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# TABLET

## Summer Reading

Erik Varden • Fiona Sampson • A.N. Wilson • Isabel Lloyd • Antonia Fraser  
Frank Cottrell-Boyce • D.J. Taylor • Julia Langdon • Lucy Lethbridge • Chris Patten  
Rachel Billington • Madoc Cairns • Melanie McDonagh • Peter Stanford  
Morag MacInnes • Rachel Kelly • Ysenda Maxtone Graham



**Judith Wolfe**  
From pretence  
to authenticity

**Isabelle Grey**  
Wim Wenders  
finds transcendence

**Austen Ivereigh**  
Pope Francis  
marvels at the Mass

**Rose Prince**  
In praise of  
buttered toast

## SYNODAL CONSULTATION

### KEY ISSUE IS CHURCH GOVERNANCE

**T**he consultation of the Catholic faithful in England and Wales, designed to promote the concept of synodality, has to be seen as a striking success. While many features of Catholic life were found to be overdue for reform, the tone was not angry and reproachful but constructive and respectful. The laity, in summary, are appreciative of parish clergy but have had enough of clericalism and want their relationship with the clergy to be reset – for the sake of priests as much as for themselves. Most priests will welcome this, as they too are frustrated. But some have chosen to opt out of the synodal process. They can see nothing wrong with the way things are, and the limit of their ambition is the successful management of decline.

Serious questions lie just below the surface of this consultation exercise. Why, 57 years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, has the kind of Catholic Church it called for still not arrived? Why are large groups of lay Catholics, most notably women, still feeling marginalised and excluded, their energies wasted or ignored? Why is the Church not functioning as it should, as a sacramental embodiment of the values of the Gospel, a shining light in a dark world?

This may seem like a criticism of the people in charge, the bishops, but none of them has deliberately set out to frustrate the Church's evangelistic mission. The remedy must lie elsewhere, in a transformation of the culture that the laity and the clergy at all levels are part of – and to a degree stifled by – and in the structures, largely set by Canon Law but also by

custom and practice, within which they have to operate. Culture and structure need reform: probably both at once, as they shape each other.

Attention should be given, for instance, to the demoralising effect of Canon 129 of the 1983 Code. "Those who have received sacred orders are qualified, according to the norm of the precepts of the law, for the power of governance, which exists in the Church by divine institution and is also called the power of jurisdiction." While it goes on to add, "Lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this same power according to the norm of law," governance in the Church – the power to make executive decisions – is denied to those who are not ordained. The Catholic Church has to ask itself whether that makes the appearance of a clerical caste inevitable, with a sense of exclusion for those not belonging to it.

In his reform of the Curia, Pope Francis has signalled the end of the theology behind Canon 129, by allowing senior posts in the Curia to be opened to lay men and women. That reform has universal implications. Why should the Catholic Church of England and Wales, or anywhere else for that matter, be governed exclusively by a priesthood of celibate males? That suggests either that government in the Church should be opened to people who are not celibate males by widening the criteria for ordination; or that Canon 129 should be repealed altogether, with its heavily clericalist presumptions, so that the laity can be fully empowered, yet still as laity. Theologically, as Vatican II reminded them, they too are part of a holy priesthood.

## LABOUR LEADERSHIP

### STARMER POLICIES NEITHER FISH NOR FOWL

**S**ir Keir Starmer, who has led Labour since 2020, has yet to offer any clear policy vision for the future. He is mainly defined by who he is not – not his predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, and not his main opponent, Boris Johnson. On the biggest long-term policy question facing Britain, its relationship with the European Union, he has resorted to a confusing mixture of ideas that are neither fish nor fowl.

Starmer has missed a great opportunity. He should have said, without apology, that a Labour government would seek to rejoin the EU single market and customs union. And then argued the case, point by point. He says he does not want to look backwards or be divisive. He means he does not want to alienate the previously Labour Northern voters who voted Tory in the last election. This was partly in opposition to Britain's EU membership, partly because Corbyn looked both extreme and incompetent, and partly because "Boris" had a personal magnetism which attracted working class voters. Britain's participation in the EU's customs union and single market was not at stake: some Brexit-leaning Tories favoured it, some did not. The single market was Margaret Thatcher's brainchild, so it could hardly be branded left-wing.

There is a consensus in British industry that single-market membership would boost the British economy. Having common standards would simplify trade with Britain's largest

trading partner, cut bureaucracy, remove tariffs, customs barriers and delays and restore Britain's image as a partner not a rival. Boris Johnson's promised Brexit dividend has yet to arrive and may never do so.

Single market membership would solve the Northern Ireland problem, as it would restore a level playing field between the Republic, Northern Ireland and the British mainland. Starmer's offer is simply to do what Johnson is trying to do, but better. Johnson's policy is failing, he says, because the EU does not trust him; whereas it would trust Labour under Starmer. That clearly is a thin argument.

Better still, from Labour's perspective, British membership of the EU single market would shoot the Scottish Nationalists' fox. The SNP wants an independent Scotland partly so it can reverse Brexit; rejoining the single market would bring most of those benefits back. So Starmer could promise the SNP another referendum in the confident hope it would lose.

The biggest flaw in Starmer's "Trust me, I'm not Boris" strategy is that it might well not be Boris he is up against, but someone as solid and staid as himself. Like Ben Wallace, the Defence Secretary. This decorated former officer in the Scots Guards is currently Johnson's main challenger. He sided with the 49 per cent who opposed Brexit in 2016. As Tory leader he could even take Britain back into the single market. What would Starmer say then?



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Pope Francis' recent letter to all the faithful on the liturgy is a plea to put aside polemics and ego, and to marvel at the liturgy's truth and beauty / By AUSTEN IVEREIGH

## Wonder of the Mass

**F**RANCIS' captivating letter calling for a new formation in the "beauty and truth" of Christian celebration is the second instalment of his response to the so-called "liturgy wars" roiling parts of the Catholic Church. For Francis, those divisions are not, ultimately, about liturgy at all, but about doctrine and ecclesiology. But more deeply, they are the result of centring on ourselves rather than on God's gift.

The first instalment was last year's *Traditionis Custodes*, a juridical document for bishops that placed limits on the use of the pre-Vatican II liturgy by groups opposed to the conciliar reform, and made clear the Pope's determination to re-establish the liturgical unity of the Roman rite. Now comes *Desiderio Desideravi*, which is directed to all the faithful and addresses the causes of the current divisions over liturgy. Even if Francis characteristically downplays its magisterial punch – it is an 11,500-word apostolic letter with "prompts or cues for reflections" – it turns out to be one of his most compelling teaching documents, the fruit of a long and careful deliberation that long predates his pontificate.

The document has two birthplaces. The first is a paper in Italian given by the then-Archbishop of Buenos Aires at a 2005 plenary of the then-Congregation for Divine Worship (CDW), of which Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was a member. In "*L'Arts Celebrandi*" he urged the CDW to issue a document in the face of the growing tendency for people to treat the liturgy as an object needing either innovation or restoration. The document he wanted to see should be "a text for meditation" rather than either a juridical document or a footnote-heavy theological treatise because the issue at heart was the internal disposition of all those involved in the liturgy, celebrants, and congregants alike, and their capacity for "amazement" (*stupore*). Rather than trying to be comprehensive, Bergoglio suggested that it should "say little, in a targeted way; and say it well, in a convincing way".

There was little hope of such a document coming from a CDW under Cardinal Francis Arinze, who headed the department in 2005, or Robert Sarah, the traditionalist who was Cardinal Prefect from 2014. But shortly before Sarah's retirement, at 75, Francis asked the CDW to hold a plenary on liturgical formation, which led to the document that has been under preparation since the English cardinal-elect Arthur Roche took over the liturgy dicastery last year. Both *Traditionis Custodes* in July 2021 and *Desiderio Desideravi* now, which bears the imprint of the Bergoglio 2005 paper,

are bold bids to re-establish the reformed liturgy that followed Vatican II as "the unique expression of the *lex orandi* of the Roman rite", as *Traditionis Custodes* put it.

In *Desiderio Desideravi* Francis wants us to get what liturgy is and does; and to alert us to what prevents us receiving it, namely Gnosticism and neo-Pelagianism, which in his 2018 apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate*, he calls the "two subtle enemies of holiness". They are subtle because although they cloak themselves in religiosity, they are really all about us.

Gnosticism trusts in the intellect, leading to a disembodied spirituality that seeks to domesticate the mystery, the kind of "rational" Christianity that afflicts certain kinds of liberal Catholicism. Neo-Pelagianism, on the other hand, trusts in effort and will, in obedience to forms and rules, which is what so often drives traditionalism, rigorism and various kinds of restorationism. Authentic liturgy, says *Desiderio Desideravi*, purifies us of these temptations.

Liturgy is born of Jesus' desire to re-establish communion with us: it is how he incorporates us, and how we are incorporated. Francis puts this graphically, imagining people arriving in Jerusalem after Pentecost with the desire to meet Jesus. They would have no option, he says, other than to seek out his disciples in order to hear his words and see his gestures: "We would have had no other possibility of a true encounter with him other than that of the community that celebrates. For this reason, the Church has always protected as its most precious treasure the command of the Lord, 'Do this in memory of me.'"

**THIS IS NOT** theatre nor an idea or concept, but an encounter with Christ in continuity with the same incarnational means God has chosen to save us. The liturgy "has nothing to do with an ascetical moralism"; it is neither "a careful exterior observance of a rite" nor "a scrupulous observance of the rubrics". Rubrics are to be observed, and every aspect of the celebration carefully attended to; but these are by themselves insufficient. What liturgy asks of us is humility: receptivity to "the gift of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord which, received with docility, makes our life new". It is a receptivity born of amazement or astonishment (*stupore*), "a marvelling at the fact that the salvific plan of God has been revealed in the paschal deed of Jesus (cf. Ephesians 1:3-14), and the power of this paschal deed continues to reach us in the celebration of the 'mysteries', of the sacraments".



Pope Francis elevates the Host at Mass in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia, in December last year

Noting that one of the traditionalist charges against post-conciliar liturgical reform is the loss of a "sense of mystery", Francis warns that the phrase is slippery. For, "if the astonishment is of the right kind, then there is no risk that the otherness of God's presence will not be perceived, even within the closeness that the Incarnation intends. If the reform has eliminated that vague 'sense of mystery', then more than a cause for accusations, it is to its credit."

At this point Francis makes a key move, showing that the resistance to conciliar liturgical reform is not about liturgical preferences but doctrine and ecclesiology. It would be "trivial" to read the tensions over liturgy as "a simple divergence between different tastes concerning a particular ritual form", he writes. "The problematic is primarily ecclesiological. I do not see how it is possible to say that one recognises the validity of the Council ... and at the same time not accept the liturgical reform born out of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, a document that expresses the reality of the liturgy intimately joined to the vision of Church so admirably described in *Lumen Gentium*."

The reason we have ended up divided over liturgy, Francis suggests, is because of "spiritual worldliness": we take the Lord's gift and turn it into our instrument. The reasons are partly cultural, as the German theologian Romano Guardini explored in his classic *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1918) and in a later (1923) text, *Liturgische Bildung* ("Liturgical Formation"), which is referenced several times in *Desiderio Desideravi*. Guardini's case is that what liturgy asks of us is not easy for contemporary humanity: hence the need for liturgical formation, which is almost like re-learning a lost language. Francis notes how the Council's aim was "to recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action", but "modern people ... have lost the capacity to engage with symbolic action, which is an essential trait of the liturgical act". He quotes Guardini that "the first task of the work of liturgical formation" is to make us once again "capable of symbols". Because the symbolic language of the liturgy

has become "almost inaccessible" to us, we need to be taught it.

It is the same crisis laid out so powerfully in Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Liturgy, says Francis, is "real existential engagement" with Christ *sacramentally*: that is, through created things that are the opposite of spiritual abstractions: "Bread, wine, oil, water, fragrances, fire, ashes, rock, fabrics, colours, body, words, sounds, silences, gestures, space, movement, action, order, time, light."

There can be "no question of renouncing such language". As *Desiderio Desideravi* puts it beautifully, "things – the sacraments 'are made' of things – come from God. To him they are oriented, and by him they have been assumed, and assumed in a particular way in the Incarnation, so that they can become instruments of salvation, vehicles of the Spirit, channels of grace." The task, then, is to "reacquire confidence about creation" for, "if created things are such a fundamental, essential part of the sacramental action that brings about our salvation, then we must arrange ourselves in their presence with a fresh, non-superficial regard, respectful and grateful".

**THE PRIMARY** school for this re-education is the liturgy itself: hence the importance of how it is celebrated, the *Ars celebrandi*, to which Francis turns in the final part of *Desiderio Desideravi*. This is not just about how priests say Mass but the way the congregation takes part. All deserve attention, "so that every gesture and every word of the celebration, expressed with 'art', forms the Christian personality of each individual and of the community". Certain ways of presiding turn the celebrant into an obstacle through "a heightened personalism of the celebrating style which at times expresses a poorly concealed mania to be the centre of attention".

The assembly has the right, Francis says, to see in the gestures and words of the celebrant Jesus' desire to eat the Passover with us, and the priest should be "overpowered by this desire for communion" that the Lord has for each of us. "It is as if we were placed in the middle between Jesus' burning heart of love and the heart of each of the faithful, which is the object of the Lord's love."

Although Francis has suggestions for seminaries and calls for a "permanent formation of everyone" to restore an attitude of wonder, *Desiderio Desideravi* is less a mandate than a plea: to put aside polemics and ego and to marvel at the truth and beauty of the liturgy, allowing ourselves "to be embraced by the desire that the Lord continues to have to eat his Passover with us". It is a call to rediscover the one essential disposition Guardini said that liturgy required of us: humility.

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## Experts are wrong about what they are experts in much less often than the rest of us



Last month Barnabas Aspray, Bethany Solleireder and I interviewed a climate sceptic for our regular podcast, "Faith at the Frontiers".

I had been looking forward to the conversation, as I generally take pleasure in having my prejudices debunked. I entered into this encounter ready to be impressed by arguments I had never thought of, and to hear concerns I had never been aware of. I would have the chance to learn how limited my own point of view on the climate conversation is, and how relative my own perspective is. But it did not go as I had anticipated.

Our interlocutor, like many climate sceptics, dismisses climate science because it is tainted by political bias. This is supposed to be especially evident in its institutionally normative form: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC). As preparation for the interview, we were invited to read the report of the so-called *Non-governmental Panel on Climate Change* (NIPCC) which is supposedly free of political influence. In fact, NIPCC is backed by the Heartland Institute, an American organ of fossil fuel industries, and its scientists are unaccredited. (It has additionally, in its short life, managed the strange manoeuvre of both denying that climate change is happening and denying that it is a bad thing.)

More troubling than his indulgence of the transparently fatuous NIPCC, however, was that our interlocutor's reasons for dismissing climate science were themselves political. Toxiation is robbery; every move towards regulation is a move towards tyranny; the climate agenda is just a cover for an extension of the power of global elites, and so on. Also like climate sceptics more generally, and the post-truth trajectory at large, our interlocutor had a hermeneutic of suspicion about "science". This is more interesting than the political point because it is, in scholarly terms, quite reasonable. There is rarely an *absolute* consensus in science, and science is, of course, fallible. A quick glance at the history of science reveals several changes in our understanding of "the facts" so dramatic that even a bare level of consistency across time is sometimes hard to discern. Scientists have been wrong before and will be wrong again. What's to stop them being wrong about

climate change? If a person has some political suspicions about the IPCC's reports, it is understandable that the "consensus" among scientists it reports will seem too convenient to be true.

Yes, experts are sometimes wrong; but the key thing is that they are wrong about what they are experts in much less often than the rest of us. The fact that doctors make mistakes does not mean that I do not go to hospital. The fact that engineers make mistakes does not mean that I never get on a plane. We go to hospital and take planes because we make a reasoned judgement based on the relative expertise of them and us. My opinion – I'm not a climate scientist – about whether or not climate change is happening is simply not interesting compared to the views of those who have made climate their lifelong study. And it is the collective view of just such people that the IPCC represents.

The obvious flimsiness of the argument from the fallibility of science reveals how politically motivated climate scepticism is. "Facts" by themselves do not generate a response from us. Our values tell us how to interpret alleged "facts"; whether to trust them, what to do about them. Our interlocutor had political values – which are in turn of course moral and spiritual values – which prevented him from accepting the overwhelming, desperately urgent scientific case for doing something drastic at the global level to prevent catastrophic warming. Having expected the frisson of having my confidence in my own established opinion and outlook shaken, I found myself instead pondering the limits of liberalism.

I am often complimented on my willingness to engage positively with those with whom I disagree. I have tended to think that when it comes to the two virtues such engagement requires – patience and humility – there is no such thing as having too much. But, my own failures aside, this conversation made me wonder whether patience and humility are irresponsible when exercised towards people displaying utter irrationality, and those who knowingly profit from their gullibility.



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What is the relationship between what we call 'authenticity' – being true to oneself – and pretence or role-playing in shaping a good life? / By JUDITH WOLFE

# Trying to be yourself

**I**N ORDER to live with deliberation and passion, we require values towards which we can orientate ourselves. It is only within a moral framework – organised by what we perceive as good (that is, what is to be pursued) and bad (that is, what is to be avoided) – that we can define and evaluate different courses of action and, therefore, that we can move. The traditional account, shared by Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and much of Christian tradition, was that this moral space was objective and absolute, and that it is our duty to inhabit it well. Nietzsche bemoaned the loss of just that moral space when he had his madman declare: "God is dead! And we have killed him ... What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down?"

It is now difficult to uphold the vision of an absolute moral order, at least in its traditional form. A long history of social hierarchies that have excluded some people from agency; of abuses justified by authority; and an ever-increasing awareness of the difficulty of achieving advantages for one group without disadvantages for another, have contributed to an evacuation of the ideal of an absolute moral order. People have increasingly come to suspect any claims to objective "truth" or "value", and consider any demands made on others in their name are a masked play for power and domination. Behind this assumption is the increasing suspicion that the world is not an ordered whole at all, but a vast field of competing and ultimately irreconcilable interests.

