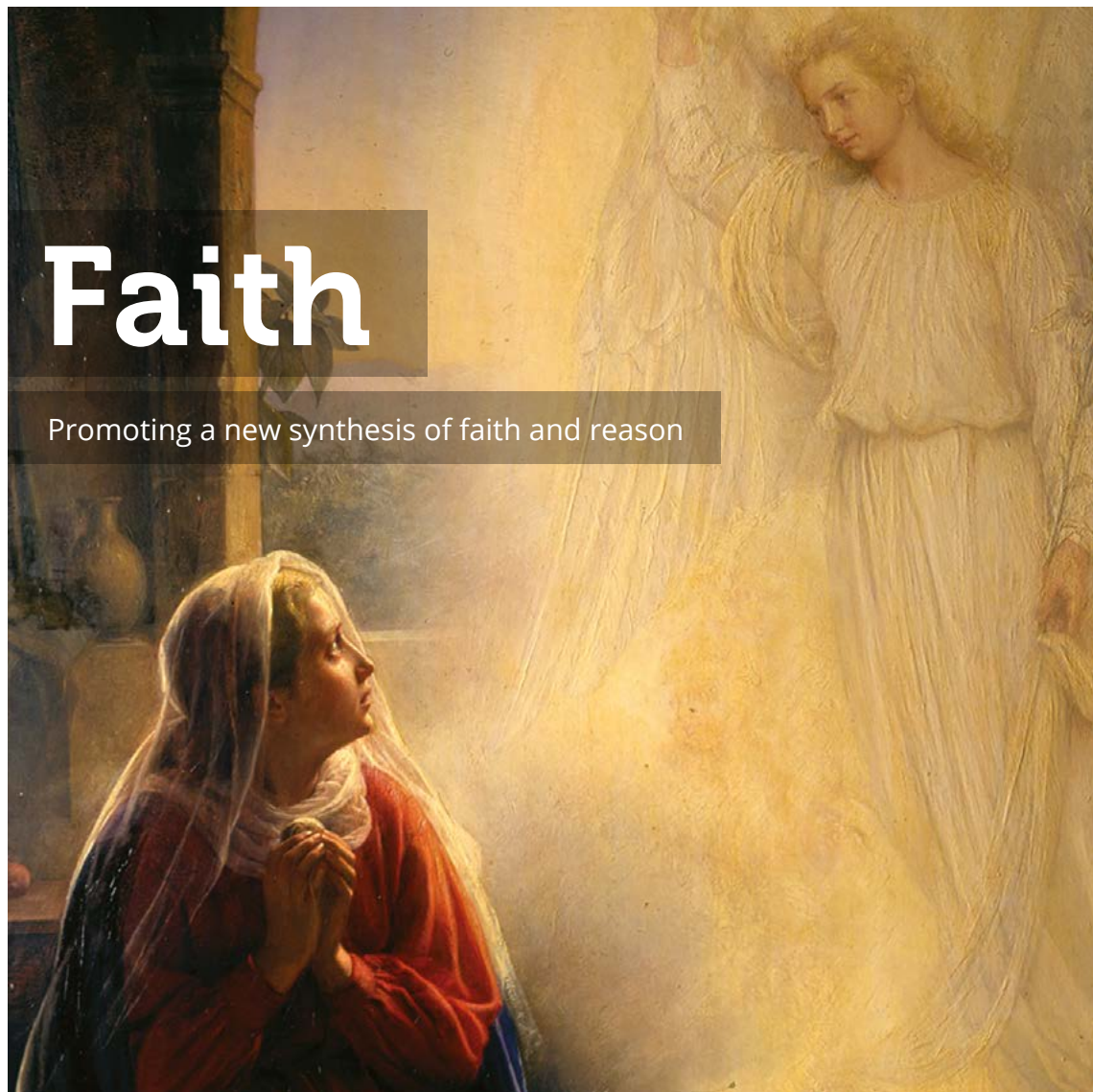


Faith

Promoting a new synthesis of faith and reason



Editorial **The Church, Freedom and Hate Crimes**

Articles **Mary and the Search for the Meaning of Womanhood** Fr. Tim Finigan
Rekindle a New Light – Tolkien and Historical Change Giuseppe Pezzini
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The Church, Freedom, and Hate Crimes

Next year, 2022, will mark a Golden Anniversary for the Faith Movement. When the Movement was founded in 1972, the Church was wrestling with the confusion of the immediate post-Vatican II era.

No one in the West, then, knew much about Archbishop Karol Wojtyla, or recognised the significance of the part he had played in what had been a major issue at Vatican II and would be one of the most important issues for the future – the emphasis on religious freedom and on truth. He was not known in Britain at all and rarely, if ever, got a mention in Britain's Catholic press or the secular media. Enthusiasms were focused elsewhere. The Catholic Left was veering towards Liberation Theology, and angry booklets and fringe pamphleteers of the far Right included stories – does anyone remember this? – that Paul VI was an impostor (you could tell, it was announced, *by looking carefully at his ears*) and that the real Pope was imprisoned in a Vatican dungeon...

Religious freedom, for people in the West, did not seem to be an issue at all in the 1970s.

No one specifically felt that the Church was a voice for freedom, or that she needed to be: it was simply assumed that if a Christian – especially one holding public office – wanted to speak out on a topical issue, that was normal. The Church had, perhaps, something of a reputation for having at one time been more on the side of seeking to silence debates rather than to encourage them. But it was also recognised, certainly in Britain, that this had changed: The Catholi-

cism that was revived in the 19th century in what Cardinal John Henry Newman described as a 'Second Spring' did not have or seek the power to urge secular authorities to punish heresy by burning people, but instead was opening up new debates in new ways.

In fact, the Church was developing a new role – that of authentic champion of freedom, and Newman's words and inspiration were at the core of this.

Experience

At the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Wojtyla spoke with deep philosophical and theological insights, and with the practical knowledge drawn from his experience in Poland, about the importance of religious freedom. He saw it as linked to truth. God created man to seek truth. God reaches out to man – we do not need to seek truth through a fog of ignorance, for God wills to make Himself known and loved. This is because He loved us first – our search for truth is in fact our response, whether we are at first aware of this or not, to His reaching out to us. Therefore, the truth is not something that needs to be imposed, for example, by the authority of a national legislature.

Coercion in religious matters denies the reality of truth.

