet is delighted to host the ground breaking two-term president of Ireland, Mary McAleese for an hour long discussion with the distinguished political commentator Edward Stourton. Mary will talk about her latest book, *Here's the Story: A Memoir* as well as building bridges though justice, social equality, social inclusion, anti-sectarianism and reconciliation. She will also discuss challenging misogyny within the Catholic Church.

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020 | 6.00-7.00PM GMT

Cacophony of Chaos: The Aftermath of the 2020 US Elections



As the dust settles on what looks to be one of the most litigated elections in American history, we have assembled an expert international panel to discuss the latest developments and make sense of what is happening in America today.

Confirmed speakers: Clifford Longley, Prof. Bryan Massendale and Fr James Heft

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER 2020 | 6.00-7.00PM GMT

To book your tickets visit: www.thetablet.co.uk/events

THE
TABLET
SINCE 1840

«The destroyer of all ailments»



In India, they say neem oil is «the defeater of all ailments» – thus a great ingredient in soap. Our neem soap is almost 50% neem oil pressed from seeds of the neem tree. Helpful for dry skin issues including eczema and other soothing skin problems.

Use also instead of liquid shampoo for clean healthy hair. Free from artificial chemicals. No animal fats. Good and natural.

Also sandalwood soap made with a blend of real powder and oil from the sandalwood tree.

Triple milled soap with the moisturizing glycerine retained.

Neem or sandalwood soap. True wholesome soap like no other.

Here's your opportunity to try it. For only £16 you can order 4 generous 125g bars, including free p&p in UK. Choose any combination – 4 the same or your assortment of both soaps.

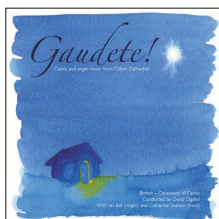
For speedy service, order at OneVillage.com – where other ideas also await you!

One Village Soap, Charlbury, OX7 3SQ © 01608 811811

onevillage.com

GAUDETE!

Carols and Organ Music from Clifton Cathedral



Music & Media

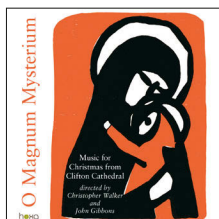
Available direct from Music & Media Consulting Limited

at £12.50 each (inclusive of VAT and p&p)

or from Amazon.co.uk

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Music for Christmas from Clifton Cathedral



Tel: 01354 740847 Mobile: 07774 426966 E-Mail: john@musicandmediaconsulting.com
www.musicandmediaconsulting.com



Blighty Brights Studio



Offers original cushions handmade in Britain from recycled and repurposed materials; available online only.

BlightyBrights.com

Advertise in The Tablet

Contact Lisa on 01903 412996 or 07958 046147

Holy Socks®

The wee gift with big impact.



Calming the Storm. Need a mask? Wear the Whale. Faith on your face.

www.holysocks.co.uk
01671 404043



TRAVEL IN TIME ...

WITH AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION TO

The Aviation Historian

The modern journal of classic aeroplanes and the history of flying

One year (4 quarterly issues) £44 inc p&p in UK NOT ON SALE IN NEWSAGENTS Order direct from: www.theaviationhistorian.com ☎ 07572 237737 ✉ TAH, PO Box 962, Horsham RH12 9PP, UK



JESUIT CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
FARM STREET

November Lockdown Mass Times

Sunday: 18:00 (Saturday Vigil) | 11:00 (Latin) | 18:00

Monday to Saturday: 10:00 | 18:00

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the church will be closed during celebrations of the Mass. All Masses are livestreamed on our website.

Opening hours

Sunday: 12:30 – 17:30

Monday to Saturday: 11:00 – 17:30

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Sunday: 12:30 – 16:00

Monday to Saturday: 11:00 – 16:00

Please phone 020-7493-7811 for more information
www.farmstreet.org.uk

In your heart. In your prayers. In your Will?

A gift in your Will is a wonderful way of providing for the people and causes you love and pray for.

Your Catholic Legacy asks you to consider celebrating your faith by leaving a gift in your Will to your favourite Catholic organisations.

For more information please visit: yourcatholiclegacy.org.uk or call 020 7095 5370

Thank you



For the inside track on what is happening in Rome, the UK and around the world, listen to The Tablet podcasts, available on Spotify and other platforms.

www.thetablet.co.uk/podcasts

THE
TABLET
SINCE 1840

Madeira m'dear

N.O'PHILE

PRESIDENT Trump, famously, is teetotal. Though the owner of a vineyard, he not only abstains from wine but dislikes it. It's not recorded if President-elect Biden enjoys a glass. George Washington, on the other hand, the first President of the United States, most definitely loved wine: so much so, that he tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to grow vines on his estate in Mount Vernon. Indigenous grapes made poor wine and European vines were prey to local disease and insect life.