But of course this disenchantment has not eradicated our deep need to know and desire some point of orientation that will enable us to act with deliberation and passion. The great philosophical systems of the twentieth century, at least in Europe, all wrestle with this need. And the quintessential modern answer, proposed in different forms by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and others, is the ideal of *authenticity*.

To understand this is also to begin to define the problem of role-playing. The older ideal of a fixed moral order was often seen to be acted out through socially defined, equally fixed roles. To be a good citizen or a good Christian was to step into social roles that prescribed frameworks of behaviour: laird, clerk, paterfamilias, servant and so on. Amid the suspicions of Western modernity, social roles were increasingly seen as instruments of oppression: inflexible moulds pressed down on inner lives in stifling and unfairly



Venetian carnival masks are worn to conceal identity

stratifying ways. And many modern philosophers, psychologists and novelists set against this oppressive regime of roles a contrasting ideal of being radically true to oneself: of being 'authentic'.

The ideal of authenticity has taken a powerful hold of the modern imagination. It rests on the simple but ultimately elusive idea that there is in each of us an inmost self – a core of identity apart from all roles and social mores – which we can discover and try to realise. With this one brilliant idea we seem to be able to resolve the crisis. The idea of an objective moral order may have been destroyed but we seemed to have found in its place another source of orientation, of fixed scaffolding against which we can "build a life": our true, authentic self.

**HOWEVER**, the more we have pursued the idea of authenticity over the last 200 years, the more it has threatened to erode itself from within. For a long time now, we have come to suspect (as expressed forcefully by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and others) that what we regard as our own personal desires are in fact genetically coded mechanisms for survival and propagation. And we have become increasingly aware of the ways in which our desires and instincts can be conditioned and manipulated by algorithms.

Our dream of being self-determined, free to create and choose the purposes we pursue, seems more and more an illusion thrown up by our sub-personal instincts and desires, which can in turn be manipulated by those

who crack their codes and learn how to trigger our desires, fears and disgusts. Much of our economy is intended to serve the wishes of the consumer seeking to realise him- or herself; but these wishes are themselves manipulated by the system meant to serve them. Similarly, our political systems are in large part meant to ensure the flourishing of those whom they protect; and yet they manipulate feelings of fear, resentment and rivalry to dictate what counts as flourishing.

So we are constantly facing the fear that the way we experience the world – our own wishes, purposes and decisions – is illusory: that behind it are sub-personal and super-personal forces that manipulate us like puppets on strings. This painful sense of contradiction between our experience of life and what we suspect lies behind it feels inescapable – yet it is unliveable, because it takes away from us the sense of a moral space within which we could orientate ourselves. The mental-health crisis in the Western world is in part the result of technology not merely outpacing our capacity to assimilate it, but revealing modern life as fundamentally at odds with itself.

This is sharpening a dilemma that has been at the heart of European philosophy for the last century or more. The work of Kierkegaard and of Heidegger is full of critiques of social roles, animated by the search for a liveable ideal of authenticity. Meanwhile modern critical theorists are engaged in a deep conflict over whether race or gender precede us – or whether all such roles or identities are utterly fluid and can be changed at will. In short, it

is difficult for us to believe in either an absolute moral order or in the possibility of finding our authentic "self". All the scaffolding that might allow us to act rightly or wrongly, to "build a life", has been swept away.

**COULD THEATRE** lead philosophy through doors that philosophy might not be able to open itself? Kierkegaard, Heidegger, critical theorists and others denounce the deadening hand of social roles. We need to rediscover that social roles can be means of finding a moral foothold in a shifting space – and the theatre is a forum where role-playing neither oppresses nor trivialises, but rather creates space for discovery.

When I was trying to figure out who I was, I consistently found that my self – my desires, convictions and hopes – was so fluid that if I reached inside myself, there was nothing to take hold of, only a mass of contradictory and often ill-founded desires, impressions and self-images. I grew up in Vienna's sixth district – just around the corner from the theatre where Beethoven's *Fidelio* was premiered – and spent much of my time performing in theatre, musicals and opera. And I found that playing theatre roles was the only way in which I could inhabit my own body and life: in which I could channel my liquid and undirected emotions and impulses.

Amid the profound anxiety of our age, it can seem impossible to take hold of one overarching good by which we might orientate our lives. But we can understand ourselves and each other under particular descriptions: daughter and sister; pupil and friend; teacher; student (that most glorious of life roles); worker; parent. Many of these roles are rooted in physical realities, but they are also associated with characteristic goods and virtues. They contain a whole complex of implicit knowledge, codified in patterns of behaviour whose purpose we may not fully understand, about social goods and how to realise them. Roles give us spaces for action; within them, we can achieve excellence and meaning.

Though we often assume them deliberately, we "dress up", in an important sense they also precede us: they are, in some sense, bigger than we are, and can become moulds into which we can pour our liquid selves. In role-playing of this sort, the anxiety of authenticity falls away, at least for a while: sincerity follows rather than motivates choice. In that sense, it is more important to choose the right role than to strive for authenticity.

Social roles represent risks and temptations. Roles are neither immutable nor "safe". This is partly because roles, like most things, are shaped statistically: they are optimised for what works best in the aggregate; and individual situations might call for other responses or actions. Roles can also be means of codifying and justifying exploitative behaviour. And some roles develop their own dynamics and run away from any consciously chosen purposes – the "virtuoso" is someone capable of mastering or internalising a role, but also of improvisation, extending its range of possibilities without distorting its purpose.

Roles do not escape the question of what is the overarching good, but they distribute the burden of its identification across roles and society, dispersing decision-making from conscious deliberation to a host of often invisible factors. Because they are ways in which societies find, negotiate and pursue their goods, they require active inhabitation and shaping, rather than merely passive following.

This may make it sound as if roles are optional: as if we could step in and out of social roles as we can of theatre roles. But this is not the case: our life with roles is so poignant because we *always* understand ourselves "under some description"; we do not have a dressing room away from roles where we are simply "ourselves". And roles are brittle and unreliable. They are load-bearing structures on which we can lean and within which we can orientate ourselves, but they are also fluid, giving shape to inchoate senses of overarching meaning and value. They display gaps, inconsistencies, tensions, which we can't use the roles themselves to navigate.

**SO ROLES** do not solve our problem of self-hood. However, they locate it. Shakespeare's theatre is so deeply moving partly because it harnesses the power of theatrical roles to explore the power and perplexities of the roles we play in life. Contrary to what the ideal of authenticity declares, the question of selfhood arises most often not as the unmoored question "Who am I?", but from the gaps and tensions in our role-playing. It arises when we seem too liquid to cast ourselves into a role at all (as does Prince Hal in *Henry IV*); when a social role we have assumed is fundamentally at odds with our urgent desires (as for Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*); when the demands of our social roles seem fundamentally ambiguous or indeterminate (as for the title character of *Hamlet*); when the demands of two social roles clash (as they do for Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*); or when their internal reward structures go against their wider social aim (as for the title character of *Macbeth*).

Perhaps the most urgent and personal moments of our lives arise in the gaps and tensions between the roles we assume in society. Shakespeare's most arresting emblem of

this is King Lear, standing on a heath in the storm that blows from just those gaps, recognising both himself and Edgar (another inveterate role-player) for one brief moment as the same "poor, bare, forked animal". And yet Lear, like Shakespeare's other great characters, cannot simply stop acting. He, Hamlet, Macbeth and Leontes all know the pathetic insufficiency of roles, but they also recognise that there is not simply a space beyond roles into which they might confidently step: life is "but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more." There is no cure for that," as Samuel Beckett said. When, in Shakespeare's (or Beckett's) work, characters do try to step into such a space, shedding their roles – when, perhaps, they might reach a point of authenticity beyond role-playing – why then the play is at an end.

As fundamental as social roles may be to us, the crises of these Shakespearean tragedies extend beyond crises of social roles to what we might call crises of *narrative* roles. By "narrative role", I mean that beneath and encompassing our social roles, we tend to cast ourselves in *one* changeable but persistent role, namely that of the protagonist of the story of our lives. This may sound like an unnecessarily figurative way of saying that we are always the subject of our own consciousness. But the term "role" draws attention to the fact that in relation to ourselves, we do not inhabit only the first-person perspective of subject, but also a third-person perspective of ourselves as the protagonist of a story we are telling or a play we are enacting. We both *are* ourselves and we *see* ourselves.

This kind of role-playing is a more active form of meaning-making than the assumption of social roles. It is also more morally complex. We play social roles beside others assuming the same roles: I am a teacher alongside other teachers, finding community and solidarity in our joint role. But none of us can assume a narrative role in her own life that she can fully share with others. We are always the *protagonist* of our own lives and we always cast others in roles vis-à-vis ourselves with which they (almost by definition) cannot fully identify: supporting roles, or antagonistic

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

ones. Of course we acknowledge, at least in theory, that others, too, are protagonists to themselves; but it is something of which we need continually to remind ourselves.

Social media warps moral space. It is so tempting to turn ourselves into characters, to turn a moment into a displayed memory before we have even experienced it. The more we insist on the role of protagonist and cast others into supporting or antagonistic roles, the more we manoeuvre ourselves into competition or worse, find ourselves the only players among non-player characters in a cosmos without coordinates. These dynamics can lead to profound loneliness and disorientation. In the pandemic we were often reduced to squares on one another's screens, pinned, shifted, minimised, muted and turned off at will.

**TO WHAT EXTENT** is the role I play in my own life truer or more defining of my self than the roles I play in the lives of others? Who has the authority to tell the story of a life? This is, among others, a theological question. Religion is often associated with roles in both senses: social and narrative. And it is true that religious faith and communities are a powerful source of roles, with all their potential and risks. Religious communities supply clearly defined social roles, which can be great goods if they offer frameworks by which to shape useful and meaningful lives; though it is also important to recognise that they can sometimes become lifeless or distorting.

Christianity offers a very powerful narrative role: within its cosmic story of Creation, Fall, salvation and sanctification, we are able to take our place as part of a larger story, in which we do not have to be perfect protagonists, but can admit to failure and need for help. This allows us to step into a wider world.

But though the Christian story is larger than we are, we locate ourselves within it narratively, and can get entangled in our own telling. (Talk to anyone who has had a major crisis of faith or life, and looks back with puzzlement and disappointment on the way she's been telling her own spiritual story.) But even more than about roles, faith and theology are about their gaps: the times when our social roles break apart, either by being flooded or by being hollowed out; and the times when our narrative role – our sense of our life as a coherent story in which we play an integrative role – fails, whether because we realise that in cultivating our own story we have made other people unreal to us and have hurt them, or because our story appears to be coming to an abrupt end in the face of crisis or death. Psychology and philosophy have crucial things to say about such breaking points, but theology says something quite different in kind to both of these.

I experienced the paradoxical freedom of role-playing in the theatre in my youth. Yet one of my profound challenges was to reconcile my need for roles with the presence of other people. Social roles can enable constructive and meaningful exchange between people; but they are merely channels, and not

the exchange itself. Consider the roles of teacher and student: being a teacher creates space in which I can offer constructive critique to a student. This requires openness and vulnerability to others. Roles can create spaces in which openness of that kind is possible; but only if we let them be porous to others rather than defences against them.

This may sound as if there is, after all, a self beside roles. But I am suggesting not that we can step out of our roles into a more authentic self known to us, but that our roles create spaces in which we can recognise others as exceeding mere roles; and that our recognition can help them know themselves better. There is a profound sense in which the narrative roles in which we cast ourselves may be less true or capacious than the possibilities created and recognition enabled by our role-playing with others. There are times and ways in which others can know us better than we know ourselves.

This is a profoundly risky suggestion. It takes out of our hands any final control over the meaning of our lives and selves, because how we play into others' lives and how they see us may be as important as our own sense of self. More controversially, it places into the hands of others some measure of power over that sense of self – and it can cause great damage if someone's self is reflected back to her through a twisted role. And yet this sense that our roles are not defences but open spaces, and that our selves are to some extent given to us in our encounters with others in (and beyond) these spaces, is grounded in a deep theological conviction, that the deepest wellspring of who we are, and how we are to orientate ourselves in the world, is found neither in fixed and impersonal values nor in the bastion of our inner selves, but in the calling and love of God.

The Psalmist rushes to "praise [God]; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"; he recognises that God's thoughts about us are precious and "more numerous than the sand" – "when I awake," he adds expressively, "I am still with thee." St Paul suggests that it is not in introspection but in allowing ourselves to be seen by God that we both are and know ourselves: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." For the New Testament writers, this fullness of understanding is not achievable within earthly life, where all our actions are incomplete, and God remains partly hidden.

It is an eschatological promise. Christianity teaches that we need roles because we are not yet ourselves. They are temporary scaffolds or channels, enabling us to receive the call and the love of God and of others. We move through the world (as T.S. Eliot put it) "with the drawing of this Love and the voice of this calling"; and as long as they draw us, we shall not cease from exploration.

**Judith Wolfe** is professor of philosophical theology at the University of St Andrews. This essay is adapted from her Inaugural Lecture, delivered in May, and available on St Andrews University YouTube channel.

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Two Jesuit priests who were murdered in Mexico last month knew the dangers they faced from criminal gangs who operate with increasing impunity / **By LUIS ORLANDO PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ**

# Crime and compassion

**J**AVIER CAMPOS Morales and Joaquín César Mora Salazar, both elderly Jesuit priests, and tourist guide Pedro Palma, were murdered inside the Church of St Francis Xavier in Cercohuí, a small town in the northern state of Chihuahua, on 20 June. Their deaths are only the latest incidents in a deteriorating security situation in Mexico.

The church where the Jesuits died is in the heart of the Sierra Tarahumara mountains, where a mission of the Society of Jesus had been founded in the seventeenth century. Palma had run into the church in fear of his life. When he saw his terrified parishioner, 79-year-old Fr Campos rushed to his aid. Palma was still clasped in his arms when a man known well to the priest entered the church and shot them both. On hearing the shots, Fr Mora, 80, came to their aid. The man shot him too.

When a fourth Jesuit, named Jesús, arrived at the scene, he realised that he knew the man who had shot his brothers. When he said: "Calm down!" the attacker hesitated. He looked deeply troubled and did not know how to respond. "Is it possible that God will forgive me?" he asked. Jesús answered simply: "Yes. Did the man repent of what he had done? We will never know. What we do know is that something moved within him.

The state prosecutor's office has since identified the suspected murderer as José Noriel Portillo Gil, known as "El Chueco". He was born and grew up among the inhabitants of the region. It is almost certain that he had been baptised in the same church in Cercohuí. He is one of many thousands of Mexicans to have been drawn into violent crime. Organised crime gangs have a firm hold on communities in the Tarahumara mountains, where they are involved in illegal logging, extortion and the harvesting and sale of marijuana and opium poppies. If men do not join the gangs, they run the risk of being "disappeared" and bringing reprisals upon their families.

**AFTER** The assassin had shot Fr Campos, Fr Mora and Palma, more armed men arrived at the church. Jesús begged: "Do not take the bodies." They ignored him. The three bodies were put in the back of a pickup truck and driven away. Three years ago, in 2019, I had eaten Christmas dinner with Fr Campos and Fr Mora, along with other Jesuits and women Religious serving at the mission, where they provided educational services for local Indigenous people. Even then, the priests and the sisters knew they were in serious danger from the drug gangs.

I was asked to celebrate a Eucharist in one of the communities. A family of Rarámuri



A Mexican soldier guards the church where the two Jesuits were killed

– as the people of the Tarahumara prefer to be called – came with me. On the way to our destination, I noticed that armed men were following us. I became nervous but kept walking. Magdalena, the woman who was accompanying me, said: "Don't worry, Father. These men have been told that you are a priest and that you have come to celebrate Mass." Her words soothed me. Generally, the local people take good care of their missionaries, telling them where to go and when to rest. Fr Joaquín and Fr Javier had made a conscious decision. In spite of the dangers, they would stay, with and beside, the people.

Their commitment might be traced back to 1973, when the newly installed Jesuit Bishop of Tarahumara, José Llaguno, spoke out against the maltreatment, abuse and murder of the Indigenous inflicted by the army and the police under the pretext of Operation Condor, a US-funded joint operation between the Mexican army and police purportedly aimed at destroying the drug industry. Throughout his episcopate, Llaguno, who was known for his affable manner and simplicity, travelled from place to place in his mountainous diocese in a plane that he himself piloted. His theology derived from the Second Vatican Council and the conference of the bishops of Latin America held at Medellín, Colombia in 1968, which saw the emergence of a distinctly Latin American "theology of liberation". In 1979, Llaguno participated in the third conference of Latin American bishops, in Puebla, Mexico, at which the inculturation of the Gospel among indigenous communities and the preferential option for the poor were reaffirmed.

This was a time when the winds of Vatican II began to blow across the whole continent. Many of the religious orders and institutes renewed their missions to bring work for

social justice and evangelisation together. In Tarahumara, Bishop Llaguno supported the founding of the Committee for Solidarity and Defence of Human Rights. Another vital project for the Rarámuri people was the Santa Teresita Clinic in Creel, founded by Luis Verplancken SJ in 1964. When it was built, more than 75 per cent of children were dying from malnutrition, tuberculosis or respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses, due to lack of medicines. Almost five decades later, the hospital is one of the key institutions serving the local population.

**"WHY DID** they take away the bodies?" I have been asked. It's a deliberate tactic used by organised crime gangs with the connivance of the authorities, designed to strike terror and tighten social control over local people. Hundreds of mothers in Mexico are still searching for more than 100,000 disappeared people; 52,000 bodies and sets of human remains remain under the guard of the state, without being identified. This task is impossible to complete without international aid; Mexico has neither the technology nor sufficient personnel.