The Church requires only freedom under the law and, in speaking out for this and defending religious freedom, she speaks for human dignity and for the reality of what it means to be human. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would later put it, citing Vatican II's *Dignitatis Humanae*, religious liberty is "a natural right of the human person to civil liberty, i.e. immunity, within just limits, from external constraints in religious matters by political authorities".¹ It is not just for Catholics: it extends even to those "who do not live up to their obligation of seeking truth and adhering to it".²

Powerful

It was powerful stuff, and it was annoying to the Communist rulers of Eastern Europe because it tackled the question of religious freedom at a spiritual level. They could no longer depict the Church as simply protecting its own space or its social or economic power. Archbishop Wojtyla's approach placed the Church on the side of those who sought truth for truth's own sake, who struggled and debated and stretched the boundaries of discussions. The Communist sloganeering since 1917 had rested on the notion that the Church crushed debate, imposed lockdowns on people's legitimate enquiries into the deep meaning of things, and fossilised all discussion.

Archbishop Wojtyla also drew the ire of some Catholic traditionalists, who would be even more angered years later when, as Pope, he affirmed publicly and solemnly the Church's sorrow for her own acts, in enforcing Christian dogma through methods not compatible with the Gospel (understood as a reference to burning heretical people alive, etc.).

When Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope in 1978 – that extraordinary year of three Popes, with the death of Paul VI and John Paul I – his words on religious freedom still seemed to be of greater significance for people in his native Poland, and in their counterparts elsewhere in eastern Europe, than to people in the West.

Prophetic?

But at Vatican II and subsequently he had, in fact, been prophetic, and his particular emphasis – opposing all forms of coercion in religion, seeing the Church as a voice for freedom and identifying freedom as an essential part of man's dignity – gave Christians a new way of approaching all of this, which is now exactly what we need. We can speak with authority and confidence.

Today John Paul is revered and loved as a saint. His emphasis on religious freedom needs to be seen not just as an attractive and heart-warming notion, but as a powerful statement of truth about the human person, created in God's image. We are made to seek truth in freedom, coercion in spiritual matters is wrong, and all



1. CCC 2108
2. CCC 2106

of this is the basis on which a healthy and thriving society can be achieved.

Religious freedom needs to be seen not just as an attractive and heart-warming notion, but as a powerful statement of truth about the human person.

In the 1980s, some in the West who watched developments in Eastern Europe were mildly patronising about the role played by Christianity in the unravelling of the Communist empire. It was acknowledged

that Poles were Catholics and that this was naturally a focus for them, but the full relevance of this was not grasped. The Church's power seemed unimportant because it lived in people's courage, not in political structures.

Threats foreseen

We in the West are facing threats to our freedom now, threats that were foreseen by John Paul II and also by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, who famously spoke of the dangers of a "dictatorship of relativism". The Church, as custodian of truth, upholds the duty of human beings to affirm and teach truth, and not to submit to accepting that it cannot be found or perhaps should not even be sought.

As 2021 opened, a campaigning group calling itself "Humanists UK" denounced the appointment of a Member of Parliament, Fiona Bruce, as the Prime Minister's new Special Envoy on the Human Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief, because she is an opponent of same-sex marriage. She voted against the idea that the law should re-invent marriage to make it the union of any two people including those of the same sex. "Humanists UK" claim that in some way Mrs Bruce has offended against human rights, and seem to be opposed to her being allowed to make her own contribution, as a Member of Parliament, on the legal status of marriage. They do this while officially claiming that they support the right of every person to "speak and believe as they wish". It's a right they evidently do not think should be extended to Mrs Bruce.



Fiona Bruce, MP

This is a matter of human dignity. The attack on Mrs Bruce is not an isolated incident. Today it is the case that an expression of support for marriage as the union of a man and a woman, or an exploration of the truth about the biological differences between men and women, could be denounced as a "hate crime" and bring real problems for the person who has spoken. Legislation in Scotland is not the only concern – there is also the possibility of being randomly "silenced" with a web page deleted on the internet or of an organisation being denied the right to hire premises or to gather people in a public space. We must be confident, large-minded, and robust when we speak up for Christian truth, and reach out in new ways to people who are actually hungry for the truth and will respond well

if they are offered it in a way that attracts. We might remember the motto of St John Henry Newman – often described as the father of Vatican II – *Cor ad Cor Loquitor*: Heart speaks to heart.

A language for defending freedom

The Church has, thanks to Vatican II and St John Paul, a language with which to defend freedom – her own and that of people generally. We must use this language.

“The Church proposes, she does not impose”.³

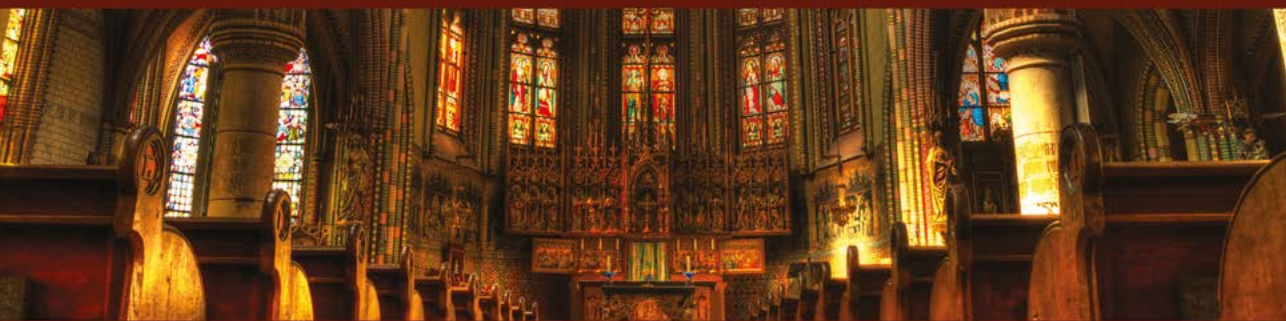
Her children have the right and privilege of speaking with her voice – it is a voice that

rings through the history of our country and of the West generally. We claim this as part of our common humanity and we also hold up our schools – and indeed the foundation of our country’s great universities, our care for the poor and the ill and the marginalised, our glorious traditions in art and music and architecture and so much else – as the heritage that we nurture and to which we add year by year for the good of all. Christians have a right to teach and to preach, to speak out and to celebrate the truth that has been revealed to us by God. We add, too, that this heritage includes martyrdom, understood as witnessing to the truth even at the cost of life itself. That, too, rests on a saying popularised by St John Paul and rooted in the words of Christ himself: “Do not be afraid!”

3. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 39

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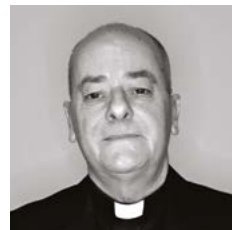
Mary and the Search for the Meaning of Womanhood

Fr Timothy Finigan discusses ways to teach the importance of Mary's role.

In 1974, Pope Paul VI addressed what he saw as problems of his time which he felt were causing people to become disenchanted with devotion to Our Lady. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (MC), he said that people were finding it difficult to take Our Lady as an example for their lives "because the horizons of her life, so they say, seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today." (MC 34) He pointed out that the Church does not propose Mary as an example because of the type of life that she led, and still less because of the socio-cultural background in which she lived.