Importing wine was the only solution; but that too was not without difficulty. Great Britain did all in its power to prevent the wine of its arch-enemy, France that is, from crossing the Atlantic. Whatever French wine made it was smuggled and hyper-expensive. Even wine from Britain's oldest ally, Portugal, was heavily taxed in British harbours before export to North America: except for Madeira. And Madeira happened to be George Washington's favourite tippie.

Washington was not alone in his love for Madeira, which he ordered from his supplier by the pipe, equivalent to 126 gallons or, roughly, 700 bottles. It was first imported in the 1640s and the only wine widely drunk in the American colonies. By the eighteenth century they were the largest Madeira market, taking over a quarter of the island's production.

Apart from its intrinsic merits, Madeira strongly recommended itself on two fronts: as well as being untaxed, it



Madeira happened to be George Washington's favourite tippie, which he ordered by the pipe – roughly 700 bottles

was not only able to survive, through being fortified, the extreme conditions of the Atlantic crossing but actually improved. But Madeira's popularity was as accidental as its discovery. Rather than crossing the Atlantic in a straight line, ships going from Britain to America sailed south towards the Equator to catch the trade winds.

Lying in the Atlantic 480 miles southwest of Lisbon and 360 miles west of Morocco, Madeira was the natural stopping off point for water, victuals and wine. It was discovered that the wines of Madeira, fortified with brandy to preserve them during the long sea voyage, were dramatically enhanced by

the equatorial heat of a ship's hold: so much so, that the wine was found to be even better on the return journey.

Famous for its longevity, Madeira is the only wine that gets better with age almost indefinitely, even if left uncorked: it is the only wine improved by long oxidation and intense heat, both processes being essential to its production. Three cases of Madeira dating from 1796, during Washington's presidency, were recently found in Liberty Hall Museum, New Jersey, in perfect condition.

Although the independence of the United States, on 4 July 1776, was celebrated with a toast of Madeira wine, Madeira's hold on America was not to last: inhibitive taxes and an increasingly competitive transatlantic market intervened after independence. Before the War of Independence, Spanish and French wines had suffered under draconian regulation; but in the aftermath, they were once more not only available but fashionable. The White House in Thomas Jefferson's time was stuffed to the gills with French wine: his own favourite was Château d'Yquem.

George Washington's love for Madeira was, however, never eclipsed. On the day before he died, 13 December 1799, he instructed his agent to write to his Madeiran wine importer with a view to replenishing his dangerously low stocks.

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

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

A SPARROWHAWK sat on our back-garden fence. Only 10 yards or so from my desk, I could see it clearly through the window. It was a female. You can discern a sparrowhawk's gender by the disparity in size, with females being 25 per cent larger than males. But this one was so close that I could also see her brown back – males are slate grey. Sparrowhawks are stealth hunters, and we usually only glimpse them darting between trees, or bursting along hedges; this one sat in full view for an hour. She must have already eaten, because



when a foraging party of long-tailed tits flew by, she didn't give chase. Seeing her, the small birds burst into a cacophony of warning calls, and quickly vamoosed.

Unconcerned, the sparrowhawk started preening. In shape and size, even female sparrowhawks are not much bigger than a gentle collared dove, but they have a compelling, coiled power. In the Middle Ages they were known as muskets, and I saw how they gave their name to the firearm when the sparrowhawk suddenly jumped from the fence and shot through the trees. When the fifteenth-century *Book of St Albans* allocated different birds of prey to each social class (a kestrel for a knave), female sparrowhawks were given to priests.

Volume 274 // No. 9378 // ISSN: 0039 8837

Published 50 times a year. Periodicals Postage Paid at Rahway, NJ, and at additional mailing offices. **U.S. POSTMASTER:** Send airspeed address corrections to The Tablet, c/o Air Business Limited, 4 The Merlin Centre, Acrewood Way, St Albans, Herts AL4 0JY, UK.
© The Tablet Publishing Company Limited 2020. The Tablet is printed by Warners Midlands Plc, The Maltings, Manor Lane, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH,
for the proprietors The Tablet Publishing Company Limited, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY 21 November 2020