Two days after their murder, the local police found the bodies of Fr Javier, Fr Joaquín and Pedro Palma. However, two other men who were kidnapped and taken alive that day are yet to be found. I am convinced that the blood shed by my brother Jesuits will be a source of light for the people they loved and served, and for whom they gave their lives.

**Luis Orlando Pérez Jiménez SJ** is a doctoral research student at University College London Institute of the Americas. He has wide experience of work in the field of human rights in Latin America.

# Life, law and the pursuit of justice

Recent decisions by the United States Supreme Court show that this is a polarised court in a polarised country – but they also show that Catholic justices do not automatically ‘vote their faith’ / By MICHAEL MCGOUGH

**T**HE SUPREME COURT’S decision to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision legalising abortion, was a seismic disruption of the legal, political and medical status quo in the United States. But it was not the only example in the court’s 2021–22 term of a determination by its conservatives, fortified by the addition of three Donald Trump appointees, to hand down bold but polarising decisions.

By six votes to three, with Republican appointees on one side and Democratic appointees on the other, the court also struck down restrictions placed by the state of New York on carrying firearms in public, ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency lacked authority from Congress to take ambitious measures to regulate greenhouse gases and held that a football coach for a public high school could not be fired for praying on the playing field.

Still, the repudiation of *Roe* was in a provocative class by itself, the dismantling of a precedent almost half-a-century old. The vehicle for overruling *Roe* – and the 1992 decision of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which affirmed *Roe*’s “essential holding” – was the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. A lower court had ruled against a Mississippi law banning most abortions after 15 weeks, noting that it conflicted with the holding in *Roe* that states couldn’t ban abortions before the foetus was viable, around 23 or 24 weeks into a pregnancy.

Writing for himself and four other Republican appointees, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr declared that *Roe* was “egregiously wrong”. Alito’s opinion – a draft of which was leaked in May – insisted that rights not specified in the Constitution must be “deeply rooted in this nation’s history and tradition”. A right to abortion, Alito said, didn’t qualify because “an unbroken tradition of prohibiting abortion on pain of criminal punishment persisted from the earliest days of the common law until 1973”.

As dramatic as the decision itself was the fact that Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr was the odd man out among the Republican-appointed justices. The chief justice agreed that the Mississippi law should be upheld but wrote in a lone concurring opinion that there was no need for the court at this time to recon-



Norma Leah McCorvey, better known as Jane Roe in the landmark 1973 abortion ruling

sider *Roe*’s declaration that there was a right to abortion. He said he would do away with the viability standard and hold that Mississippi’s law allowing abortions up to 15 weeks provides “an adequate opportunity to exercise the right *Roe* protects.” In almost plaintive tones, Roberts reminded his colleagues: “If it is not necessary to decide more to dispose of a case, then it is necessary *not* to decide more.”

The court’s decision to overrule *Roe* was cheered by the pro-life movement and activists and conservative lawyers who have laboured for decades to reverse the 1973 decision. It was also welcomed by Catholic bishops, including Cardinal-designate Robert McElroy of San Diego, who said: “Today is a day to give thanks and celebrate.” (He added: “Support for children and families cannot stop at birth.”) But the decision also has generated criticism and protests. President Joe Biden called the ruling a “sad day for the Court and for the country” and called for Congress to codify abortion rights in a federal statute.

Like many critics of the decision, Biden has focused on the way it would jeopardise “a woman’s right to choose, her right to make intensely personal decisions with her doctor, free from the interference of politics”. But some critics have suggested that the decision

was not simply hostile to women’s equality or disrespectful of precedent but reflective of a religious agenda.

Jennifer Rubin, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, wrote in May after the publication of Alito’s draft opinion that the potential loss of abortion rights was “a religious power grab by justices who, according to at least two female Republican senators, dissembled under oath about their intentions regarding *Roe*”. In an apparent allusion to the number of conservative justices who are Catholics, a cartoon published by *The Washington Post* after oral argument in the *Dobbs* case showed toilets at the Supreme Court labelled “Men” and “Incubators”. The title of the online cartoon was “Adjudicating While Catholic”.

**THE NOTION** that Catholic justices automatically “vote their faith” is dubious as well as offensive. The late Justice William Brennan, who was in the majority in *Roe v. Wade*, was a Catholic, as is retired Justice Anthony Kennedy, who voted in *Casey* to reaffirm *Roe*’s “essential holding”. What is less debatable is that the court’s conservatives, including the chief justice, are especially solicitous of the rights of believers, Catholic and otherwise – more so in some cases than their liberal colleagues.

That split was evident in two important cases this term involving the religion clauses of the First Amendment. That amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”, strictures that the Supreme Court also applies to actions of state governments.

In *Carson v. Makin*, the six conservative justices struck down a law in the state of Maine that excluded some religious schools from a programme in which the state makes payments to help defray the costs of private school tuition for children who don’t live near a public school.

Writing for the court, Roberts said the decision was consistent with two earlier rulings in which the court said states couldn’t discriminate against recipients of government benefits on the basis of their religious character. Dissenting, Justice Stephen Breyer argued that the majority paid almost no attention to the Establishment Clause while giving “almost exclusive attention” to the Free Exercise Clause. Maine, he said, should have been allowed to withhold aid from sectarian schools in the interests of religious neutrality even if such aid wouldn’t violate the Establishment Clause.

In another religion case, *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, the court ruled six to three in favour of Joseph Kennedy, a high-school football coach in Washington state who lost his job because he knelt at midfield after games to offer what the court called “a quiet prayer of thanks”. In an opinion by Justice Neil Gorsuch, the court ruled that the school district violated Kennedy’s rights to free speech and the free exercise of religion. Gorsuch wrote that Kennedy’s speech was

"private speech, not government speech" that his employer could control. Also, Kennedy prayed during a period of time when "coaches were free to attend briefly to personal matters – everything from checking sports scores on their phones to greeting friends and family in the stands".

In her dissenting opinion, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, joined by Justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, wrote: "Students look up to their teachers and coaches as role models and seek their approval. Students also depend on this approval for tangible benefits. Players recognise that gaining the coach's approval may pay dividends small and large, from extra playing time to a stronger letter of recommendation to additional support in college athletic recruiting."

Ira C. Lupu, a professor emeritus at George Washington University Law School, worried that Gorsuch's opinion could undermine landmark Supreme Court decisions from the 1960s holding that official prayers and Bible readings in public schools violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. "It would have been so easy to write this opinion in a way that reassured people that they weren't ripping the foundations out of the school-prayer cases," Lupu said, suggesting that the decision might lead to prayer by teachers in public-school classrooms. "The teacher might say, 'OK, class starts at nine. At 8:58 I'm going to say a prayer. Nobody has to join me ... I think we're going to get a lot of that'."

Richard W. Garnett, a professor of law and political science at the University of Notre Dame, takes a more positive view of the court's decisions in this term in religion cases, saying that the justices "continued to correct what they regard as a misunderstanding of church-state separation and continued to affirm that government should not discriminate against religion in the public sphere".

**GARNETT SAID** that he thought the court in the Kennedy case rejected the idea of a per se rule that any prayer by a coach is coercive. But he did not think the court held that coercion must involve "legally operative pains and penalties". In any case, he said, the decision does not hold "that a district can't tell a football coach not to engage in coercive or pressuring prayer with students". The question is whether many students who felt such pressure would complain about it.

Some important decisions in the 2021-22 term didn't break down along partisan or ideological lines. For example, in *Shurtleff v. Boston*, the court unanimously ruled in favour of a group that filed a suit against the city of Boston when officials refused to fly the group's Christian flag on a flagpole that had displayed a miscellany of other flags representing various countries and causes. But consensus in the most important cases was the exception, not the rule. This is a polarised court in a polarised country.

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

## Middle-class idealists wanting to improve the lot of poor folk had better live among them



TOYNBEE HALL was not at all as I expected. I knew little more of it than the social work done there by the indefatigable penitent John Profumo.

There's a bit of grass halfway up traffic, battered Commercial Street that looks like the remnant of a village green and behind it stands a Tudor-brick mullioned façade with tall chimneys above its gables. That is Toynbee Hall.

I stood in its wood-paneled lecture room and ate some olives in support of the launch of Vols 34 and 35 of the *Survey of London*, that stupendous long-term cooperative architectural record of the capital, parish by parish. These two volumes were for Whitechapel, which Peter Guillery got a move-on in editing before much more was demolished.

Toynbee Hall was built in 1884 as a settlement: the first in the East End. The idea was that if middle-class idealists wanted to improve the lot (material and cultural) of poor folk, they had better live among them. An early settler at Toynbee Hall was the Arts and Crafts architect C.R. Ashbee, who in 1894, shocked by the demolition of seventeenth-century buildings in Bromley by Bow, founded the Survey of London.

The progenitors of Toynbee Hall were the clergyman Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta ("pretty, witty and well-to-do", her father's fortune having come from the men's hair-preparation Rowland's Macassar Oil, against which antimacassars were invented). He founded the Society for Repressing Mendicity and Organising Charity; she the Metropolitan Association for the Befriending of Young Servants.

He had been appointed vicar of St Jude's, Whitechapel, in a notoriously poor and lawless neighbourhood. The Church of St Jude was built in 1847 in "Cockney Gothic", as adherents of the ecclesiological movement called it. The number of Christian families in the crowded parish was reported to have fallen to 250 by the 1890s, when Barnett resigned his living to build up Toynbee Hall. There was an influx of poor Jewish migrants into the area and in 1925 the Church Commissioners demolished St Jude's so that its site could be more profitably sold (and in a deliberate move to stop it being turned into a synagogue).

The Barnetts went on to found Whitechapel Art Gallery, round the

corner. They always meant to foster the best in the lives of the Whitechapel poor through Ruskinian education and art. "Whitechapel needed lovely colours," Henrietta Barnett declared.

IN THE summery light of Queen's College Chapel, Oxford, we heard, as part of the memorial service for Brian McGuinness, the witty, kindly and brilliant Wittgenstein scholar, a recitation of the elegy for Heraclitus. The lines by Callimachus were spoken in Greek, and they gave us a crib in the printed order of service, though it was not the version beginning: "They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead." That translation was written by William Johnson while he was still a schoolmaster at Eton. In 1872 he suddenly resigned from Eton, though "no one can be quite sure of the exact circumstances" in the words of his biographer.

For good measure, he changed his name to William Cory. That gives the name to the anecdote found in the *Notebooks of Geoffrey Madan* (who as a boy had won the whole school a holiday for the brilliance of his account of Eton in Herodotean Greek). The Bishop of Brisbane leant over to Cory and said: "Did you ever know Johnson? I always thought him the most unpleasant fellow I ever came across." To which he replied: "I see what you mean, but I'm not sure it mayn't have been a little exaggerated."

I'VE JUST defrosted the fridge. I'd never done it before, not to this fridge, but I could no longer deny the impossibility of shutting the drawer with the frozen peas in. Like polishing your shoes, defrosting is not something you imagine needs instructions. Yet people now look for a How To video on YouTube for such things. The difficult bit was finding the electric socket switch under the kitchen worktop. Once the ice began to melt I found it hypnotic. The ice scraper that came with the machine cleverly fitted into a groove to act as a sort of run-off silt slope. Water gathered slowly to form a drip, then followed the same waterway again to drip more rapidly. Watching this wonder of nature, I almost made myself late for lunch.



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

Birdsong and the scent of wild flowers fill the pages of our much-loved nature columnist's new adventure story for children / By JONATHAN TULLOCH

# There is a happy land

**I** DON'T HAVE many distinct memories of the farm. I can clearly see the lane leading down to it between high banks. I can hear too the drum roll as our Allegro rattled over the cattle grid, a clatter always followed by the hoof beats of curious heifers as they gathered to watch us arrive. I will recollect a glistening slate roof, a huddle of byres and the vast rise of the fells beyond. The rest comes in fragments: the warm breath of calves; the mysterious shadows of the cattle shed; a mountainous heap of mangolds; the cuckoo calling endlessly over the tarn.

And yet, though I only went to this Lakeland farm a handful of times, I know it intimately because throughout my childhood I was a regular visitor there – forever travelling to it on the wings of family stories. It was where my grandmother and her sisters spent the war years. With the menfolk fighting, these three sisters (Auntie Dolly, Auntie Polly and Nannie Annie – along with my infant mother) saw out the duration of the conflict, farming the thin, stone-cluttered, Westmorland soil.

The farm had been sold by the time I came to know the three sisters in the 1970s, and yet much of the time they talked about it as though they were still living there. Along with the hairpins, thimbles and pegs, their pinny pockets held a never-emptying stash of memories from the war years, and they were forever rummaging in there to bring one out.

Should a match be produced to light their coal fires in winter, it was always agreed with Presbyterian certainty that no coal fire could approach the warmth of upland peat, dug from the farm bag; you were warm even when the tarn was frozen over. Whenever a hankie materialised to wipe my mouth after a jam sandwich, I was always reminded that nothing tasted like the bilberry jelly they used to make – you knew that it was high summer when the bilberries were ripe on the fells. If a walking stick dropped in the porch, it was immediately appraised and found wanting as a nutting stick: you needed a proper crook to get at the crop of hazels growing above the tarn when autumn turned the woods red. And every time the key for the cuckoo clock was pulled out, you were persuaded that no cuckoo ever sang as loud or as true as the fell farm cuckoo.

**ON THIS** seasonal backdrop was woven, in exquisite colour, the tapestry of the sisters' countless wartime adventures. The hostilities might have been far away from them, but adventure was always near. The gentle Clydesdale horse that used to open the farmhouse door with his giant but deft hoof – and once climbed the stairs. The time Auntie Dolly nearly drowned when she fell through the



tarn ice, only to be rescued in the nick of time by her future husband. The postman who delivered the mail to their kitchen table and then sat down for a cuppa. And Hubert, the German prisoner of war.

Hubert was one of the few male characters to feature in their stories and he fascinated me. Like many boys of my generation, I was reared on a diet of war films, games of "Japs and Commandos" and the strange, reticent box of my granddad's service medals, but here was an enemy that defied easy pigeonholing. Hubert was softly spoken and didn't shout "Achtung!" or "Hände hoch". Hubert clipped sheep gently. Hubert missed his wife and baby. Hubert saved a toddler from a haystack wheel. Hubert did actually find a needle in a haystack. Hubert had nothing to do with the Nazi bomber that flew over the farm one night and dropped a bomb on Barrow.

It was inevitable that one day I would write about these family stories, and who else but Hubert would be one of the main characters? Likewise, it was inevitable that the book would be for children. My first attempt began 25 years ago and was called *The Good Enemy*. Beyond kind rejections and advice from publishers, it didn't see the light of day. I returned to the idea a couple of years ago, rewriting the novel as *Cuckoo Summer*. *The Good Enemy* had enrolled Hubert pretty much as he was, a POW allocated to work on local farms. *Cuckoo Summer* made him fly over the dale, parachute from a Heinkel bomber and hide in the woods with a Luger pistol. *The Good Enemy* kept to real personnel; *Cuckoo*

*Summer* created a cast of fictional characters such as Tommy, whose father is missing during Dunkirk, and Sally, the Geordie evacuee – it's these unlikely friends that find the airman and must decide whether or not to tell the authorities. Then there's Mr Scarcross from the neighbouring farm who believes that the only good German is a dead one. And Mrs Gently, the teacher who's anything but gentle.

At first, I felt a touch disloyal to the stories given to me by the elderly relatives whose kindly faces were wrinkled as deeply as the apples they once kept in a farm barrel, but a story is a living thing that dies unless its teller breathes new life and colours into it: it's a pip to plant, not a fruit to store. Besides, I kept my great-aunties in the tale, and also the Clydesdale horse my mother used to sit on at the plough.

*Cuckoo Summer* is a more personal book than its earlier incarnation. In the years since that first attempt at turning family stories into a novel, I've written countless nature columns, and many of the glorious sights and sounds of British nature I've enjoyed have flown and grown their way into its pages; not just the eponymous cuckoo, but many of the different species of trees, birds and flowers that I can remember being common in my own childhood, and have since become rarities. Children need to meet nature in our books so that they know what the British countryside should really sound, smell and look like. There's a biodiversity crisis in our fiction as well as in reality.

**SO IT IS** that nightjars whirl over the hayfields of *Cuckoo Summer*. Barn owls watch every move the hiding German airman makes. Tommy and Sally wade through moonlit meadows that send up the fragrance of lady's bedstraw. Dragonflies, damselflies and herons all lead their own lives as the human drama comes to a head when we learn of Sally's sad past. I'm pretty sure that this is the only children's novel that mentions the hidden treasures of betony and hare's-foot clover.

And it's not just birdsong and the scent of wild flowers that fill these pages. I've also let the book ring with the music of Geordie and Lakeland dialects. For me, the way people speak is as beautiful and natural as bees and butterflies. Sally talks with an easy-to-understand Geordie twang, and my great-aunties' Westmorland lilt finds its way on to the lips of some of the characters. Naturally, I've included the wonderful old ways of sheep-counting: yan, tan, tethers ...



**Jonathan Tulloch** is the author of eight novels, including *The Season Ticket*, *Give Us This Day* and *Mr McCool*. He has won the Betty Trask Prize and the J.B. Priestley Award. *Cuckoo Summer* is published this week by Andersen Press at £7.99 (Tablet price £7.99).

## A patchwork of paths out of the pandemic

BY RACHEL KELLY

**I** LOVE chatting to my friend Dr Carla Croft, lead clinical psychologist for Barts health staff support, and the person looking after the mental health and well-being needs of nearly 20,000 NHS employees. She really is on the happiness front line. And every time we meet up for a coffee, I always leave feeling enlightened.

Her thoughts are helping me navigate this tricky, turbulent summer, a time when it costs £100 to fill your petrol tank; when just as we got back into the office the RMT strikes mean many of us are WFH again; and when suffering caused by the war in Ukraine shows no end.

So much for us to cope with, when many of us are only just

emerging from the grief and losses experienced in the pandemic. But what if we may be stronger than we think? Could reflecting on what Covid has meant for our psychological well-being be crucial to help us through this difficult phase?