He was concerned that some of the difficulties people found with devotion to Our Lady might be due to the image of Mary found in popular writings. Referring to the differing sociocultural contexts of different ages, Pope Paul expressed a concern that some outward religious expressions, though valid, might not be so suitable to people of different ages and cultures. (That concern was itself part of the sociocultural context of the early seventies.) It is always possible to cite extreme examples of aberrant Marian devotions: my own favourite is a practice that had to be forbidden by the Holy See, of sacrificing a bull to the Blessed Virgin Mary. However, this shows the problem of accepting the argument from sociocultural context. The sacrifice of a bull in honour of Our Lady could never be acceptable to the Church whatever culture it came from. Conversely, I am not

sure that there are many genuine devotions to Our Lady that would be acceptable in another sociocultural context that would not be acceptable now.



The Incarnation

In looking for universal and perennial ways in which Our Lady is an example for us today, Pope Paul rightly focuses on her role in the incarnation, her consent to the will of God, her sharing in the role of redemption, and her practical care for Our Lord. As the first and most perfect of the disciples, she who listened to the Word of God and kept it, she is indeed "the outstanding type of womanhood and the pre-eminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels." (MC 36)

Pope Paul then begins on a path that has preoccupied many in the Church in recent decades, that of answering feminists by presenting Our Lady as the model of modern womanhood.

Unfortunately, Our Lady is rejected immediately as a model by many feminists who accuse the Church of offering women an impossible ideal: that of a virgin-mother.

Pope John Paul made an express attempt to address this question in the context of a more developed feminism which had become more widespread and influential.

To this purpose he wrote the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (MD) on the special dignity of womanhood, offering a reflection on the dignity and vocation of women.

A woman's dignity

Pope John Paul reflects on how women showed to Our Lord “a special sensitivity which is characteristic of their femininity.” (MD 16) Later he notes that in suffering, this sensitivity plays a role for the woman “even though she often succeeds in resisting suffering better than a man.” (MD 20) He notes approvingly that, “It is commonly thought that women are more capable than men of paying attention to another person.” (MD 18) On the order of love, he says that the role of the bridegroom is to love, whereas the bride is “she who receives love, in order to love in return.” (MD 29) This affirmation is a key theme of the Apostolic Letter in which Pope John Paul insists that a woman's dignity is bound up with the love that she receives “by the very reason of her femininity” and is similarly linked with the love that she gives in return. (MD 30)

These attempts of Pope John Paul to characterise the “feminine genius” are complemented by other ideas of his own and of Pope Paul. Such as Our Lady as the strong woman, the woman of freedom, or the woman charged with decision-making.



While a man or woman of faith might find much to ponder in these sincere suggestions for pinpointing the existential character of womanliness, it has to be admitted that they would be of little use in persuading most of the modern women of today either of the Church's favourable attitude to women or of the decisive role of Our Lady as the perfect woman. Picture, if you will, the poor priest attempting to use them as arguments in a BBC discussion on womanhood with a cynical and secular female chat show host. One can almost hear the screech of tyres, crumpling of metal and tinkling of glass on tarmac in such a car crash interview. And that is before you add into the mix a gender-fluid spokesperson.

Why Men and Women at all?

To consider the lived reality of defending the place and role of women in an aggressively secular setting, is not intended in any way to downplay the valiant attempts of either Pope Paul VI or Pope John Paul II to present a vision of womanhood with reference to Our Lady. However, they were given for their time and culture, and both have moved rapidly on. Nor need we despair of finding an answer to the question

of what constitutes the “feminine genius.” The feminist movement is currently in crisis before the aggressive cancel culture of transgenderism which attacks them as “trans-exclusionary radical feminists” (TERFs), and serious questions are already being raised over the damage that the sweeping craze for gender fluidity is doing, not least to young people who are irresponsibly guided into devastating changes to their bodies at a stage in their lives when those who care for them should be doing everything they can to prevent them from coming to harm.

In addition, it would not be irrational optimism to hope that there will be a reaction against the cruder forms of feminism that have recently been in vogue. The “Kill Bill” ideal of the woman who has hero status for overcoming the men who have brutalised her, by being even more brutal and violent than them, could run out of steam before too long. Likewise the standard streaming service digital film sermon on how women can confound our dumb expectations by springing the shocking surprise of adopting non-traditional roles is probably no longer the epiphany moment it once was. Culture that is dependent on subjective values is a fickle overlord, whether it is master or mistress.

Prophetic

Pope John Paul began *Mulieris Dignitatem* by saying that the task set him by the Synod of Bishops to address the problems connected with the meaning and dignity of being a woman and being a man was ultimately “a question of understanding the reason for and the consequences of the Creator’s decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man.” (MD 1) *Humanae Vitae* was prophetic in holding the line on artificial contraception just as the world began the final stage of dismantling marriage and the family in a way that was unthinkable in 1968. Similarly, Pope John Paul was prophetic in raising the question of why we are male and female, just as the

world began to tear apart the very meaning of the sexes in a way that was unthinkable twenty years earlier.

Pope John Paul spoke of his predecessor Pope Leo XIII as the Pope of the Rosary because of his twelve encyclicals and five apostolic letters on the subject. In a more thoroughgoing way, Pope John Paul was the Marian Pope. He adopted the motto *Totus Tuus* referring to his consecration to Mary, as advocated by St Louis Grignon de Montfort. I remember cynical theological liberals in Rome making the snarky comment: “you think he would have left a little bit for Jesus.” The best response to this was that if Our Lady always and surely leads us to Christ, you should either consecrate yourself to her totally or not at all.

The Place of the Rosary

The vindication of the *Totus Tuus* motto is found in Pope John Paul’s Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (RVM). Pope Paul VI had strongly urged that the Rosary was a Christocentric prayer, defending it against those who wanted to downplay the devotion in favour of more biblical spiritual exercises, or those who saw it as having no connection with the sacred Liturgy. Pope Paul vigorously and convincingly showed how devotion to Our Lady was indeed focussed on Christ, was found in the feasts of the revised Liturgy, and was itself capable of being fully integrated into biblical devotion through the Rosary.

Essentially, Pope John Paul II complements the writing of Pope Paul VI on the Rosary being a Christocentric prayer but expounds in a deeper way the Marian dimension of being centred on Christ.

In a brilliant summary of the real meaning of the Rosary, he said that it was “nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ.” (RVM, 3)

In this simple explanation we see the lived experience of a man, a priest, a bishop, and a pope who had nourished his spiritual life from childhood on the prayerful recitation of the Rosary.

In addition to the continuity of thought between Pope Paul and Pope John Paul II, there is an interesting element of discontinuity. We need not make too much of it, but it is striking enough to be worthy of comment. Pope Paul was keen to point out that although the Rosary draws from the liturgy and points back to it, nevertheless it is not part of the liturgy. Perhaps he went a little too far when he said that "it is a mistake to recite the Rosary during the celebration of the liturgy, though unfortunately this practice still persists here and there." (MC n.48) When Pope John Paul was largely incapacitated by Parkinson's, some students in Rome (now fine apostolic priests) told me that when they were at the Academic Mass for the start of the year, Pope John Paul was not able to be the celebrant but attended in the sanctuary. The keen-eyed seminarians noticed with delight that he had a Rosary moving slowly in his hands during the Mass.

Someone might argue that Pope John Paul knew the texts of the Mass very well and was able to engage in spiritual multi-tasking so that his full conscious and active participation was not impaired. Perhaps there is more to it than that. If the Rosary is contemplating with Mary the face of Christ, it is entirely suited as one possible form of genuine participation at Mass. Meditating on the life, death and resurrection of Our Lord is precisely what we should be doing in order to offer our praise, thanksgiving, sorrow, and supplication in union with Christ on the Cross, and the priest at the altar who acts in His person. To engage in such meditation with the help of our Blessed Mother ought not to be seen as a distraction if we are contemplating with her the face of Christ. By

actively demonstrating a devotional point, Pope John Paul has hammered home a theological truth concerning the centrality of Our Lady in the incarnation and therefore in the plan of God. This is where we need to explore further.

Christocentrism and the Divinity of Christ

Pope Paul VI was rightly concerned to defend what he saw as the Christocentrism of recent theological thought. There are in fact many writers in whom Christ can be clearly identified as central to their theology, not least St Anselm, St Bernard, and St Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, it would be hard to find a doctor of the Church who did not promote a healthy Christocentrism in both doctrine and devotion. The urgency in the time of Pope Paul was to ensure that the Christ at the centre was in fact truly divine. Both among professional theologians and catechetical writers, the focus in the early seventies was on the humanity of Christ, often effectively denying His true divinity. Time and again in issues of *Faith* during that period the divinity of Christ was defended against popular presentations which undermined the fundamental teachings of the early councils.

Popular writings presented Christ as the "man for others", questioned whether He actually knew who He was, cast doubt on His miracles, and suggested that He was unsure what to do. By way of example, an influential Study Guide for adult education in the 1980s told of how Mary and Joseph supported Jesus in his adolescence "as he began to examine and question what he had been taught in the course of his religious upbringing." Of course, Jesus was presented as a thoughtful teenager, so "Along with his peers, he searched for a faith which he could really call his own." (Purnell, A P. *To be a People of Hope*. 1987. p15)

Christocentrism does need to centre on the Christ who is truly God made man, the Word made flesh.

A litmus test of whether portrayals of the man Jesus are in line with revealed teaching, is whether there is a real understanding of original sin and its effects, and of the truth that Jesus Christ did not have original sin, nor concupiscence, nor habits of sin. Nor indeed did

Our Lady since she was conceived immaculate. She did not sin and therefore did not have habits of sin. Certainly, she was put to the test, underwent trials, and was attacked externally by Satan, but she did not have disordered desires or the weakness consequent upon them. If we want to find the heart of Mary's psychological strength as a strong woman, it is in her being full of grace. If we want to find the place of that strong woman in the plan of God, we need to look to the origins and purpose of the universe.

The Lynchpin of the Material Universe

The overall vision of the faith that is presented in the Faith Movement has at its heart a Franciscan understanding of the incarnation. Calling it "Franciscan" rather than "Scotist" is a helpful way to avoid the obfuscation of referring to a brilliant but controversial theologian of the thirteenth century, but also in my view a just acknowledgement of the followers of St Francis, who still proudly adhere to the subtle doctor's landmark insight. The Franciscan school maintains that the incarnation of Christ was always part of the plan of God from eternity. Although sin meant that Our Lord was also incarnate to redeem us from our sins, the incarnation would have happened even if there had been no sin. Support for the position can be found in the writings

of St Irenaeus, St Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers and Maximus the Confessor. It has always held a respected place alongside the alternative Thomist thesis that the purpose of the incarnation was redeem us, and that without sin, there would have been no incarnation.

The Thomist-Scotist debate focusses on the purpose of the incarnation; we can equally focus on the purpose of the creation of the human person. If God becoming man was part of the eternal plan of God from the beginning, then so was the creation of the human race.

The incarnation itself requires that there be co-operation between humanity and God. If God visited us without becoming man, there would be no real and ultimate union;

if a man was the visitation of God (as in the case of a prophet) there would be some communication from God, but no real presence of the divinity. God coming down to earth and becoming man, taking on our humanity, is the perfect union of the human and divine. This incarnation must be achieved through the co-operation of an individual woman with God: a woman because of the two parties involved in



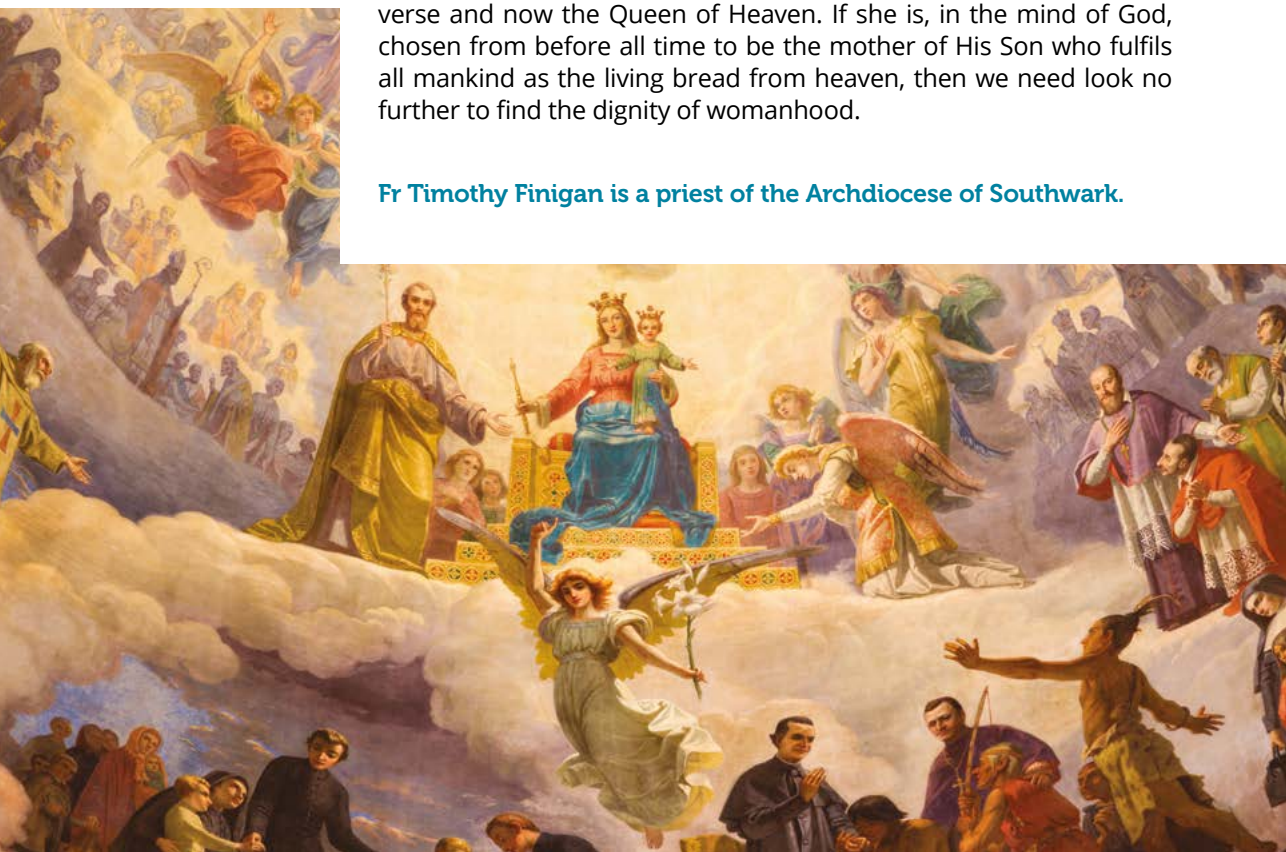
the conception of a human person, (contrary to some of the wilder assertions of those who deny a meaning to gender) it is the woman who gives birth.