The British Psychological Society identifies what it calls "response phases" to a crisis. The preparation phase is about "anticipatory anxiety"; then comes "heroics and the urge for solutions"; next comes "disillusionment and exhaustion"; and finally comes "recovery and long-term psychological impacts".

Dr Croft reckons that only now, in July 2022, have we got to the recovery phase. Which is where *tapestries* come in. Let

me, or rather Dr Croft, explain. "I am suggesting to clients," she says, "that they might think of their experience like a tapestry, with hundreds of different threads and different colours and experiences – the good, the bad and the ugly."

Reflections may bring into focus what was good about the pandemic. What new habits and ways of being do we want to retain? Perhaps we found purpose in making a difference to others, be that in delivering meals to the elderly, or helping the infirm with their shopping.



Maybe we met our neighbours for the first time and discovered a sense of community as we stood on our doorsteps and banged our saucepans for the NHS. And for NHS staff, maybe they can find pleasure in the nation's newfound appreciation for doctors and carers.

"Everyone's tapestry will be different," says Dr Croft. "But somewhere amid the colours of sadness and grief, personal development and post-traumatic growth may be part of the picture too."

Yes, the pandemic was challenging. But our strength may have been made more perfect in weakness, to paraphrase Corinthians. Armed with this perspective, we may be better placed than we realise to face the fresh challenges of this summer. Thanks to Dr Croft, I for one feel a little stronger.

Rachel Kelly is an ambassador for SANE. Her latest book is *Singing in the Rain: 52 Practical Steps to Happiness* (Short Books, £12.99).



### How much should living cost us?

More than 250,000 people are homeless in England today, with that number only growing as the cost of living crisis hits.

Millions are struggling, and cannot afford even the most basic essentials. As foodbanks struggle to meet growing demand, needs beyond food alone often go ignored. That's where we can help.

As a small charity, we know the names of every person your donations support.

£9 a month helps us add to that list.



Find out more: [www.churchhomelesstrust.org.uk](http://www.churchhomelesstrust.org.uk)

# 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.

## Bruce Kent

● Bruce Kent ("Peacemaker, priest and prophet", 18 June) was well known as a peace campaigner. Many will know of his passion for human rights, but few will be aware of his support for those in prison.

He was disgusted with the growing number of people locked away in UK prisons, especially the elderly; cared deeply about their welfare; and became especially interested in those maintaining innocence. Sentences are getting longer, and Kent understood the anguish affecting the convicted and their families and friends. Prison reform was high on his agenda.

In 2004, he became a founder member of Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI), a small voluntary group trying to help PMIs to make progress through the prison system. His clarity of thought and communication skills helped to drive our campaigns, and he both visited prisoners and corresponded with them. Although he retired from the PPMI executive committee in 2020, he still joined our meetings until a few months ago. Above all he was a warm and encouraging man, eager to motivate others to take up our cause. He would let us know if we were not giving enough with a short, impatient outburst, followed by a constructive plan to move forward again.

Bruce Kent welcomed visitors to his home, and few escaped without a bowl of soup or glass of wine and a slice of cake, to be consumed while planning next steps on the campaign.

**SUE STEPHENS**  
PROGRESSING PRISONERS  
MAINTAINING INNOCENCE  
HAWANT, HAMPSHIRE

## A space for peace?

● In seeking to understand Pope Francis' challenging stance on the Ukraine invasion, Denis MacShane ("The Pope, Putin and Nato", 2 July) seems torn between two interpretations: on the one hand, the idea that the Pope's Argentinian background

## TOPIC OF THE WEEK

### Roe v. Wade: the rights and wrongs

**THANK YOU** to Tina Beattie (column, 2 July) for a sane, calm voice amid the deafening noise of war after the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*.

The people shouting abuse from all sides in the argument about abortion and women's rights are sowing hatred and violence rather than peace and truth. Pro-life surely means pro the life of all God's people, whoever they are. It should also mean opposing the death penalty and the unregulated ownership of guns: otherwise "pro-life" becomes "pro-death".

It also means not using the Eucharist as a weapon.

**MICHAEL ALLAN**  
CAMBRIDGE

**I VERY MUCH** respect Tina Beattie as a gentle, intelligent and charitable person. However, I can't agree that an abortion is the right way for even a young woman in distress, because the unborn is not a part of the mother's body but is emerging as a separate person.

What I can agree with, absolutely, is the need for proper support for women. There needs to be adequate and free health care, child care, counselling and financial and social support. These are either pushed out of sight by a society that espouses abortion as a norm, or ignored by right-wingers who provide little or nothing.

**FRÉDÉRIC KEVIN O'DONNELL**  
PONTMAIN, FRANCE

**HAVING HAD** a long career as a social worker, and from my own life experience, I share Tina Beattie's views. A decision to have a termination is taken only when there

is perceived to be no available alternative. People I meet who are strongly opposed to abortion have never been alongside those who are having to make painful choices about a pregnancy. Sadly, this is particularly true of the members of the church hierarchy who judge women so harshly.

**ALISON FLATH**  
BURY ST EDMUNDS, SUFFOLK

**IN YOUR** otherwise brilliant analysis of the abortion debate (editorial 2 July), you make one increasingly common omission. You polarise the choices a pregnant woman faces into either termination or keeping the baby. What is the problem with adoption?

In no current society is a distressed woman praised for having the courage to give her unborn child the gift of life and then, if she can bear it, give her newborn to someone who would welcome that new life. Why has adoption become equated with abandonment? The Catholic Church used to lead the way in facilitating successful adoptions.

**SUSAN ROLLINS**  
TYWYN, GWYNEDD

**MEN ARE** the prime cause of abortions. Men engaging in unprotected sex with women produce the unwanted foetuses which are then aborted. Sensitive self-discipline by men could reduce greatly the pressure for abortion which women experience. I remain outraged that the responsibility, the anguish and possibly life-long sense of guilt related to abortion should be borne exclusively by women.

**PETER SIMMONS**  
EDINBURGH

somehow predisposes him to "neutrality"; on the other, that "Francis persists in the logic of the Gospel – to never give up on the humanity of the other, and the possibility of dialogue." He ends by dismissing the second because the good guys and the bad guys are so clearly delineated.

The idea that Francis is somehow influenced by the 1940s strategic position of the Argentine military is as absurd as the idea that in this invasion he is morally neutral. No one who has followed his dozens of pronouncements since February

could be in doubt about who he sees as the aggressor, and who the victim. But he understands three things better than almost everybody: that it is poor civilians who pay the price of war, in death and rape and destruction; that ending the conflict has to be the single aim of Vatican policy; and that this will only happen when exhaustion sets in, and both sides seek a disinterested space in which to sue for a negotiated settlement.

When that time comes, will it have made the Vatican's offer of that space more credible if the

Pope has been the chaplain to Nato, if he sees no other solution than ever-escalating arms supplies to Ukraine, if his rhetoric is indistinguishable from that of Western leaders, if he has shown no willingness to understand Putin's sick perspective?

**AUSTEN IVEREIGH**  
HEREFORD

● Denis MacShane's criticisms of the Pope's remarks about Ukraine are spot on. Indeed, there can be no better argument for an increased role for the laity than the present situation; for

the clergy, understandably, are reluctant to speak out against the views of the Supreme Pontiff. But someone has to, because the Pope's suggestion that there is some moral equivalence between Russia and Ukraine in the present conflict is giving succour to Putin and his thugs and is bringing shame on the Church.

Sometimes it seems that Rome is more interested in the dubious subtleties of its negotiations with totalitarian regimes than in its duty to raise the voice of prophecy.

**FRANCIS BOWN**  
LONDON E3

## Australia decides

● I was taken aback to read Christopher Lamb's glowing report of Australia's Plenary Council ("Australia first and foremost", 2 July).

I'm one of the many holding on by bloodied fingernails, all wanting the Church to be its best self. To that end, the 17,500 submissions put to the council included a personal one from me. It included the concerns of so many – clericalism, the position of women in the Church, those who identify as LGBTIQ+, the divorced and remarried. You could not have gauged the importance of these issues to so many from the resulting agenda, and even less so from the report after the first

session of the council, even though a few brave souls managed to raise some of these issues in discussion groups.

There is a large body of people who are not optimistic and would not see the Plenary Council as a model for the rest of the Church as it prepares for the Synod on Synodality. However, we await the second session of the council and its outcome, hoping that the Holy Spirit will be allowed to breathe as it has not been allowed to do since Vatican II.

**MARGARET CALLINAN**  
HAWTHORN, VICTORIA,  
AUSTRALIA

● We can take a feather from the cap of the Australian Church, which is currently discussing the proposals of its Plenary Council. The proposals include laypeople delivering the homily at Mass, clear and inclusive language in the liturgy, and the Church creating publicly recognised ministries for women.

Every parish and Australian Church institution is being asked prepare a plan to protect the environment; and a national Catholic Social Teaching programme is proposed. A challenging proposal is "a need to ensure that decision-making is not confined to those who exercise sacramental power".

My heart warms to

this development in our international Church.

**PHILIP KINGSTON**  
BRISTOL

## Feast of St John

● Melanie McDonagh has now twice bemoaned the downgrading of the Feast of St John the Baptist in England and Wales (Notebook, 18 June and 2 July). I write from the Portuguese island of Faial, Azores, where, on the eve of the feast, a chapel dedicated to St John was the focus of celebrations. There was folk dancing, a temporary stage with a popular singer and a bonfire at midnight. The next morning saw a consecrated Mass and sermon about the saint, with only a brief mention of the Sacred Heart.

These were very modest festivities compared to some. St John is the patron of the city of Porto and this year saw a month of celebrations as Covid restrictions were lifted. Might I suggest to McDonagh that next year she plans a visit to Portugal? **FRED WHEELER**  
BUCKINGHAM

● The clash between the Nativity of St John the Baptist and the Feast of the Sacred Heart (Melanie McDonagh's Notebook, 2 July), which occurs when Easter falls on 17 April, will recur in 2033 and 2044, to

give her advance notice to stock up on tranquillisers. In 2000, when Easter fell on 23 April for the first time in 84 years, Trinity Sunday on 17 June and Corpus Christi (on the traditional Thursday) on 21 June, the Nativity of St John the Baptist fell on a Sunday. But the next Friday, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, was already occupied by another ancient celebration, the Apostles Peter and Paul.

I have no idea how they got round this in 1916, when the world had other preoccupations, but in 2000 the Apostles remained on the customary day, and the Sacred Heart was moved to the following Sunday, 1 July. This solution, which allowed far more people than usual to celebrate the Sacred Heart, was obviously far too intelligent to allow us to expect it ever to be repeated.

**(FR) DAVID SILLINCE**  
READING, BERKSHIRE

## Priestly politics

● Fr Marc Lyden-Smith, in his support for the recent rail strikes (Letters, 2 July), has strong criticism for the present government. Does he not realise that many Catholic priests like myself vote Conservative, because following in the steps of Karl Marx is not the same as following in the steps of Christ.

**(FR) BARRY GRANT**  
CRANBROOK, KENT

## THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

There is a good spirit which frees us from evil ways and brings us closer to God and eternal life. It is this latter spirit that all who follow the monastic way of life should strive to cultivate, spurred on by fervent love. By following this path they try to be first to show respect to one another with the greatest patience in tolerating weaknesses of body or character. They should even be ready to outdo each other in mutual obedience so that no one in the monastery aims at personal advantage but is rather concerned for the good of others. Thus the pure love of one another as of one family should be their ideal. As for God, they should have a profound and loving reverence for him. They should love their abbot or abbess with sincere and unassuming

affection. They should value nothing whatever above Christ himself and may he bring us all together to eternal life.

### ST BENEDICT

FROM ST BENEDICT'S RULE,  
TRANSLATED BY PATRICK BARRY OSB  
(AMPLEFORTH ABBEY PRESS, 1997)

Nobody owns anything but everyone is rich – for what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind and freedom from anxiety?

### ST THOMAS MORE

FROM UTOPIA, TRANSLATED BY DOMINIC  
BAKER-SMITH (PENGUIN CLASSICS, 2020)

We really live outside of ourselves. There are very few humans who truly live inside themselves and



this is why there are so many problems ... In each person's heart, there is something like a small, intimate space, where God comes down to speak alone with that person. And this is where a person determines his or her own destiny, his or her own role in the world. If each of the people with so many problems were to enter at this moment this small space, and, once there, were to listen to the voice of the Lord which speaks in our own conscience, how much could each one of us do to improve the environment, society, the family with whom we live?

### ST OSCAR ROMERO

FROM THROUGH THE YEAR WITH OSCAR  
ROMERO (DARTON, LONGMAN & TODD, 2006)

## CALENDAR

<b>Sunday 10 July:</b> Fifteenth Sunday of the Year (Oscar O)
<b>Monday 11 July:</b> St Benedict, Abbot, Patron of Europe
<b>Tuesday 12 July:</b> Feila
<b>Wednesday 13 July:</b> Feila or St Henry
<b>Thursday 14 July:</b> Feila or St Catharina de Lellis, Pious
<b>Friday 15 July:</b> St Bonaventura, Bishop and Doctor
<b>Saturday 16 July:</b> Feila or Our Lady of Mount Carmel
<b>Sunday 17 July:</b> Sixteenth Sunday of the Year

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For the calendar for the Month of 1962  
go to [www.jmli.org.uk](http://www.jmli.org.uk)

## Timeless odes

THEY ARE ONE of Christian literature's great mysteries. The Odes of Solomon – one of the many unsolved puzzles around these short poems is how they became associated with the third and final king of Israel – are the oldest surviving hymnal from the early Christian world. The original language in which they were written is contested – but it was likely to have been Syriac, a close cousin of the Aramaic of Jesus – and they were probably written in ancient Syria in the early second century. They were long lost, but rediscovered in 1909 by a great roofer-out of manuscripts, James Rendel Harris, who said he had discovered a pile of forgotten leaves from a Syriac manuscript lying on a shelf in his study which, he said, had come from the "neighbourhood of the Tigris".

The language of the poems is drawn from everyday life: motherhood, farming, sailing, mirrors and make-up, archery. Their astonishing directness and beauty, the Syriac scholar Sebastian Brock writes, "gives them a timeless quality". There are several renderings in English around, mostly on the stiff side. Now a more fluent and prayerful translation by the late Indian monk Francis Acharya OCSO



has been published, thanks to Bernard Kilroy, who admits to ghostwriting some of Fr Acharya's commentaries.

According to the distinguished New Testament and Early Christianity scholar Teresa Morgan, "These psalms deserve to be much more widely known and used by Christians today. Across nearly two millennia they speak to us almost as vividly as the writings of the Bible themselves. Gently and irresistibly, they draw us into prayer with them".

The current edition is published in Bangalore but bernard.kilroy@gmail.com has a limited UK stock.

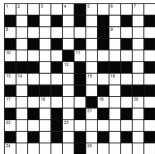
SINCE IT WAS used a few weeks ago in an episode of *Stranger Things*, the hugely popular Netflix science fiction series set in a small Midwestern town in the 1980s, Kate Bush's exhilarating single "Running Up That Hill" has exploded everywhere, in the way things sometimes do these days, reaching the top of the singles charts in the UK and Ireland 44 years after her previous number one, "Wuthering Heights", recorded when she was 18.

Bush's mother, Hannah Daly, grew up in a farm near Ballyvoile cove, along the Waterford coast between Dungarvan and Tramore. One of three daughters, Hannah went to England to train as a nurse, and in 1943 married a doctor, Robert Bush, in St Joseph's Catholic Church in Epsom. Kate was born, the youngest of three, in 1958, and attended St Joseph's Convent Grammar School, a Catholic girls' school in Abbey Wood run by the Daughters of Jesus.

Hannah died in 1992. Kate has acknowledged the Catholic tinge in "Running Up That Hill" (or "A Deal With God", as she would have preferred to have called it), and in many other lyrics. "A lot of [Catholic] images are in there; they have to be; they're so strong. Such powerful, beautiful, passionate images!" she later told an interviewer.

## PUZZLES

## PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 813 Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 9 July The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GJ. 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 Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

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

Prizes kindly donated by

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## Across

- 1 Vulgate books SS dare to violate (8)  
5 Praise in church for Debussy title (6)  
8 Essential to Scotland in this seventeenth-century Poise (8)  
9 Ruth's husband's neckwear's the ultimate Ritz accessory (4)  
10 English press promoted capital Sports book (5)  
11 Compact city by the small-scale removal of half the capital (7)  
13 Scupper Siamese, being invaded by a biblical country (6)  
15 Like the matching elements in an Italian city (6)  
17 Drive a martial arts expert fast (7)

## Down

- 19 Divine messenger falls in Venezuela (5)  
22 Mineral Catholics discarded, seeing the state of the Jews (4)  
23 Bishop's seat's left out of the roan church ... (8)  
24 ... part of the chapter's against adopting Gaelic (6)  
25 Country quietly ejected from another in the past? (6)

## Down

- 2 Delhi is, from the first, suitably Hindu Indian vestment attired (5)  
3 As erred, unfortunately they are placed in minor orders (7)

- 4 One infiltrating ex-Italian leader's almost a Placid (4)  
5 Liturgical music pieces they contain so long (8)  
6 Prior home of Turkish governor with a superior railing (5)  
7 Clerics of a second order (7)  
12 Where Paul sought, but could not see? (8)  
14 One from the Old Testament turned up with a flash tie (7)  
16 Boy catches a few lines of Shakespeare ... (7)  
18 ... and Seth's lad has a son after a girl (5)  
20 Where Og's arm's beaten – that's way to the east – and it's all over (5)  
21 Guide to the Nativity? (4)

## SUDOKU | Hard

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

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

## Solution to the 18 June puzzle

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

## Solution to the 18 June crossword No. 810

Across: 5 Amphipolis; 7 Athens; 8 Malabar; 9 Copt; 10 Emmanuel; 13 Dioceses; 14 Asia; 15 Relics; 16 Oases; 19 Punishment.