The original purpose of God

Indeed, the very division of the sexes into male and female may be seen as part of the original purpose of God. Biologically, of course, there are good reasons why sexual reproduction developed, such as genetic variation, adaptive ability, and survival advantage. These contribute to the goodness of creation and are themselves part of the overall purpose of creation in the mind of God. If we see in addition that the very creation of humans as male and female is fundamental to the plan of God for the incarnation and for our destiny in eternal glory, then it is no wonder that this aspect of creation is insisted on twice in Genesis and is one of the verses of the Old Testament quoted by Jesus Christ. (Gen 5:2, Gen 1:27, Mk 13:19).

Saint John saw a vision of *The Woman*. At one level, she is the earth because she is clothed with the sun and has the moon at her feet. She was in pain to be delivered of the child who would rule the nations with the rod of iron, which we understand as the staff of divine truth and authority. (Rev 12:1-2) The Church has always seen a further level of meaning in the Virgin Mary who is *The Woman* who fulfils the longing of mankind as she brings forth the Word made flesh in the quiet watches of the night. She is the lynchpin of the material universe and now the Queen of Heaven. If she is, in the mind of God, chosen from before all time to be the mother of His Son who fulfils all mankind as the living bread from heaven, then we need look no further to find the dignity of womanhood.

Fr Timothy Finigan is a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark.



Rekindle a New Light: Tolkien and Historical Change

Giuseppe Pezzini gains insight from J.R.R. Tolkien at this time of change.

What is Tolkien's attitude to change – to crisis, historical development, and the passing of time in general?

It is worth posing this question at the beginning of a new year of 'the Covid era', because the issue of historical change is relevant to all of us facing, as we are, dramas similar to those faced by Tolkien: the sudden and traumatic collapse of a world, the challenges of change and insecurity, and the beginning of a new era, for better or worse. As Tolkien put it in a beautiful, dramatic letter:

"Imagine the experience of those born (as I) between the Golden and the Diamond Jubilee of Victoria. Both senses and imaginations of security have been progressively stripped away from us. Now we find ourselves nakedly confronting the will of God, as concerns ourselves and our position in Time. 'Back to normal' – political and Christian predicaments – as a Catholic professor once said to me, when I bemoaned the collapse of all my world that began just after I achieved 21" (Letter 306).

In this article, I want to focus on Tolkien the man: A father, a friend, and a great Christian, completely rooted within his own historical period (the first half of the 20th century) with all its crises, pain, and challenges. He was a man deeply wounded by his history, and yet not defeated by it, not because of some sort of naïve fatalism or fideism, but because of the awareness that there is always something good germinating under the frost of history. That the "wheels of the world" are not turned by the strong and the powerful, but rather by the simple, powerful 'yes' of humble, powerless individuals.

A conservative Tolkien?

According to many, Tolkien had a 'conservative' attitude towards history, culture and politics, as well as to Christianity and life in general. People highlight for instance his supposed idealisation of the Shire, as a model of a rural, traditionalist, a-technological and autarchic community. Or, the idea of a 'return of the King', construed as a restoration of a legitimate order against chaos. Tolkien has also been described as a man in love with the myth of Old England, a nostalgic of the Middle Ages and its Christian framework, a defender of the West and its values, in sum a 'conservative' in a broad sense, "not usually liking or trusting change, especially sudden change" (Cam-



Tolkien's 'conservatism' seems to be confirmed by his fondness for a 'narrative of decline'

bridge Dictionary).

Leaving aside the political implications, Tolkien's 'conservatism' seems to be confirmed by his fondness for a 'narrative of decline', a vision of history that posits a gradual degradation (ontological, moral, social, and aesthetic) from an idealised Golden Age, going hand-in-hand with a detachment of God(s) from mortals and vice versa. We

can trace this narrative in Tolkien's division of his world into ages, from an idealised First Age filled with Joy and Light, to a Third Age, described as "the first of the broken and changed world" (*Letters* 131); or in his notorious perception of history as a "long defeat" (cf. *Letters* 195), related to that "heart-racking sense of the vanished past" and longing for a lost Eden (cf. *Letters* 96), which pervades Tolkien's works, and which he described as the emotion which moved him "supremely" and he found "small difficulty in evoking" (cf. *Letters* 91).