Down: 1 Ape; 2 Messes; 3 Joan; 4 Bithynia; 5 Authorised; 6 Asceticism; 10 Tycho; 12 Mosaic; 16 Shia; 18 Ibs.



# SUMMER READING

Tablet reviewers and contributors, including Erik Varden, Fiona Sampson, A.N. Wilson, Isabel Lloyd, Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Antonia Fraser, choose the books they love best published (mostly) so far this year



## ERIK VARDEN

Having visited the Józef Czapski Pavilion in Kraków last September, I was keen to learn more about this extraordinary writer and painter. Czapski's little book on Proust, *Lost Time* (New York Review of Books, £9.99; *Tablet* price £9), is a marvel: the text came into being as lectures given to fellow inmates in a Soviet prison camp. Eric Karpeles' life of Czapski, *Almost Nothing* (NYRB, £13.99; *Tablet* price £12.59), is also highly readable. A fine portrait not only of a man, but of an age.



## FIONA SAMPSON

I've long admired the way Gerald Murnane has created, from such unlikely material as horse-racing, small-town teaching, the hinterland of the Australian plains, a revelatory

meditation on thinking, Proust's *le moi profond*. But you don't need to have read his "true fiction" to be moved and engaged by *Last Letter to a Reader* (And Other Stories, £11.99; *Tablet* price £10.79) in which the 83-year-old revisits his life's work, observing himself trying to capture experience itself.

## D.J. TAYLOR

I can confidently recommend *Just Go Down to the Road* (Polygon, £14.99; *Tablet* price £13.49), James Campbell's intriguing account of his formative years in Glasgow and elsewhere.

One had always imagined that the legendary figure of the Scottish autodidact had died out decades ago; but Campbell, who left school at 15, followed the hippy trail to the exotic East and then reinvented himself as a literary journalist and the biographer of James Baldwin, shows that he is still going strong.

## YSEMDA MAXTONE GRAHAM

In *The School that Escaped the Nazis* (Two Roads, £20; *Tablet* price £18), Deborah Cadbury introduces us to an unsung heroine, Anna Essinger, visionary headmistress in thick specs, who as early as 1933 saw how things were going for Jews in Germany and relocated her liberal Jewish school near Ulm to a draughty house in Kent, Bunce Court. The contrast between her benign haven and the trauma some of her pupils have had to endure in Nazi-occupied Europe could not be more stark. A beautifully written account of kindness amidst unspeakable tragedy.

## A.N. WILSON

Daisy Dunn's *Not Far from Brideshead* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is a book about parochial things (who will be next Regius professor of Greek?) which reflects very large things – the future of Europe in the time of Fascism. It's a look at Oxford between the wars, concentrating on three Greek scholars – Gilbert Murray, Maurice Bowra and Eric Dodds – but somehow encapsulating the 1930s, poets, ideological warfare, academic innocence. I love the way Daisy Dunn writes.

## ISABEL LLOYD

In Tessa Hadley's *Free Love* (Jonathan Cape, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29), a bored suburban housewife begins an affair – so far, so Emma Bovary. But Hadley's acutely realised, deeply humane novel of family breakdown has bigger ambition than just skewering a foolish protagonist, and its plot – set in 1960s London, amid the shattering of post-war social certainties – constantly surprises. Politics, sexual and otherwise, take a bow, but ultimately this is a book about emotional bravery, and the price we pay for ignoring its demands. Unmissable.



## RICHARD HOLLOWAY

*The Golden Treasury of Scottish Verse*, edited by Kathleen Jamie, Don Paterson and Peter Mackay (Canongate, £30; *Tablet* price £27), is a collection of more than 300 poems from the early medieval period to just about last week. It's terrific!

## ANTONIA FRASER

Jean Rhys was born on the Caribbean island of Dominica, came to England when she was 16, and died here, an old but still fascinating lady, in 1979. She was an extraordinary novelist, and a complicated and appealing person. In *I Used to Live Here Once* (William Collins,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

£25; *Tablet* price £22.50), Miranda Seymour has done justice to both the writer and the woman in a biography I found thrilling. The thrill comes from all the research Seymour has done into the Caribbean childhood that inspired Jean Rhys' greatest novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I rushed to reread it: no greater compliment.

## THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING

A NEW HISTORY OF HUMANITY

DAVID GRAEBER | DAVID WENGRÖW

The fact that instead we seem to be mired in trivia is not the fault of Davids Graeber and Wengrow. *The Dawn of Everything* (Penguin, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69) is a massive, bracing book that turns ideas like progress and civilisation inside out. It looks at the past with excitement and the future with optimism and invites you to do the same.

## CHRISTOPHER BRAY

I only came to Mick Herron having watched the TV series of his first Jackson Lamb novel, *Slow Horses* (Baskerville, £8.99; *Tablet* price £8.09), earlier this year. Since then I've worked through the back catalogue. Though the stories are independent of one another, it's still best to start with the debut and read on chronologically. It's not just that the characters deepen, it's that the jokes – possibly the most crucial part of Herron's talent – do too. Kingsley Amis would have approved. Case closed.

## CARINA MURPHY

Canadian Sara Freeman's sparsely written first novel, *Tides* (Granta, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69) is presented in an unusual, lyrical style of vignette-like paragraphs. Each one pieces together protagonist Mara's raw psych-

ical and mental journey away from her family to an out-of-season seaside town, following a stillbirth. While not exactly a screaming frothy holiday read, its episodic nature is perfect for dipping into, brief yet absorbing, leaving the reader pondering how we retain a sense of self in the face of devastating trauma.

## MICHAEL GLOVER

Those who plan to enjoy green thoughts in green shades this summer should be accompanied by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's *English Garden Eccentrics* (Yale University Press, £30; *Tablet* price £27), a delightful, book-length survey of the work of many of the eccentric gardeners of England over the past 300 or so years. Explore, for example, the gargantuan displays of topiary in East Bedford churchyard or the "Underground Road" at Welbeck Abbey, created for the "invisibly nobleman ...".

## JULIA LANGDON

Patrick Radden Keefe's *Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* (Picador, £9.99; *Tablet* price £9) is a stunning piece of work, a brilliant journalistic exercise and a superb exposé. The author reveals how three generations of the Sacklers created the opioid epidemic which caused 500,000 deaths worldwide in the two decades before 2019. Through skillful market manipulation of prescription drugs, the family grew so fabulously wealthy that they became famed for their philanthropy without the source of its funding ever being disclosed. Until this book. A rollicking read.



Midlands. The series revolves around a fictional New Labour MP and her former boyfriend, a convicted drug dealer. The latest instalment, *Death in the Family* (Shoestring Press, £10; *Tablet* price £9), revolves around the general election of 2001, with murder and skulduggery once more afoot.

## LUCY LETHBRIDGE

I absolutely loved James Hamilton's new biography of John Constable (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £25; *Tablet* price £22.50). If you're holidaying anywhere really hot then his depictions of Constable's waterlogged meadows and about-to-break rainclouds will make you long for the myriad variations of a British summer. Hamilton situates Constable (a staunch Tory with no time for garret-dwelling bohemians) within the bustling East Anglian mercantile world of the early nineteenth cen-

tury and delineates brilliantly his obsession with depicting landscape with increasingly expressionistic boldness. It's a tour de force of historical imagination.



## LUKE BELL

*For Their Sake I Consecrate Myself* by Jadwiga Stabinska (The Corgi Press, £16.95) is the story of Sr Maria Bernadette of the Cross, a Polish Benedictine Nun of Perpetual Adoration (1927-1963), who

offered her life to Christ in reparation for priestly infidelities. In the agony of illness and death she found extraordinary happiness with "something of eternity in it". Like St Thérèse, she shows that love can change everything.

## RACHEL KELLY

Of Britain's 55 prime ministers, 25 lost one or both of their parents as a child and 69 per cent suffered some sort of serious childhood trauma. What can we learn from those who have turned early adversity into successful adulthood? *What I Wish I'd Known When I Was Young* by Rachel Sylvester and Alice Thomson (William Collins, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is wise and informative, interweaving personal stories and psychological research to come up with some answers. Just up my street.

## BRIAN MORTON

Sometimes even the most meticulously researched biographies fail to deliver any real sense of a breathing individual. Not so Jacqueline Riding's long but immensely readable *Hogarth: Life In Progress* (Profile Books, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69). Note the absence of an article, definite or indefinite. Riding brings the creator of *A Rake's Progress* and *Gin Lane* to convincing life by placing him perfectly in his times: serious, rascally, risky, fun. A "peregrination" rather than a dull biog.

## ARIANE BANKS

Hanya Yanagihara's powerfully emotional *To Paradise* (Picador, £20; *Tablet* price £18) swirls around one house in Washington Square Park, from 1893 to 2093, as America evolves new codes of freedom and repression against the backdrop of resurgent plagues. Within a grand symphonic structure its protagonists, whose names and narratives echo down the generations and who are linked by poignant bonds of sexual (often same-sexual) and familial love, struggle to protect one another in navigating the joys and terrors of their world. Extraordinary!

## ANTHONY GARDNER

In the age of Empire-bashing, J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur*

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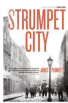
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## SUMMER READING

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £8.99; *Tablet* price £8.09) offers a refreshingly nuanced view of the Raj. Absurdity, snobbery, courage and resourcefulness are displayed in equal measure as an isolated British community fights for survival during the Indian Mutiny. A worthy winner of the 1973 Booker Prize, this stylistically brilliant novel musters a splendid array of characters – and is completely gripping.



### ANNE CHISHOLM

No book published this year has impressed me as much as *Strumpet City* by James Plunkett (Gill & Macmillan, £10.99; *Tablet* price £9.89), which first appeared in 1969. Based on facts, it uses a handful of fictional characters living in Dublin between 1907 and 1914 – the privileged and the poor, labourers, tramps, trade unionists and priests – to explore the social deprivation blighting the city and the violent repression of attempts at reform. Evocative, angry and tender, it shocks and deeply moves the reader. It deserves recognition as one of the greatest of all political novels.

### CHRIS NANCOLLAS

The most interesting book I have read this year is *Tell Me the Truth About Love* (Ebury Press, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29), a series of 13 case studies from couples therapist Susanna Abbe. Many of us will recognise personal traits from these tales of fractured relationships, and as a former GP I found myself nodding as she described her own anxieties in some of the consultations. A wonderful read.

### MELANIE McDONAGH

Leif Bersweden's *Where the Wild Flowers Grow* (Hodder & Stoughton, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is a book about plants by someone who really knows them, and communicates his enthusiasm by taking the reader with him on a botanical tour by bicycle. "Many of us," he observes, "use wild plants to get to know what time of year it is, to orient ourselves within the seasons." And many more of us should. For anyone on holiday, it shows how to engage with our surroundings through plant life.

### SIMON SCOTT PLUMMER

The bride of Roger Hardy's *The Bride* (Mount Orleans Press, £25; *Tablet* price £22.50) is the land of Palestine, coveted by foreigners for religious and/or political reasons from the middle of the nineteenth century to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Hardy brings his story to life through the personal recollections of those involved and by 142 wonderful black-and-white photos taken from the 1880s onwards.

### MORAG MACINNES

Novels about the woman behind the famous man are common. Much rarer are novels where the Alpha male realises, too late, the error of his ways and immortalises his wronged woman in wonderful poems, full of longing, regret and guilt. I'm talking, of course, about the tragic story of Emma Gifford, Thomas Hardy's wife. In *The Chosen* (Riverrun, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.09), Elizabeth Lowry recreates their relationship with insight and lightly worn scholarship. A great summer read.

### PETER STANFORD

Families dread having a writer in their midst, turning their real-life dramas into fiction, but what they produce is often compulsive reading. Julie Myersson has form when it comes to taking painful honesty to the limit. *Nonfiction: A Novel* (Corsair, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29) has the nameless parents at its core left powerless when drug addiction overwhelms their teenaged daughter. Terrifying, heart-rending and dizzying, it is a technical masterpiece that spares neither writer nor reader.



### JULIAN MARGARET GIBBS

*We Move* (Serpent's Tail, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69) is the best new thing I've read this year: a wonderful collection of short stories by the startlingly youthful Gurnalk Johal (born in 1998). Set mostly in the tight British-Punjabi community of Southall, these interconnected stories are often moving and always subtle. I especially loved "The Twelfth of Never" which traces a song heard and sung by ordinary individuals over three centuries.

### DENISE COTTRILL-BOYCE

The darker moments in Amor Towles' *The Lincoln Highway* (Hutchinson, £20; *Tablet* price £18) need to be read on long sunny days. Steadfast Emmett Watson leaves a youth detention centre determined to build a solid future for his little brother. The other young adults who cleave to him – all variously abandoned by their parents – want the same. Never cynical, and larded with hope, grace and characters you yearn to cherish, this novel is uncompromising in its core question: children may try to nurture and protect one another, but can they ever succeed?

### MARCUS TANNER

When Amy Bloom's husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he wanted his life ended as soon as possible, at the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland. Bloom supported him all the way, and *In Love* (Granta, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29) is a close-up account of exactly what "assisted dying" involves, right down to

that last, lethal "cocktail". An uncomfortable, groundbreaking account of a phenomenon that has become part of our world, whether we like it or not.



### TINA BEATTIE

Emma Stone's *The Lamplighters* (Picador, £8.99; *Tablet* price £8.09) is a hauntingly enigmatic novel. Focusing on the disappearance of three lighthouse keepers, it reads like an allegory of the human condition. We are caught up in an infinite mystery, sending signals to one another across vast emotional distances, often unable to connect and yet with a yearning that intensifies the pathos and ultimately the redemptive quality of the narrative. I found it as gripping as it was elusive, commanding attention but resisting explanation.

### CHRIS PATTEN

Julia Boyd's *A Village in the Third Reich* (Elliott & Thompson, £25; *Tablet* price £22.50) tells the compelling story of how the rise and fall of Hitler and Fascism affected the inhabitants of a small, beautiful village in the mountains of Bavaria. Impeccably researched and elegantly written, it is a moving account of how a wicked ideology affected the inhabitants of this peaceful Christian community. There are warnings here, perhaps, of why we should never take for granted the resilience and sustainability of civilisation and the values of an open society.

### LUCY POPESCU

In Andrew Miller's *The Slowworm's Song* (Sceptre, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.09), Stephen Rose, an ex-soldier and recovering alcoholic, is haunted by his past. He lives in Somerset and attempts to connect with a daughter he barely knows. His fragile equilibrium is threatened when he's summoned to testify at an inquiry about an incident that took place in Northern Ireland in 1982. Andrew Miller tackles big themes and weaves a profound and poignant tale about shame, trauma and the possibility of redemption.

### MADOC CAIRNS

Rossana Rossanda's death in 2020 brought to a close an extraordinary career – journalist, feminist, respected public intellectual in her native Italy – and called to a halt a body of work spanning politics, literature and the arts. Until this year, her writing was almost entirely untranslated into English. But now Seagull Press has released a volume of Rossanda's thoughts on the body: *This Body that Inhabits Me* (Seagull Books, £14.99; *Tablet* price £13.49). Ironic, melancholic, sharp-eyed, shrewd: it's all here. It's all here.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

## SUMMER READING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

### MARKIE ROBSON-SCOTT

Julia May Jonas' first novel, *Vladimir* (Picador, £14.99; *Tablet* price £13.49) is a deliciously readable, satirical exploration of sexual politics in American academia in the #MeToo age. The narrator, a woman professor aged 60, has an open marriage with her husband, the chair of the English department, whose past transgressions with his students suddenly become a problem for the university. When he's suspended, she becomes obsessed with ensnaring her gorgeous, much younger colleague Vladimir, with chaotic results.

### PATRICK HUDSON

If in the closing minutes of *The Godfather*, as Michael Corleone settles all family business, you find yourself pondering your next excuse to watch it all again, Mark Seal's account of its making is your latest. *Leave the Gun, Take the Cannoli* (Simon & Schuster, £20; *Tablet* price £18) is a stiletto-sharp telling of a totemic event in cinema history, replete with all the schmaltzy noir which is the real reason we keep watching the film.

### KATHERINE BACKLER

I didn't think Elodie Harper's novel *Wolf Den* (Apollo, £8.99; *Tablet* price £8.09), about enslaved prostitutes in Roman Pompeii, could work; it would either gloss over the horrors or be too bleak to read. Its portrayal of the ferocity of female love and hope under conditions of extreme psychological and sexual violence astonished me. I read it in four hours straight and thought about it every day for weeks afterwards.



### RORY RAPPLE

Fernando Cervantes' *Conquistadores: A New History* (Penguin, £14.99; *Tablet* price £13.49) is one of the best crossover academic books I've read for a long time. It's approachable, but breaks new ground in its assessment of the Spanish conquerors of Latin and Central America. Cervantes pitches it perfectly, immersing readers in the mental world of these historical figures, tracing the connection between their ideas and the reality it created.

### RACHEL BILLINGTON

English painting in the first half of the twentieth century has its passionate supporters, and artists such as Stanley Spencer and Eric Ravilious have reached wide audiences, if not international recognition. Their situation, as they leave one world war behind and face another, adds depth and drama to their story and their art. Frances Spalding's *The Real and the Romantic: English Art Between Two World Wars* (Thames & Hudson, £35; *Tablet* price £31.50) interestingly extends her subject to lesser-known painters of the period, including women. The amply illustrated volume is a gripping read whether for new collector looking for tips, art lover or expert.

### FRED KELLY

Benjamin Myers' latest novel, *The Perfect Golden Circle* (Bloomsbury, £16.99; *Tablet* price £15.29), is set over the summer of 1989 and follows two crop circle creators. Full of mythology, wonder and oddity, Myers' typical lyricism moves seamlessly from the mundane to the magical, the minute to the magnificent. Those who feel the English countryside deep within their bones will be enchanted by this folk gem from one of the nation's most illuminating writers.

## Please help The Tablet grow



James Martin SJ  
Jesuit priest  
and writer

When I first encountered *The Tablet* during my Jesuit novitiate, I was astonished. How could one magazine cover the Catholic Church, in its beautiful and maddening complexity, with such skill, such depth and such gorgeous prose, and do so with such a modestly sized staff? In the 30 years since then, I've never stopped reading and I've never stopped being astonished. *The Tablet* is a minor miracle and a necessity for all thinking Catholics.



This year, we invited some high-profile readers and friends to reflect on "What *The Tablet* means to me". The response has been a reminder of how much *The Tablet* is loved and appreciated, and we hope their enthusiasm will inspire you to contribute to our development fund, which makes possible initiatives such as internships and improving access to our 182-year-old archive of back issues.

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# In a city of angels

Wim Wenders considered becoming a priest; instead, he became a giant of the cinema. But how far did his faith influence his movies? **Isabelle Grey** asked him

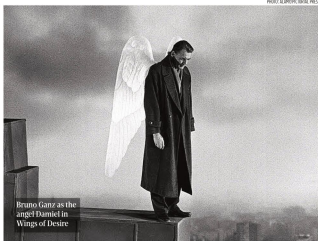
**F**ILM-MAKING, the German movie director Wim Wenders once said, is "not so much the story, but something more essential, which is: why are we here and what are we living for? ... And if you're a man of faith like I am, who believes we are watched by a God who loves us, then a movie sort of has to reflect that."

With *Kino Dreams*, a month-long retrospective of his work, under way in Curzon cinemas throughout the UK, it's clear how much Wenders' childhood Catholic faith was an influence in his movies - especially *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*), released in 1987, in which Cold War angels in greatcoats watch over a divided Berlin. "As a child I prayed to 14 angels," he tells me, "but in making the film I had no knowledge of them, no belief in them. They were metaphors, drawn as much from reading Rilke as from the Bible. I was making a film about Berlin. But angels are powerful spiritual entities and slowly, through making the film, I felt a force, and I got so much help, so much power."

When Wenders began shooting *Wings of Desire*, his only storyline was that an angel, Damiel, played by the late Swiss actor Bruno Ganz, falls in love. Wenders never even knew from day to day where they would film. Nor did he know anything about angels who, after all, can do anything. If it rains, for instance, do they get wet? And he could offer the actors no context for playing them, no backstory or unhappy childhood to hold on to. "I told them, you are looking at people and you like them. You are understanding, loving and curious. They didn't have to perform."

**THE RESULT** is a haunting, tender and playful film. Damiel and his friend Cassiel (Otto Sander) can observe, sometimes from high above the city, sometimes close beside the people they watch, but not intervene. Only children are able to see them, and the film, shot in black and white, opens with the "Song of Childhood" by Peter Handke, who co-wrote the film. With echoes of I Corinthians 13, it describes how differently, "when the child was a child", humanity saw and interrogated the world.

Damiel and Cassiel listen in to the thoughts of people travelling on the subway, staring out of windows or sitting in front of the television. What they hear is loneliness, regret, misunderstanding, a lack of connection, the themes that run throughout the director's



work, along with a reverence for the details that show, as in a line from the "Song of Childhood", why I am me and not you. The angels offer comfort through a sense of their unseen presence, but are unable to prevent a man's suicide or another's death after a motorcycle accident. They are compassionate, affectionate, intrigued by individual quirks, yet ultimately detached witnesses of what it is to be human.

When off duty, they meet to compare notes or congregate with other angels perched around the vast modern spaces of a library, the Staatsbibliothek in Potsdamer Strasse near the Berlin Wall. There Cassiel encounters Homer (Curt Bois), an old man who remembers Potsdamer Platz before the Wall, before it was reduced to rubble by Allied bombing and before it was hung with swastikas. Cassiel and Damiel's memories go much further back, to when it was grass and water, before mankind had acquired speech.

Perhaps Damiel has become wearied by eternity, for he tells Cassiel how good it would be to become a part of life, to experience such simple physical sensations as pushing off his shoes beneath a table and wriggling his toes. He wants to feel a weight that would tie him to the earth, and to have his own story. When

he falls in love with Marion (Solveig Dommartin), a trapeze artiste with a small circus who also longs for more meaningful connection, the film bursts into colour, and returns to colour once his wish is granted and he becomes human.

Although *Wings of Desire* defies any neat explanations of what it's about or what it means, the fresh perspectives it offers are uplifting and full of childlike wonder and joy. In terms of hope, it is certainly extraordinary, watching the film today - in a 4K digital restoration - to realise that the Berlin Wall fell only two years after its release. As Wenders has said, films (much like angels) "can reveal something that you can't actually see".

**IN 1993** in *Faraway, So Close!* Wenders continued Cassiel's story in a unified Berlin, showing the angel's spiritual intervention in a world more obviously divided into good and evil. Although Wenders seldom defines his faith, his clear sense of spirituality is always present.

Wenders was born in Düsseldorf in August 1945, three months after the end of the war. As a teenager he considered either the priesthood or becoming a doctor like his father but,

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influenced by 1960s rock'n'roll, went instead to Paris to study painting. There he began going to the cinema to keep warm. Seeing movies from all over the world, and slowly arriving at an understanding of film language, he became addicted. It was, he says, "entire mankind passing by. Everything was there, the whole world was in front of me."

He returned to Germany and in 1970 graduated from the recently opened Munich Film School. He made a trilogy of road movies exploring human connectedness – or the lack of it – two of which, *Alice in the Cities* (1974) and *Kings of the Road* (1976) are included in the current retrospective. They were followed by *The American Friend* (1977), an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's noir thriller *Ripley's Game*, also with Bruno Ganz and starring Dennis Hopper as the amoral Tom Ripley. These films placed Wenders within the New German Cinema movement beside other such independent directors as Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and brought him an invitation from Francis Ford Coppola to go to America to make a neo-noir mystery about the crime writer Dashiell Hammett.

His first and only experience of the studio system was not happy. "I had to live in America for a while before I realised I was a German romantic," he says. He returned to his own style of film-making, shooting chronologically on a tiny budget, with another road movie, *Paris, Texas* (1984) which won many awards, including a Bafta for best director and the Palme d'Or at Cannes. In its famous opening, Travis Henderson, a "raggedy" man in a red baseball cap (Harry Dean Stanton), comes walking out of the harsh desert lands of the American Southwest to the yearning sound of Ry Cooder's slide guitar. It is a story of displacement and broken dreams, of almost explicitly Christian notions of redemption and self-sacrifice. "It is about America," Wenders says, "but it is not an American film."

**WHILE IN** THE US, Wenders lived for a while in a Presbyterian community; today, he considers himself an ecumenical Christian. After making such successful documentaries as *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) and *Pina* (2011), he was approached by the Vatican and offered exclusive access to Pope Francis to make his own independent film about the Pontiff. His 2018 documentary *Pope Francis: A Man of His Word* also includes re-enactments from the life of St Francis of Assisi, whom Wenders considers "a hero of humanity".

*Wings of Desire* ends with the now human Daniel looking for Marion at a live gig played by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. Daniel and Marion kiss, and he declares, with delight and amazement, that he knows now what no angel knows. Despite humanity's endless worries and mistakes, Wenders believes that mere mortals can find transcendence.

*Wings of Desire* is in cinemas now. The *Kino* Dreams retrospective closes on the weekend of 29 July with *Paris, Texas*.

## THEATRE

## Quiet desperation

Truthfulness, dialogue and performances that thrill twice over

MARK LAWSON

**The Glass Menagerie**  
DUKE OF YORK'S THEATRE, LONDON  
**Mad House**  
AMBASSADORS THEATRE, LONDON

**A** PLAY's nationality is often revealed by the centrality of faith. For British characters, religion generally intrudes only during a pogrom (Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt*), if the central figure is a vicar (Stephen Beresford's current *The Southbury Child*) or the playwright is Graham Greene (*The Potting Shed*). We generally, though, know where fictional Americans worship, perhaps because it's common there to declare political and faith allegiance.

This tendency is well illustrated in an old and a new play from the States. In the revival of Tennessee Williams' 1944 play, *The Glass Menagerie*, the central Wingfield family is explicitly Episcopalian but the "gentleman caller" (a courting ritual in the American South) whom single-parent matriarch Amanda arranges for her shy, frail daughter Laura is Jim O'Connor, a Catholic whose faith is a reason (or at least excuse) he is out of reach to Laura.

Religions sometimes accuse worshippers of an à la carte attitude but the only metaphor close to describing Williams' spiritual journey is smorgasbord. Raised Episcopalian, after falling critically ill with a Spanish flu in 1969 he summoned a local Jesuit priest. "I have always loved the richness of the Catholic ritual, the aroma of incense, the splendour of the art," Williams wrote of his conversion. He remained, though, theologically promiscuous. His 1983 Requiem Mass unusually had the departed lying (by request) in a traditional Jewish coffin holding a Russian Orthodox icon.

Director Jeremy Herrin's *The Glass Menagerie* extends the embedded "otherness" of O'Connor by making him African American, powerfully played by Victor Alli. Further diversity is affectingly achieved by casting as Laura, who has a congenital disability, Lizzie Annis, an electrifying professional debut by an actress whose programme note discloses that she "has cerebral palsy". The role of Tom – who, in the text, narrates the play, then steps into the flashback scenes – is shared by Paul Hilton, remembering, and Tom Glynyn-Carney living the recollections.

This gives a greater realism to what



Amy Adams and Lizzie Annis in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*

Williams called "a memory play", and also affects the portrayal of Amanda by Amy Adams who, with six Oscar nominations for films including *Vice* and *Junebug*, is the main box-office lure. Mrs Wingfield is a fantasist, living a bit-part B-movie life but believing she's a Hollywood lead. As it's a big role, often star cast, actresses often foreground the show-off grandiosity, but Adams exposes the doting *loser* below. Some reviewers have found this underpowered but it adds to the unusual truthfulness of this version. And Williams' dialogue – "Time is the longest distance between two places" – thrills as ever.

American dramatist Theresa Rebeck (*Seminar*, *Bernhardt / Hamlet*) seems strongly influenced by Williams in *Mad House*, world-premiered in London. To the shabby clapboard home of a dying patriarch come his two successful children to pull emotional rank over the unsuccessful one who has stayed to struggle with Dad's terminal emphysema and his own mental health. Rebeck follows *The Glass Menagerie* in religious specificity, though with polarities reversed: central Catholicism – wall crucifix, anecdotes about the parish priest – is offset by the Pentecostalism of a hospice nurse.

Star American casting is again an attraction, with Bill Pullman as the viciously narcissistic Daniel and David Harbour's troubled son Michael pleasures to watch, especially in the fast nasty sparring of the first half under spell check's least favourite director, Moritz von Stuelpnagel. After the interval, though, there's unwisely much less of both main men, as the family focus spreads and the squabbling menagerie becomes more conventional.

### Tennessee Williams' Requiem Mass had the departed lying in a Jewish coffin holding a Russian Orthodox icon

## MUSIC

## Summer's dark shadows

Sobering concerns under the sandals-and-shorts façade

BRIAN MORTON

Aunt Kelly - Remember

AUNT KELLY  
MUNA - Muna  
SADDEST FACTORY

**"T**HEMED" listening is a rum business at the best of times, like insisting on playing Ravi Shankar with a takeaway bhalti. But there is something to it, and even those of us whose summer wardrobe is precisely identical to the winter one continue to believe there is such a thing as "summer music". Two perfect examples just came along, Sunny, outwardly joyous pop, but filled, both of them, with reminders that this particular summer comes at the end of a long dark winter, whose bony shadows will continue to affect us for a while yet.

**LIKE A THOUSAND** bands, Aunt Kelly had their plans for a debut album squashed by Covid and are only now putting out *Remember* as a self-released item. Consisting of vocalist, guitarist and pianist Kelly Hannemann, bassist Dan Gianaris and drummer Sarah Weddle, the trio delivers a unique blend of power pop whose sandals-and-shorts façade conceals sombre concerns. "Worse for You"



sounds like a soundtrack for dancing round the pool, but delves into the challenges of bipolar disorder, and if that sounds like a perverse mismatch of words and music, it's subtler than that, because Aunt Kelly know how to stitch in little harmonic dissonances that tell you everything isn't quite right, while singing about deep pain with a smile. It's a delicate and potentially self-defeating tactic, but they have it down perfectly.

Hannemann returns to the feelings of helplessness that accompany mental illness on "Master of My Mind", a beautiful piano-fronted ballad, and on the title track, "Remember", on which she faces the fear of losing memory and losing self. This time, though, it's done as a big rock number. The familial band name isn't an accident. Aunt Kelly sound almost like a sibling band, but

in reality Hannemann and Weddle are partners in life, and they've all three spent time living together.

**QUITE A DIFFERENT** vibe, but similar energy from female trio Muna, who return from major label exile with the self-titled *Muna*, released on former collaborator Phoebe Bridgers' Saddest Factory label. Their last record *Saves the World* was one of the best releases of the year before lockdown, but didn't make enough of a dent on the charts for RCA to keep them on. The fools. The new one is strong, subtle, sexy but hard-headed, too. "Anything But Me" is the best break-up song ever written. The guitar sounds as if it's kicking over the traces, but the lyric is two parts defiant vitriol to one part honey, with a little salty tear dropped in at the end to fix the dye.

If it's possible to imagine a place between Riot Grrrl punkiness and Shania Twain's flint-eyed country manner, that's approximately where Muna sit. "Kind of Girl" is a country song that you could imagine one of the Nashville divas taking over and making a smash on the rhinestone circuit. Used to be you never heard a synthesiser on a country record. Muna love them, and know exactly how to programme them to generate maximum energy. "Runner's High" starts off almost Vangelis and then sprints away into high energy rock. Despite some questionable – or possibly misfired ironic – video imagery, Muna are supremely intelligent practitioners of widescreen pop. Another perfect soundtrack to this odd summer.

## TELEVISION

## Vacuous vessel of evil

That sense of entitlement – again

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Ghislaine Maxwell: The Making of a Monster  
CHANNEL 4

**C**HANNEL 4 devoted three evenings running to a documentary on Ghislaine Maxwell, who has now been sentenced to a merciless 20 years for sex trafficking. Despite its gloatingly provocative subtitle, "The making of a monster", the programme did its best (at least in the opening episode) to be even-handed in its presentation of a complex tangle of money, power, greed and abuse.

In Christian terms this is a story, almost fabular, of pride and its downfall. But it is also the chronicle of a woman deeply damaged by a bullying father and how this experience shaped her subsequent relationships with men, in particular her fatal and terrible relationship with Jeffrey Epstein (pictured, with Maxwell), the millionaire financier for whom she procured women, many underage.



Epstein committed suicide in prison in 2019 and therefore only Maxwell got to stand in the dock. Although apparently sure till the end that her famous charm and charisma would see her acquitted, Maxwell's public humiliation was her final abasement to a man for whom all encounters were coldly transactional.

In episode one, we meet the Maxwell family at home. Robert Maxwell's nine children were terrified of him but pretty, clever Ghislaine was his favourite, "the child who could do no wrong". Contemporaries at Oxford line up to recall her conversational skills, her appetite for networking. She was "fascinating", "charming" and "flirtatious" but also "entitled", "arrogant" and (to her father's employees) "rude". Environmentalist George Monbiot remembered how flattered he had felt when she took him up but how he soon detected a hollowiness in her relentless social energy, "a deficit". Left distraught by

her father's death, she ran to New York in the early 1990s and attached herself to Epstein. He supplied the money she needed to live in the style to which she was accustomed; she in turn supplied him with social cachet, attracting the big names he wanted to cultivate. To maintain his interest, she supplied him with girls.

The next two episodes cover her swift clamber up the New York social ladder and the long, cold tumble into public shame that followed Epstein's death. Inevitably, it is a dispiriting three hours of television, much of it all too familiar: this is the third long documentary series on Maxwell and Epstein. The survivors understandably feel vindicated by the downfall of the woman who groomed them, but it's surely an unsatisfying kind of satisfaction. Maxwell has gone down but the men in the story, the famous names who flocked to Epstein's girly island paradise, remain ever-shadowy. Of Epstein himself we learn nothing here whatsoever: his handsome face with its empty smile flashes up on the screen – a vacuous vessel of evil who comes from nowhere. One can't help feeling that a documentary on the socialite who falls from grace is an easier tunnel to enter than the one which leads to the seedbed of an Epstein.

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# NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

## Funeral protest

More than 700 Catholic priests in Nigeria held a peaceful protest on Thursday last week as they buried Fr Vitus Borogo, a priest in Kaduna Archdiocese, killed by unknown armed persons at Prison Farm, Kujama, on 25 June. Fr Borogo's younger brother was abducted during the attack. The priests carried placards with inscriptions expressing their grievances and calling on the authorities to take action. At the funeral at the Queen of Apostles Catholic Church, the Archbishop of Kaduna, Matthew Ndagoso, lamented the state of insecurity in the country. He said that Nigerians, and in particular the faithful in Kaduna, were traumatised by the rising number of attacks in the country that the authorities have failed to tackle.

The Missionaries of Charity congregation has been expelled from Nicaragua in the latest attack on the Church and its ministries by the increasingly repressive Sandinista government. The order operates a home for abandoned adolescents, a home for the elderly and a nursery for low-income families.

Pope Francis sent a video message to South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo on 2 July, the date he had planned to make an "ecumenical pilgrimage" to the region. The Pope told the people of both countries that "words at this time are not enough to convey the closeness I would like to express to you", regretting the postponement of his visit due to mobility problems in early June.

The Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, celebrated Mass in front of the parliament in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Around 100,000 Congolese took part in the Mass, which was held at around the same time on Sunday as Pope Francis celebrated Mass in St Peter's Basilica for Rome's Congolese community. "Greed for raw materials and the thirst for money and power slam the doors on peace and represent an attack on people's right to life and serenity ... Peace upon this house! Peace upon the Congolese land: May you return to being a house of fraternity!" Parolin said.