The Design of God

Narratives of decline are certainly present in Tolkien, together with a 'conservative' position: if history is a decline, creatures only try to preserve or restore the past, to delay or impede change. Novelties, and change in general, are perceived as evil, and related to an inescapable 'catastrophic' tendency of history, and related moral corruption. This negative outlook on change is present in Tolkien, and is

probably close to his wounded sensitivity, but, crucially, it is not his only outlook. Rather, this 'conservatism' is presented as a 'partial' position, in the sense of both 'incomplete' and 'belonging to a part'. The part I am referring to is that of the Elves, whose main "motive" is "*the prevention or slowing of decay (i.e., 'change' viewed as a regrettable thing), the preservation of what is desired or loved, or its semblance*" (*Letters* 131). Despite his own fondness for the Elves (cf. e.g., *Letters* 96), Tolkien is honest enough to admit that "*the Elves are not wholly good or in the right (...) They wanted to have their cake and eat it: to live in the mortal historical Middle-earth because they had become fond of it (...) and so tried to stop its change and history, stop its growth.*" (*Letters* 154). For Tolkien, the Elves' refusal of change, however understandable, is not right. Rather, it is an obsession: [the Elves] became obsessed with 'fading', the mode in which the changes of time (the law of the world under the sun) was

perceived by them. (*Letters* 131). In fact, "*mere change as such is not represented as 'evil': it is the unfolding of the story and to refuse this is of course against the design of God. But the Elvish weakness is in these terms naturally to regret the past, and to become unwilling to face change: as if a man were to hate a very long book still going on and wished to settle down in a favourite chapter.*" (*Letters* 181)



For Tolkien, the changes of time, however dramatic and traumatic, are not catastrophes to avoid or bemoan, but rather “the law of the world under the sun”, that is the mysterious unfolding of the history of Creation, to be embraced with hope and courage.

To try to arrest this unfolding, to refuse to engage with change, is a temptation to overcome; and this is why in the *Lord of the Rings* the Elves’ redemption follows their acceptance to give up the power of their Rings and accept the development of history under God’s guidance.

Tolkien’s way: development, maturation, renewal

‘Conservatism’ is thus for Tolkien a wrong attitude; but this should not lead anyone to affiliate Tolkien with the opposite party and consider him as a sort of ‘progressist’ or ‘reformer’, as someone seeking or invoking change as a means of power, in order to ‘improve’ the real world. As he loudly declared: *I am not an ‘embalmer’ [but I am not] a reformer [either]! I am not a ‘reformer’ (by exercise of power) since it seems doomed to Sarumanism.* (Letters 154). In fact, for Tolkien the error of the ‘reformer’ (epitomised in the wizard Saruman) is founded on the same temptation of the ‘embalmer’, consisting in the refusal to accept the ‘inherent development’ of reality: (...) *the desire for Power (...) all use of external plans or devices (...) instead of development of the inherent inner powers or talents - or even the use of these talents with the corrupted motive of dominating: bulldozing the real world, or coercing other wills*” (Letters 131). What is thus the correct attitude according to Tolkien? The *via media*, or rather ‘the Straight Way’, between these two errors?

The unfolding of the seed

Since Tolkien was an artist, and not a theologian, I will respond to this question with three images, and not an argument. These images are different and yet similar, all implying a vision of history as ‘development’ and requiring the same attitude.

The first image is the seed developing into a tree, which Tolkien uses to describe any individual human life: *I think that comparison with a seed is more illuminating: a seed with its innate vitality and heredity, its capacity to grow and develop. A great part of the ‘changes’ in a man are no doubt unfoldings of the patterns hidden in the seed.* (Letters 183). The change which Tolkien calls to embrace is not thus the revolution or subversion of a pre-existing entity, nor the introduction into it of external elements. Rather, it is a natural “unfolding” of the “patterns hidden in the seed”. Tolkien uses the same image in another letter, this time to describe the history and life of the Church: *‘my church’ was not intended by Our Lord to be static or remain in perpetual childhood; but to be a living organism (likened to a plant), which develops and changes in externals by the interaction of its bequeathed divine life and history – the particular circumstances of the world into which it is set.* (Letters 305)

This is a key passage, from a letter which would deserve a longer treatment, in which Tolkien offers a prophetic hermeneutic with which to interpret the Second Vatican Council. Here I only highlight that for Tolkien there cannot be any external similarity between the seed and the tree, even though they are the same entity. In fact, to prevent the historical development of a seed into a tree is a mistake, which results in the loss of both. One can also note that in both passages Tolkien talks of (biological) ‘heredity’: the Church, just as any human life, is a living organism, which is bound to develop (if it is alive); but at the same time it has an inherited history, and thus a necessary link with the past. Change, in a living organism, is not a break with the past, but a development of/from it.

The renewal of the lineage

This introduces the second image, of the (botanical) lineage renewed after centuries of apparent extinction. As the eagle announces to the city of Minas Tirith, after the fall of Sauron: *the Tree that was withered shall be renewed, and he shall plant it in the high places, and the City shall be blessed*. The verb 'to renew' is a buzzword in Tolkien, and is especially associated with the character of Aragorn, whose key epithet is that of 'renewer' (*LotR* 170) and whose blade will be "renewed" (cf. *LotR* 170), just like the "dignity of the kings of old" (*LotR* 1044) and the "kingship" in general (*LotR* 1057). The renewal of the tree of Gondor is analogical to that of its kingship, as Gandalf explains to Aragorn in a key scene of the novel, when a new sapling of the ancient Tree is providentially found under the snow of the sacred mountain: *"Verily this is a sapling of the line of Nimloth the fair (...) though the fruit of the Tree comes seldom to ripeness, yet the life within may then lie sleeping through many long years, and none can foretell the time in which it will awake. (...). Here it has lain hidden on the mountain, even as the race of Elendil lay hidden in the wastes of the North. (LotR 971)*. The renewal of the lineage, which is an expected, mysterious event, is not a conservation or restauration: with Aragorn's return, the old, dead tree and is replaced by the new sapling, and it is removed and is "laid to rest in the silence" together with the graves of the ancient kings (cf. *LotR* 972). It is a new tree that is born, a new story that begins, which yet belongs to, and renews an old story, an ancient lineage.

The blossoming of the Tree

The third, and final image is the great Tree blossoming with infinite and ever-new leaves, which symbolises the artistic work of God, the Story of Creation. In Tolkien's story 'Smith of Wootton Major' the eponymous hero Smith, symbol of the artist entering by Grace into the depths of reality, sees at a certain point *"the*

King's Tree springing up, tower upon tower, into the sky, and its light was like the sun at noon; and it bore at once leaves and flowers and fruits uncounted, and not one was the same as any other that grew on the Tree."

The idea of Creation as an organic ensemble of infinite individualities is key in Tolkien and is developed especially in the cosmogonic myth of the *Silmarillion*:

this tells of a primigenial concert of angelic beings, who "like unto countless choirs singing with words" fashion the single theme of God, "with endless interchanging melodies". Another important quality of this Creation is its never-ending newness: Tolkien's God has not revealed "all that he has in store, and in every age there come forth things that are new and have no foretelling". Among these 'new elements' introduced by God there are the Elves, the Children of God, new individualities in which one could see *"the mind of [God] reflected anew"*.

Newness and variety are necessary qualities of artistic creation, divine but also human, as Tolkien explains in *On Fairy Stories*, pointing out that the main aim of (human) art is to create "something new", and to pay tribute "to the infinity of [God's] potential variety". At the same time, this ever-new variety is not autonomous or self-referential; rather, all individual stories, past, present, and future, are in relationship with each other, and all contribute to the same polyphonic music of Creation, which transcends Time and Space. There are infinite leaves, but they all belong to the same Tree, and as such they share the same archetypal pattern; just like all leaves of an oak tree are somehow similar, and yet none of them is identical to the other, because each one is called to blossom according to its own particular story, in springs that are ever-new, as an "unique embodiment of the pattern" (cf. *On Fairy Stories* 66).

The ongoing embracing of one's tale

These images (the seed developing into a tree, the renewal of the lineage, and the Tree blossoming with infinite leaves) help clarify Tolkien's attitude to historical change. Tolkien has an essentially 'organic' and 'dynamic' vision of (divine) history, which develops through infinite, individual stories, embedded in ever-changing circumstances; new, individual, ever-different stories, yet in continuity with the ones that precede them, in a narrative chain which ultimately has its 'master Ring' in the Gospel story, the 'Primary Story' to which all human lives are called to conform. Historical change is thus inevitable and in fact positive and necessary, if construed and embraced as a providential development of the past – a past that is not to be preserved nor reformed (neither with the Elves nor Saruman), but renewed, through fully embracing one's own tale, in the present and ever-changing circumstances. This is why Tolkien could write to the friends of his youth, after the horror of the Somme: *"[we have] been granted some spark of fire (...) that was destined to kindle a new light, or, what is the same thing, rekindle an old light in the world; (...) to testify for God and Truth"* (Letters 5).

The path that has been laid

From a narrative point of view, this 'positive' position towards historical change is reflected in a character's availability (*fiat*) to discover and tread the path that has been laid for them (as Galadriel says to the Fellows of the Ring), even when it leads to dark roads. To walk the path of one's history, with the courage and humility of a hobbit and under the guide of Grace (Gandalf), is the truest and most authentic way to rekindle a new light, and

"testify for God and Truth". All this is possible for those who know that there is a loving Author behind their story, an Author who simply needs our availability "never to turn back", as Sam says to Frodo on the stairs of Cirth Ungol, in one of the most beautiful scenes of the *Lord of the Rings*. To tread one's given path means to live

To tread one's given path means to live fully in the times which are given to us, with its lockdowns, Zoom calls, and Covid bulletins because, as Gandalf famously says, it is not for us to decide the time that is given us.

fully in the times which are given to us, with its lockdowns, Zoom calls, and Covid bulletins because, as Gandalf famously says, it is not for us to decide the time that is given us. The ability to engage with the changes of the times allows God to bring our story to fulfilment, and eventually to integrate it into His own great Story, the Great Story of the Great Author, a story which started 2000 years ago with the 'yes' of the most powerless, and yet most powerful, woman of all and continues through our own, simple powerful 'yes-es'.



Discover, protest and nourish

A final note: To tread one's own path and thereby rekindle a new light in a changing world is only possible because *"we have been granted (...) some spark of fire"*. The renewal and blossoming of the Tree, in ever-new circumstances, is not the product of a human effort, but rather an unexpected gift; it is not the result of a human project (even a Christian one) but a seed that germinates in unexpected places, which we are simply called to discover, protect, and nourish (like Aragorn with the new sapling). As Tolkien wrote in one of the darkest moments of modern history: *"the future is impenetrable especially to the wise; for what is really important is always hid from contemporaries, and the seeds of what is to be are quietly germinating in the dark in some forgotten corner, while everyone is looking at Stalin or Hitler"* (Letter 79).

Newman

Where does Tolkien's perspective come from, a perspective that is so relevant in this particular historical moment? There are many answers, but the most accurate one includes the name of John Henry Newman, whose story was intertwined with that of Tolkien. Newman, the author of the *Development of Christian Doctrine*, but above all Newman, the convert who had the courage to fully embrace change in his life under the lead of the *Kindly Light*, was convinced that *"to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often"*. The relationship between Newman and Tolkien, however, is another great and fascinating story...

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Holy Fear

Sr Claire Waddelove OSB explores a concept not always popular today.

The fear of the Lord is not a popular concept in our society.

“The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied” (Acts 9:31).

The fear of the Lord is not a popular concept in our society or even in the Church in this 21st century. Yet it is highly prized and highly praised in Sacred Scripture. It lies at the heart of love of God and neighbour and is the basis of Christian life, the foundation stone of every true spiritual edifice. “Fear God, and keep the commandments; for this is the whole duty of man”, says the Preacher succinctly (Eccles 12:13). Popular understanding of this term is often limited to awe or reverence, but the implications are much deeper and more extensive:

“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good?” (Deut 10:12-13).

Put poetically:

**“Those who fear the Lord will not disobey his words,
and those who love him will keep his ways.
Those who fear the Lord will seek his approval,
and those who love him will be filled with the law.
Those who fear the Lord will prepare their hearts,
and will humble themselves before him” (Sir 2:15-17).**

According to Proverbs, “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil” (8:13) and, equally, lack of fear of the Lord is love of evil:

**“Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;
there is no fear of God before his eyes.
For he flatters himself in his own eyes
that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.
The words of his mouth are mischief and deceit;
he has ceased to act wisely and do good.
He plots mischief while on his bed;
he sets himself in a way that is not good;
he spurns not evil” (Ps 35:1-4).¹**

¹ The psalms are numbered as in the Septuagint, in accordance with ancient Christian usage.

Plentiful blessings are promised to those who fear the Lord.

And more subtly, “He who withdraws kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty” (Job 6:14).

Wisdom

This holy fear is markedly associated with wisdom: it is “the beginning of wisdom”, “wisdom’s full measure”, “the crown of wisdom” (Sir 1:14, 16, 18). This wisdom is not merely intellectual knowledge, but divine guidance directing a man’s steps; it is dependent on a good heart, the keeping of the commandments and faithfulness to God (See Proverbs 2:1-15).

Plentiful blessing are promised to those who fear the Lord, summed up in this line “O how abundant is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for those who fear thee” (Ps 30:19), to quote one of many such texts in the Psalms. And,

**“The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation,
and gladness and a crown of rejoicing.
The fear of the Lord delights the heart,
and gives gladness and joy and long life.
With him who fears the Lord it will go well at the end;
on the day of his death he will be blessed” (Sir 1:11-13).**



The Angel Hinders the Offering of Isaac, by Rembrandt

Thus it is for our own good that we are to fear the Lord. All our blessedness lies in loving submission to God’s will, which is the essence of this holy fear. It can be tested severely. Abraham was commended for his obedience in being willing to sacrifice Isaac, “Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me” (Gen 22:2). Job was also praised for this quality in the face of devastating calamities. “The Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him, to destroy him without cause’” (Job 2:3).