PHOTO: THEIR



An Italian nun who dedicated her life to poor children in Haiti was killed on 25 June. Her home diocese of Milan reported that Sr Luisa Dell'Orto (pictured), 64, was injured "during an armed aggression, probably with the aim of robbery", in Port-au-Prince, the capital. She died in hospital soon afterwards, just two days shy of her 65th birthday. Pope Francis mentioned her heroic life the next day after he prayed the midday Angelus.

The President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (Coebe), Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, has reaffirmed the Church's concerns about the way the issue of abortion is treated at the EU level. Following the US Supreme Court's ruling overturning the 1973 case of Roe v. Wade, the European Parliament is expected next week to reiterate its call for "safe

access to abortion", and its condemnation of a "backsliding in women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in the US." According to a statement released on Friday, MEPs were set to reaffirm this call in a debate on Monday and in a resolution on 7 July. During a meeting with the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, Cardinal Hollerich insisted that seeing abortion only as a fundamental right "not only goes against the respect of the dignity of every human being, which is one of the pillars of the EU, but it will also gravely endanger the right to freedom of religion, of thought and of conscience and the exercise of conscientious objection".

## Chow backs Lee and Xi

Twenty-five years after Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule, the territory's leading Catholic prelate, Bishop Stephen Chow, voiced gratitude to the Chinese government in Beijing and vowed to help build "a more caring and inclusive Hong Kong, filled with vibrancy, hope and development opportunities". Hong Kong's Chief Executive, John Lee, elected in May, was sworn in on the same day, 1 July. After swearing in Lee on Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping, on his first trip outside mainland China since the Covid pandemic began, vowed that "one country, two systems" – a model under which Hong Kong was promised some autonomy and freedoms for 50 years – would endure. Xi returned to mainland China after less than 24 hours.

Christians in India on 3 July celebrated the 1,950th anniversary of the death of St Thomas the Apostle, who first brought the Gospel to the subcontinent. The date is marked in the country as Indian Christian Day. "We are happy that the Declaration was done on 3 July 2021 as Indian Christian Day/Yeshu Bhakti Divas," explained Archbishop Anthony Poola of Hyderabad, who will be created a cardinal by Pope Francis on 27 August. Poola is the first Dalit to be made a cardinal.

Elon Musk has said that he met Pope Francis at the Vatican on Friday last week. "Honored to meet @Pontifex yesterday," Musk wrote in a 2 July Twitter post published at 3:54 a.m. Rome time. The world's richest man, with a net worth of more than \$200 billion dollars, posted a photo of himself and four of his eight children standing with the Pope. The private meeting was not listed in the Pope's schedule.

PHOTO: OS, NABBY FRELW WEDIC



US President Joe Biden announced he would confer the Medal of Freedom on Sr Simone Campbell (pictured), who led the Catholic social justice lobby NETWORK for 17 years. Sr Simone is best known for starting a nationwide advocacy tour called "Nuns on a Bus" that brought her and other religious women to various states, urging members of Congress to enact policies that reflected Church teaching on social justice issues, such as health care reform and immigration. Her political activism earned the ire of the Vatican which cited her work in its censure of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in 2012.

Archbishop Paul Coakley, chair of the US bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice, expressed regret that the Supreme Court had restricted the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. "The bishops have long-supported the EPA's ability to regulate greenhouse gases in order to address climate change," Coakley said.

Compiled by James Roberts and Ellen Teague.

## SUMMER SALE

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66 To see abortion as a fundamental right goes against the respect for the dignity of every human being, a pillar of the EU

Comece President Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich ahead of a European Parliament vote calling for 'safe access to abortion' (see page 24)

ROME / Pope Francis explains 'authentic' liturgy

## How to understand and celebrate the Mass

JAMES ROBERTS

ON 29 JUNE, the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, Pope Francis issued an apostolic letter to ordained, consecrated and lay Catholics on "the liturgical formation of the people of God". It aims to "help us rekindle our wonder for the beauty of the truth of the Christian celebration, remind us of the necessity of an authentic liturgical formation, and see the importance of an art of celebrating that is at the service of the truth of the Paschal Mystery and of the participation of all of the baptised in it".

Behind the gentle words is a harsher implication: that many of the faithful no longer "wonder" at the beauty and truth of the Mass; that they need "authentic" liturgical formation; and that some celebrants fail to embody the requisite "art" of *celebratio*.

The *ars celebrandi* "cannot be reduced to only a rubrical mechanism", Francis says, "much less should it be thought of as imaginative — sometimes wild — creativity without rules ... The true artist does not possess an art but rather is possessed by it."

The title *Desiderio Desideravi* is taken from Luke 22: 15, "*Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum, antequam patiar*: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer". These words of Luke that open the account of the Last Supper, are "the crevice through which we are given the surprising possibility of intuiting the depth of the love of the persons of the Most Holy Trinity for us". Francis' letter explains why it is the liturgy that informs, penetrates and guides every other aspect of church life, just as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, informed all the other Vatican II documents.

*Desiderio Desideravi* does something that Vatican II aimed to do — foster understanding and right celebration of the Mass. But of the two great aims of the Council — *aggiornamento* or renewal with an eye on the needs of the modern world, and *ressourcement* or return to the sources — Francis' most obvious purpose is to reclaim what has been lost or forgotten.

Christ's "infinite desire to re-

Pope Francis: the Last Supper must be present in every celebration of the Eucharist



PHOTO: GREG HARRIS, ROMEO GARRI

establish that communion with us that and remains his original design, will not be satisfied until every man and woman, from every tribe, tongue, people and nation [Revelation 5: 9, Francis' italics], shall have eaten his Body and drunk his Blood. And for this reason, that same Supper will be made present in the celebration of the Eucharist until he returns".

A celebration that does not evangelise is not authentic, just as a proclamation that does not lead to an encounter with the risen Lord in the celebration is not authentic. "Christian faith is either an encounter with Him alive, or it does not exist ... We need to be present at that Supper, to be able to hear his voice, to eat his Body and to drink his Blood ... The salvific power of the sacrifice of Jesus, his every word, his every gesture, glance, and feeling

reaches us through the celebration of the sacraments," Francis declares. The fact of the Incarnation "reaches in the Last Supper the extreme point of his desiring to be eaten by us". Francis quotes Leo the Great: "Our participation in the Body and Blood of Christ has no other end than to make us become what we eat."

Our body, Francis explains, "is a symbol because it is an intimate union of soul and body; it is the visibility of the spiritual soul in the corporeal order".

"To have lost the capacity to grasp the symbolic value of the body and of every creature renders the symbolic language of the Liturgy almost inaccessible to the modern mentality. And yet ... such language ... cannot be renounced because it is how the Holy Trinity chose to reach us through the flesh of the Word."

## We must be 'scientific' on abortion issue says Francis

IN AN interview with Reuters published by the news agency on Monday, Pope Francis responded to the decision of the US Supreme Court (Scotus) that overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling enshrining a woman's right to abortion; speculated on visiting Moscow and Kyiv; and spoke on the circumstances in which he might consider resigning, writes James Roberts.

Francis said he respected the Scotus decision, but needed to study it further "from a judicial

point of view". He continued: "Leaving [that decision] aside, let's go back to the issue of abortion ... In this we have to be scientific, see what science tells us today. Science today and any book on embryology tells you that 30 days after conception there is DNA and the laying out already of all the organs.

"It's a human life — that's science. The moral question is whether it is right to take a human life to solve a problem."

On the question of Catholic

politicians who support abortion — US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi are the most prominent — Francis said: "When the Church loses its pastoral nature, when a bishop loses his pastoral nature, it causes a political problem. That's all I can say."

On rumours that he might be planning to resign, Francis said: "For the moment, no ... However, when the time comes that I see that I can't do it [run the Church, because of bad health] I will do it [resign]."

"That was the great example of Pope Benedict. He told popes to stop in time", Francis said.

Pope Francis said the decision to postpone the trip to DRC and

South Sudan because of health issues with his knee caused him "great suffering".

On future travels and the war in Ukraine, Pope Francis said, "The first thing is to go to Russia to try to help in some way, but I would like to go to both capitals, that is, Kyiv and Moscow."

On Thursday last week Francis met with a delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

"Amid a cruel and senseless war of aggression in which many, many Christians are fighting one another, reconciliation among separated Christians as a means of contributing to peace between peoples in conflict is very timely," he told the delegation.

COLOMBIA / Truth Commission presents findings after three-and-a-half-year investigation

## Report on 50 years of atrocities

FRANCIS McDONAGH

ON TUESDAY 28 June, the distinguished Colombian Jesuit Fr Francisco de Roux presented the final report of the country's Truth Commission, established as part of the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the largest guerrilla group, the FARC-EP. The agreement formally ended more than 50 years of internal conflict. Fr de Roux, the commission's president, summarised the commission's three-and-a-half-years' work: the commission, he said, had heard evidence from more than 30,000 witnesses in 28 sites in Colombia and from Colombian exiles in 24 countries. It had received more than 1,000 reports from civil society organisations and "clear and discreet" support from the Pope.

The commission aimed to echo its motto: "There is a future if there is truth." The report notes that Colombia's institutions, including the Churches, did nothing for decades to stop the conflict: "In the face of this crisis of the spirit what did the religious



Fr Francisco de Roux

leaders do? ...What did the majority of bishops, priests and religious communities do?" it asked.

The report makes grim reading as it reviews the various categories of horror to which the Colombian population was subjected, especially poor rural communities. There are an estimated 110,000 "disappeared" people. There is the long list of kidnappings, which the FARC used as a fundraising tool with its demands for ransom. Massacres were not only commit-

ted by the guerrillas but also by the armed forces and the paramilitaries – armed groups supported by landowners and accepted as unofficial allies by the army.

One of the biggest atrocities was of so-called "false positives" – young people recruited by the army and then murdered. The army dressed their corpses in guerrilla uniforms and added them to their tally of guerrillas killed in action. The official estimate of these young victims is 6,402 but the commission says there were probably many more.

When the government finally took action in 2008 and sacked 36 senior officers, including three generals, the killings stopped. All these military units had chaplains under the authority of the bishop of the armed forces. Why did they do nothing, the report asks?

Some 30,000 young people aged 15 or under were involved in the conflict by various acts. Girls were particularly vulnerable, raped by commanders and forced to have abortions. The Church had not responded to the report as *The Tablet* went to press.

### FRANCE

## Church management scrutinised as another group is shut down

MISSION Thérésienne, a French canonical association of the faithful active in about 20 countries, has been shut down by the Bishop of Bayeux-Lisieux for "substantial management dysfunctions", writes Tom Henehan.

The association, named after Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, encourages children and their families to pray for vocations and for about 6,500 priests and religious they have adopted. It promptly closed its website and its five magazines for young Catholics, promising to refund subscriptions. The shut-down was the latest community closure or diocesan inspection in France, where Church management has come under increasing scrutiny after the country's two top archbishops, in Paris and Lyon, quit over the past two years.

New communities in France, often charismatic or traditional groups that have grown in recent decades, as vocations to the diocesan clergy fall, have received special attention. Pope Francis announced in mid-June that bishops now needed Vatican support before approving any new canonical associations.

Over the past month, ordinations have been suspended in a diocese judged overly friendly to new communities, a charismatic community has been dissolved and an apostolic visitation has been announced for the Archdiocese of Strasbourg amid charges of mismanagement.

The Bayeux-Lisieux diocese said the problem lies in "dysfunctions ... in internal and external fora" and not other types of abuse.

Bishop Jacques Habert launched an inquiry into the mission, which was recognised in 1992, after he took over in 2020, said diocesan spokesman Fr Laurent Berthout.

"We have here the example of a bishop who exercises vigilance," he said.

Fr Berthout insisted that the dissolution was not linked to mission founder and spiritual counsellor Fr Bruno Thévenin. Sexual abuse accusations against him were investigated without result before Bishop Habert arrived, the diocesan spokesman told the weekly *Famille Chrétienne*.

While the canonical association was shut down, other activities supporting vocations may continue under a civil association that continues in the diocese.

Cyrille Chartier-Kastler, head of the civil association that continues to work with the diocese, said: "As soon as our project is stabilised, we will present it to the members of the civil association Mission Thérésienne."

## Faithful leave Church in ever greater numbers

IN GERMANY, where a compulsory Church tax means the numbers leaving the Church may be counted, as they sign forms to halt the tax payments, 359,338 Catholics officially left the Church in 2021, writes *Christa Pongratz-Lippitt*. The figure represents a dramatic increase of more than 86,000 on 2019, when 272,000 left. The statistics, which did not cover the Covid year of 2020, were published by the German bishops' conference on 27 June.

The bishops' conference president suggested that the figures could be explained by the fact that the changes recommended in the synodal pathway on which the German Church has embarked had not yet "filtered through".

"This is nothing to gloss over. I am deeply shattered at the extremely high number of Catholics who have left. We are, moreover, getting more and more feedback that Catholics who were committedly engaged in their parishes are leaving. The new departure, which the German synodal path has set out on, has obviously not yet filtered through to the faithful," Bishop Georg Bätzing said.

But he admitted that the Church in Germany faced a "deep crisis", caused by the scandals which "to a great extent" the Church was responsible for. "We must say goodbye to the hope that the number of faithful will go up or churches fill again," Bätzing said. Deputy conference president Bishop Franz-Josef Bode of Osnabrück told the *Bistumspress* that the German Church was "tilting at windmills". To understand what was happening, it was vital to remain in personal contact with those who had left, he said.

Bishop Franz-Jung of Würzburg in a statement published by his diocese said he felt exasperated and disappointed by "the problem-ridden image that we as the Catholic Church in Germany, in the Vatican and in the world Church, are sending out".

"No one should be surprised" by the figures, he said.

## UNITED STATES

# Welcome for end of 'Remain in Mexico' policy

**THE US** Supreme Court handed a victory to the Biden administration, ruling that it could terminate the "Migrant Protection Protocols", or "MPP", adopted by former President Donald Trump, writes *Michael Sean Winters*. That policy required those seeking asylum in the US to "remain in Mexico" until their case could be heard by an immigration court. Some 70,000 asylum seekers were sent back to Mexico since the policy was enacted in 2019, and the Biden administration sought to end the policy.

The case, *Biden v. Texas*, represented an effort by Republican-controlled states to force the Biden administration to keep the Trump-era policy. Chief Justice John Roberts, for the 5-4 majority, argued that the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act said the government "may" require asylum seekers to remain outside the US but did not require it.

"Today's decision recognises and preserves the executive branch's ability to reverse untenable, illegal, and immoral policies, regardless of who is in office," said Bishop Mario Dorsonville, chair of the US bishops' Committee on Migration, Sr Donna Markham, President of Catholic Charities USA, and Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network in a joint statement.

## KENYA

# Bishops' warning on biodiversity

**AHEAD OF** the planned international conference on biodiversity, Cop15, now scheduled for 5-17 December this year in Montreal, Canada, the bishops of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (Secam), after a preparatory meeting in Nairobi, issued a statement signed by Secam's Vice President, South African Bishop Simeonle Sipuka, saying: "We join the global civil society's calls for no more biodiversity collapse," writes *Francis Njuguena*. Naming indigenous communities as "guardians of Creation", the bishops expressed particular concern over a planned East African crude oil pipeline stretching from Uganda to Tanga, Tanzania, and the environmental destruction of Africa's Congo Basin rainforest.

# VIEW FROM SYDNEY

Christopher Lamb



**B**ILL BRYSON pointed out in his book on Australia that so often "we pay shamefully scant attention to our dear cousins Down Under" because it is far away and sparsely populated. But, he went on, "this is a country where interesting things happen".

Bryson's words also apply to the Church in Australia. Outside of Latin America, its Plenary Council is the most advanced attempt yet to implement the vision of a more synodal Church implicit in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. I am in Sydney for the final assembly of the Plenary Council, taking place in the school attached to St Mary's Cathedral, an imposing nineteenth-century Gothic Revival building in the centre of the city. Around 260 delegates – lay people, priests, religious and bishops – gathered around tables in a large room to debate and decide on a roadmap to help steer the Church's future.

The event began with an Aboriginal-led Indigenous prayer ceremony calling on the Holy Spirit to guide the proceedings, a sign that synodality includes inculturation. It is hoped the council will bring healing and concrete reforms to a Church still traumatised by the scandal of the clerical sexual abuse crisis. A powerful liturgy of lament for abuse took place on the afternoon of the first day. Compared to the German synodal path, Australia's council has received scant attention. Yet sometimes what happens under the radar in the Church turns out to be most significant.

"The Holy Spirit", Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, the president of the Council, told delegates in Sydney, is sometimes experienced as the "burning fire and roaring wind, turning everything upside down." Other times, he added, "it is in the still, small voice – the gentle breeze." The Australian process feels more like the latter.

During the sessions, time was given over for periods of prayer, emphasising the spiritual nature of a process that is focussed on listening to the Holy Spirit. Delegates spoke to the assembly following spiritual conversations and the participants were seated at round tables, to remind them that the event was a discernment rather than a parliament. Lay and bishops mingled together, giving a sense of consultative decision-making, rather than decrees being issued from on-high.

There is plenty of disagreement among those taking part, and very different visions for the future of the Church in Australia are being promoted. Some here are sceptical of Francis' synodal approach. Others want changes to come faster and go further. But, significantly, people are still talking to each other and are willing to discern together. It is hard to imagine a similar event taking place

in the deeply polarised Church in the United States. And, as one council observer pointed out, this assembly would have been unthinkable were it not for Pope Francis' renewal efforts. Although the Plenary Council is not a magic wand that will make internal tensions in the Church disappear, it opens a new path.

"This is a step along the Francis way," one bishop told me, as he entered the room.

**S**OME ARE trying to dismiss the Plenary Council as a talking shop for those with vested interests and little theological training. That claim rings hollow when you consider the *periti* – advisers that are providing a theological underpinning to the process – include some eminent ecclesiologists, including Professor Fr Ormond Rush, a member of the theological commission advising the Church's global synod process, and Professor Fr Richard Lennan of Boston College in the United States, whose former students include Sr Nathalie Bequart, the Holy See's synod office under-secretary. Also advising the plenary are scripture scholars Brendan Byrne SJ, a former member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and Francis Moloney, a Salesian who served on the Holy See's International Theological Commission.

The council's proceedings are being closely watched by leading Church figures, some of whom took part in the council as "observers," including the New York-born papal nuncio to Australia, Archbishop Charles Balvo. Myanmar Cardinal Charles Bo, President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, was in Sydney, as was New Zealand Cardinal John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington.

**A**ROUND ONE in five pupils in Australia attends a Catholic school, making Catholic education the Church's most significant social contribution to the country. Much of this is down to the religious sisters and brothers who set up and often still run the schools, including the Marist Order. This year, the order, founded by St Marcellin Champagnat, is marking the 150th anniversary since four Marists arrived in Sydney and set up their first school. A book, *Sub tum praesidium* (Beneath thy Protection), has been published to mark the contribution of the Marists to education. It is a detailed and honest assessment, which recognises and apologises for the tragic instances of abuse that have taken place.

Today, 56 schools in Australia are part of the Marist network, educating 50,000 pupils. While the brothers started the schools, the order today continues its charism through committed lay Marists. The Holy Spirit keeps on surprising.

# NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

## Archie's parents return to court

The parents of **Archie Battersbee** have won an appeal for his case to be heard again, after a High Court judge ruled in June that the 12-year-old had died and his life-support treatment could stop. The Court of Appeal accepted the argument of Edward Devereux QC, acting for Hollie Dance and Paul Battersbee, that there "cannot be room for question marks" in deciding whether a child has died. Doctors treating Archie at the Royal London Hospital had told the High Court that it was "highly likely" that he was "brain-stem dead". The case will now return to the High Court.

The Bishops of England and Wales are discerning their response to the **National Synthesis** document that has emerged from the synodal process. Their work, together with the synthesis document will be sent to the Synod Office in Rome as the formal submission to the Synod from England and Wales. From this and reports from all the other conferences in the world, the first *Instrumentum Laboris* will be drawn up, referred to by the Synod Office as the "Document for the Continental Stage".

Two Catholic dioceses (Armagh and Leeds) are among 33 faith institutions from six countries – including five Church of

England dioceses, and a Church of England cathedral – that have announced their **divestment from fossil fuel** companies. In total, 19 of the 33 institutions divesting are from the UK.

PHOTO: OIL SHOCK ONLINE



Pope Francis has appointed the Eparch of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the UK, Kenneth Nowakowski (pictured), as apostolic visitor to **Ukrainian Catholics in Ireland**. There is one Ukrainian Catholic parish in Ireland, under the care of Fr Vasyi Korentsky, but the arrival of refugees from the war in Ukraine has created demand for a greater pastoral presence. Ireland's Central Statistics Office records 39,000 arrivals since the Russian invasion.

Retired Dublin priest Padraig McCarthy, who is a member of the Association of Catholic

Priests, has warned that government policy in **Ireland** is "reviving the kind of religious discrimination we hoped was long gone". In a blog on the ACP website, Fr McCarthy said that the controversy over National Maternity Hospital's move to the site of St Vincent's Hospital at Elm Park gave "the impression ... that the any Catholic influence is malign, and that the Church has no business whatever being involved with health care".

The ordination of Fr Kevin Rennie in Dumfries last week was the first in the Diocese of **Galloway** for 14 years. Fr Rennie, who read engineering at the University of Edinburgh before discerning a vocation, was ordained by Archbishop William Nolan of Glasgow, the former Bishop of Galloway. Reflecting on today's synodality, Archbishop Nolan said that Fr Rennie had to continue learning, but now from his parishioners.

**Abuse victim gets £455,000**  
A former priest who attempted to sue the Bishops' Conference of Scotland for more than £2 million following **abuse at a seminary** in the 1970s, has been awarded £455,000 in damages by the Court of Session in Edinburgh. The man's identity has not been revealed, but it was heard in court that he had asked to be

laicised after suffering continuing sexual abuse by his spiritual director.

PHOTO: AFRISOPE



**St Columba's College** in St Albans is to have a new head from September next year. Karl Guest (pictured), currently head of Alton School in Alton, Hampshire, is married with two children. He was raised in south London and educated by the De La Salle Brothers. His move comes as St Columba's College is rated "excellent" in the latest report of the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, was among those billed to attend a **Save the Parish** conference in York this Thursday, the day before the General Synod of the Church of England opened at the University of York on Friday.

Compiled by **Ruth Gledhill**.

## EDITORIAL

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PERSON IN  
THE NEWS

**Dr Gordon Macdonald**, of Care not Killing, in a debate on 4 July: "Our current laws do not need changing; we need to refocus on how we provide the very best palliative care to those who need it."

**OPEN DOORS REPORT** / Surveillance and disinformation are tools of control

## Religious minorities face 'Orwellian' type of existence

PATRICK HUDSON

**A REPORT** from the charity Open Doors has warned that religious minorities face an "Orwellian existence" under growing digital persecution.

It says that surveillance technology and states' monitoring of social media have combined with censorship and disinformation on digital platforms to target religious minorities.

Open Doors, which campaigns for persecuted Christians worldwide, published the report with the universities of Birmingham and Roehampton. Its release coincided with the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, held in London on 5-6 July.

"We watch on as mobs and terror groups around the world are making use of digital platforms to tighten their grip over religious minorities," said Dr David

Landrum, director of advocacy and media for Open Doors UK.

"Most shocking of all, governments are turning a blind eye to this, or even actively encouraging the violent, oppressive behaviour."

The report cites the Chinese government's extensive use of surveillance technology to attack religious communities, and the role of online disinformation in fomenting hostility towards minorities in India. It also notes the growth of digital persecution in other African and Asian countries such as Myanmar, where stories shared online have blamed Christians and other minorities for spreading Covid-19. In Libya, internet monitoring is used to target those who access Christian resources online.

Criticising the latest human rights reports of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Open Doors has called for the UK government to prioritise

research and action on the issue. It urges cooperation with international institutions to establish ethical standards on the development and export of surveillance technologies.

In a foreword to the report, Sam Brownback, the former US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, warns that the Chinese government has turned Xinjiang province into "a laboratory" for "technological oppression".

"The Uyghurs there have effectively become a marketing tool to sell these technologies all over the world," he wrote.

Other recommendations in the report include calls for digital companies and social media platforms to respond robustly to disinformation and states' demands for censorship, and "to uphold human rights and civil liberties, resisting these demands from authoritarian regimes."

## Priest shortage 'means future of Catholicism in Ireland is at stake'

**NEW PROPOSALS** on the restructuring of parishes in the Archdiocese of Dublin will buy the Church between five and 10 years at most because the situation is "critical", a senior priest has warned, writes Sarah Mac Donaid.

Fr Aquinas Duffy, parish priest of Cabinteely, who is also Vicar Forane (rural dean) for up to 15 parishes in the Bray Deanery in Dublin, made his comments after it emerged that a total of 34 priests in the diocese have died since February 2020, the youngest of whom was just 52.

"Anybody who works in parishes can see the structures are collapsing around us. The time for talk is over; concrete



action needs to be taken," he said. "This crisis has been coming for many years, but Covid has pushed us further over the cliff."

He said the new move to appoint a parish priest to multiple parishes would put huge pressure on priests. As part of its plans to

offset the impact of a declining and ageing clergy, the Archdiocese of Dublin's new strategy, "Building Hope", has asked parishioners to identify nearby parishes with whom they can share resources in terms of finances, personnel and volunteers.

It is Fr Duffy's view that the future will see funerals done without priests as the Church relies increasingly on lay-led liturgies.

"We have to face the deeper questions that are coming out of the synodal pathway, like who is going to provide the Eucharist in the future? If we don't consider issues like women priests and married priests, we are only fooling ourselves."

He told *The Tablet*: "I can't emphasise enough how critical a moment we are at right now. We are at a crossroads which will determine the future of Catholicism in Ireland."

## Dominic Grieve to lead review of Oxford college

**THE FORMER** Conservative MP Dominic Grieve QC will lead a review of the governance of Christ Church, Oxford, following a vote by its governing body, writes Patrick Hudson.

Mr Grieve, former attorney general and shadow home secretary, received "overwhelming" endorsement from governors to chair the Independent Governance Review, which follows the departure in April of the college's dean, Martyn Percy.

In a statement, the college said the review will make recommendations "to ensure that Christ Church's statutes, by-laws and governance arrangements meet the needs of this unique institution in the twenty-first century". It is expected to report in 2023.

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BRUCE KENT / Funeral celebrates life of activist 'always loved and respected within the Catholic Church'

## Peace campaigner laid to rest

ELLEN TEAGUE

**RETIRING** from "active ministry" was a misnomer in Bruce's case, said the celebrant at Bruce Kent's funeral on 4 July. "He was more active than ever, being a better preacher, a better disciple and a better priest, who built the peace of Christ." Archbishop of Liverpool Malcolm McMahon, President of Pax Christi England and Wales, was referring to Kent's decision in February 1987 to end employment as a priest with Westminster Diocese and to focus on peace activism, particularly nuclear disarmament.

"He was always loved and respected within the Catholic Church," said the archbishop. Right up until his death on 8 June at the age of 92, Kent played leading roles in the Campaign for

Nuclear Disarmament, Pax Christi, Movement for Abolition of War, the International Peace Bureau and Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence.

Kent's widow, Valerie Flessati, told of his "strong sense of mission", saying: "He didn't see himself as a rebel but shaped his life according to the moral teaching of the Church." She recalled his love of walking – particularly his 1988 walk of 1,000 miles from Warsaw to Brussels calling for a peaceful, nuclear-free Europe – and his love of creation. "His optimism and energy gave people hope," Ms Flessati said.

At least 400 people in the Church of St Mellitus, Tollington Park in Westminster Diocese and around 300 joining live online were welcomed by parish priest Fr Chinedu Udo after Kent's great



Bruce Kent's funeral Mass

nephews carried his pine coffin, topped with a family bouquet of flowers, into the church. Symbols representing his life were placed on the coffin: a chalice given the day of his ordination as a priest, a "well-thumbed" copy of the Psalms, a list of prisoners he wrote to and his copy of the United Nations Charter.

Former war broadcast reporter Martin Bell, Jeremy Corbyn MP and composer Bernadette Furrell, joined members of Pax Christi England and Wales, Christian CND, the National Justice and Peace Network and religious, including the Assumption Sisters and the Passionists.

The Finsbury Park Mosque, with which Bruce had built links, was represented, as was Battersea Buddhist Peace Pagoda. The congregation included people from Belgium and Ireland, and a man who attributed his release from a foreign prison where he faced execution to an intervention by Kent. Music, led by Percy Aggett and Patricia Hammond, included Kent's favourite hymn, "In Bread We Bring You Lord" and the peace hymn "For the Healing of the Nations".

## Eamon Martin tells Dublin rally that 'pro-life' is 'pro-women'

**THE HEAD OF** the Irish Church has warned that the desperate situations of women with a crisis pregnancy, who feel isolated, neglected and alone in their distress, "do not go away no matter how widely available abortion is made", writes Sarah Mac Donald.

In his homily at Mass at St Saviour's Dominican Priory in Dublin ahead of the "Rally for Life" march, Archbishop Eamon Martin (pictured) highlighted how in Ireland "the right to personal choice has been elevated above the fundamental right to life itself".

He told some of the thousands of campaigners from all over Ireland who descended on Dublin for the first pro-life rally since the pandemic: "Often you face setbacks, because the pro-life message is counter-cultural, and is falsely portrayed as negative, anti-women, anti-choice or lacking in compassion."

The Primate of All Ireland noted that during the 2018 abortion referendum campaign there

were many calls and promises of help for women in crisis, saying: "Where is the compassion and accompaniment for a woman in crisis that was promised?"

He pledged to continue to seek dialogue about how a respectful and life-supporting environment can be created for every person in Ireland, at every stage and in every state of life.

The legislation introduced three years ago had left many unanswered questions, he noted, such as what options, other than abortion, can be offered to women during the three-day reflection period.

One of those who spoke to campaigners about the choices available to women who take abortion pills was Irish NHS consultant Dr Dermot Kearney. In a talk addressed to Family Solidarity Ireland, Dr Kearney recalled how restrictions imposed on him were reversed in February this year, allowing him to continue his work to help mothers who change their minds.

## Cardinals at Lambeth Conference

**CARDINAL KURT KOCH** will lead the Catholic delegation to the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion this summer, writes Patrick Hudson.

The Swiss prelate, who heads the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, will address a plenary meeting of the assembled bishops, as will Cardinal Luis Tagle, the pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation.

Running from 26 July to 7 August, this will be the first Lambeth Conference since 2008, with 658 bishops expected to attend from across the world. The conference normally meets every 10 years, but divisions within the international Anglican communion over teachings on sexual ethics led to a postponement in 2018, with further delays caused by Covid. Lambeth will be the first post-pandemic conference for many attendees, and will be hosted by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby.

The Catholic delegation will include the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, and

two bishops from Canada and India, countries which will also have strong Anglican representation: the Archbishop of Regina, Donald Bolen, and the Archbishop of Delhi, Anil Couto. The Irish bishop Brian Farrell, who has been secretary to the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity since 2002, will join the delegation to the conference.

No bishops from Nigeria, Rwanda or Uganda will attend, after the primates of the three Anglican provinces rejected the invitation to the conference earlier in June. Archbishops Henry Ndukuba of Nigeria, Laurent Mbanda of Rwanda and Stephen Kazimira of Uganda accused attendees of going against Biblical teaching, particularly on homosexuality.

At a press conference Archbishop Welby said that he "regretted" their absence, but emphasised that it was "nothing new that people don't come to the conference", citing absentees from other conferences since the first in 1867.

"The idea that however many millions of people will agree on everything is an illusion," he said.

Nigerian bishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, the secretary general of the Anglican Consultative Council, suggested that the archbishops' decision was not representative of their congregations.

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in conversation with



Raymond Friel, OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)

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# Footprints in the butter

ROSE PRINCE

**A** SLICE OF toast signals comfort, there at the beginning of our day and often at the end. The scent of it soothes and consoles. Toasted and buttered bread is a delicious mattress for all those other things we adore: scrambled eggs, jam, cheese, peanut butter and – nowadays – avocado.

I have never felt guilty about eating a moderate amount – until now. Because unfortunately, every time your toaster emits a little puff of the essential burning smoke that gives toast its wonderful flavour, it releases carbon into the atmosphere.

The argument rages between vegans and omnivores as to whose diet is better for the planet. But a recent experiment carried out by BBC Future, tracking carbon emissions for a vegan, vegetarian and omnivorous diet, dug up some thought-provoking detail and produced some surprises. To summarise: yes, plant-based food has the lowest carbon footprint, even if transported between continents via boat or truck (air freight is out, obviously). Beef always tops the chart for high emissions, so no shocks there. Sadly, cheese comes out badly, too, especially hard cheeses like Parmesan, which is bad news for vegetarians who rely on cheese and other dairy products.

The environmental cost of different cooking methods were calculated – ovens, for example, being worse than cooking on the hob. Cooking makes up for most of the carbon impact of any food,



**Every time your toaster emits the smoke that gives toast its wonderful flavour, it releases carbon into the atmosphere**

so an apparently innocent dish of roast root vegetables is not as harmless as it seems. And food waste, of course, bears a high cost – even vegans admit to throwing unused or rotting fruit and vegetables away.

The study appears to show that plant-based diets produce the lowest carbon emissions. I am an enthusiastic meat-eater, so I pick holes in the results with the eye of a partisan. I agree it is hard to defend beef, the majority of which goes into low-grade processed foods like burgers and ready meals. The negative impact of growing animal feed, changing land use and methane emissions is not in dispute – it is a terrible way to produce

food. But beef animals slow-grown on natural grassland do not produce as much methane – so this is the beef to eat.

As for vegetables, they need nutrients and these must come either from animal sources – manure, “fish blood and bone meal” – or plant compost. Nitrogen fertilisers are produced using fossil fuel and the underground source, potash, has been all but mined to extinction. In my opinion the healthiest diet should include some meat, so we can grow more food plants. We will go on disagreeing over this for years to come. In the meantime, here is a recipe for my favourite meal on toast – Greek eggs.

## GREEK EGGS SERVES TWO

- 4 eggs, chilled in the fridge
- 2-4 red chillies, not too fiery, chopped
- 4 tbsp butter
- 2 handfuls rocket leaves
- 2 slices of buttered sourdough toast
- 4 tbsp full fat Greek yoghurt

**First poach the eggs for 3-4 minutes: crack each egg into a small cup or ramekin and tip into a pan filled with boiling water and one teaspoon of vinegar. Chilling the eggs first helps keep them together. Fry the chillies in butter. To assemble, put rocket leaves on the toast, then the eggs, then yoghurt and finally pour over the chilli butter.**

# Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

THE GRASS IS waist-high on the wide strip of fallow land between the cornfield and the woods. A slender path weaves through this strip and if you follow it on a sunny summer day, you'll likely meet countless butterflies and butterflies. A brief stop at the low-growing patches of red clover will yield close encounters with numerous bumblebees and the skittish small skipper – a diminutive butterfly species with huge, all-seeing eyes. As you pass by a particularly thick whorl of grass, a baby roe deer may well be watching. Speckled with white



spots, these youngsters are known as kids.

I love this patch of unruly ground, and among its many midsummer delights there's one I really look forward to – the

orchids. From one year to the next you can't predict where they'll show up, so as summer arrives you must keep your eyes peeled for the plant's spikes that rise in the grass like mini church steeples.

This year the colony of common spotted orchids can be found at the far end of the strip. Their pale pink flowers, streaked with delicate purple stripes, are nearly hidden in a scaffolding of brambles. Enigmatic, unpredictable, able to appear and disappear almost at will, orchids turn a strip of grassland into a nature reserve.

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