Behaviour

Incidents in Scripture which show an absence of fear of the Lord are not lacking. We can think, for example of the two sons of Heli the priest, whose incorrigibly bad behaviour earned them a violent death at the hands of the Philistines (1Sam 2:22-25; 3:13-14), and the fate of Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar for lifting themselves up against God (Dan 5:18-30).

In the New Testament, the good thief on Calvary rebukes his complaining companion, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong” (Lk 23:40-41). In the Acts of the Apostles, we see Ananias and

his wife Sapphira dropping dead at St Peter's rebuke for lying over the proceeds of a sale of their property, "You have not lied to men but to God" (5:1-11), and King Herod's fate for accepting the people's acclamation, "The voice of a god and not of man!" (12:21-23).

A gift

It is the prophet Isaiah who tells us that the fear of the Lord is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, gifts which according to the Catechism are "permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1830). They are infused into the soul at Baptism along with sanctifying grace.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Is 11:1-3 Vulgate).

This text is, of course, a messianic prophecy and is read at Mass during Advent when we are preparing for the coming of Christ. It is upon him that the Spirit rests with his seven-fold gifts. St Bede comments that all of them "remain in our Lord and Redeemer forever"² and that only he receives them in their fullness,³ a doctrine endorsed by the Catechism (1831). If the gift of holy fear was necessary for the perfection of the sacred humanity of the Son of God himself, how much more so is it for us poor sinners. He was "gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29), he "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant ... and became obedient unto death" (Philip 2:6-8). We, on the other hand, all too often fall into the temptation to "be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5).

Pride is an obstacle

Dom Prosper Guéranger, OSB, treating of the gift of fear, asserts, "Pride is the obstacle to man's virtue and wellbeing. It is pride that leads us to resist God, to make self our last end, in a word, to work our own ruin. Humility alone can save us from this terrible danger. Who will give us humility? The Holy Ghost; and this by infusing into us the gift of the fear of God."⁴ If it is lost, there is no longer growth in virtue, but a "conceited self-complacency ... a secret and habitual pride" which paralyses the soul.⁵ In opposition to this, poverty of spirit safeguards the soul, a Beatitude which corresponds

Poverty of spirit safeguards the soul.

to fear, according to St Thomas Aquinas, "the reason being that filial fear is concerned with showing reverence to God and being subject to him. ... Resulting from such submission of self to God is a disinclination to seek glorification in oneself or in any other except God. For this would be irreconcilable with perfect subjection to God. ... Perfect fear of God, then, accounts for the fact that one seeks neither self-exaltation in a spirit of pride nor the eminence that can be gained through exterior goods, such as honours and wealth."⁶

Different

Godly fear is very different from cowardly, worldly fear. Our Lord himself exhorts us, "Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him" (Lk 12:4-5). It is noteworthy that both here and in the parallel passage in St Matthew (10:28), this saying is followed, a few verses later, by Christ's assurance that those who acknowledge him

2. St Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, 1:9. 3. Cf. St Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 1:2. 4. Dom Prosper Guéranger, *The Liturgical Year. Paschaltide Vol III*, Whit Sunday. 5. *Ibid.* 6. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 19, 12.

before men will be acknowledged before his Father, and the warning that those who deny him before men will be denied before his Father. The martyrs have believed and acted upon these words of Jesus. They have not feared those who kill the body; they have feared God, preferring to acknowledge him before men at the cost of their earthly lives, in order to be acknowledged in heaven and live eternally with God.

A contradiction?

Commenting on a verse from Psalm 32, St Augustine has a passage which is equally illustrative of this section of the Gospel: “Let all the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him” (v 8). Let them not fear another instead of him. ... Is a wild beast raging? Fear God. Is a serpent lying in wait? Fear God. Does some man hate you? Fear God. Is the devil attacking you? Fear God. For every created thing is subject to him whom you are bidden to fear.”⁷

St Augustine also addresses the apparent contradiction between 1 Jn 4:18 “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” and Ps 18:10: “The fear of the Lord is chaste, enduring for ever.” Explaining the latter, he writes, “The fear of the Lord is not a slavish but a chaste fear. It loves and looks for no recompense; it fears not punishment from him before whom it trembles, but separation from him whom it loves. This is a chaste fear, not that fear which perfect charity casts out, but enduring forever and ever. Here indeed is the Holy Spirit; or rather, this fear is bestowed, conferred, implanted by the Holy Spirit,”⁸ and fear of the Lord “is a chaste fear which leads the Church to avoid what may offend her Bridegroom with a care that equals her burning love for him. Now perfect love does not cast out this fear which abides for ever.”⁹

In Heaven

It is the teaching of the Church that the blessed in heaven will not be without fear of God. St Thomas Aquinas asserts that “blessedness consists in utter submission to God ... The defect implied in fear is rooted in the very nature of the creature, its infinite remoteness from God, and so is one that will continue in heaven. Fear will not entirely pass away, then.” In the meantime, St Paul bids us to “make holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1).

So let us strive to persevere in the humble fear of trustful love, which will lead to the possession of the Beloved in eternity.

**“Those who fear the Lord,
wait for his mercy;
and turn not aside lest you fall.
You who fear the Lord, trust in him
and your reward will not fail;
You who fear the Lord,
hope for good things,
for everlasting joy and mercy”
(Sir 2:7-9)**



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7. St Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps 32, 3rd Discourse, 12. 8. St Augustine, *ibid*, Ps 18, 2nd Discourse, 10.

9. St Augustine, *ibid*, Ps 18, 1st Discourse, 10. 10. The regional Council of Sens (1140) attested this when condemning Abelard's contrary error: Mansi, t.xxi., col. 569. 11. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 19, 11 ad 3.



Edward Holloway

Holloway on...

Holiness in the Twenty-First Century

Part 2

In this FAITH editorial from September 1986 Fr Holloway contrasted the early Christians' joyful embrace of the Church's demanding moral teachings, with those dissenters from the Magisterium in the post-conciliar years who saw these high standards like fences in a horse race which were too difficult to jump. He identifies the theological roots of such relativism but also sees the Truth prevailing in the future.

If the reader is one of those who flinch before the appalling holiness of the early Christians, especially before their total chastity in marriage or out of marriage, let him face one stark fact: This is the Church of the original face of Christ. For three hundred years it was weeded and decimated by bloody persecution and loss of goods. Its testimony is that of men and women, and children too, who truly loved God in the Christ, and witnessed what they knew to be the absolute, and the necessary holy human life of men and women redeemed in the flesh of Jesus the Lord, living members of His risen body. These were men and women formed by God Incarnate more fully, and more deeply than ever any human founder of a religious order formed his or her disciples.

When present writers derogate from the authority in matters of love and chastity of St. Augustine, let them remember that this was the Church which recognised the teaching of Augustine as its own and re-endorsed it, at the very time that the disciples of Pelagius were

first teaching those 'dissident' views that can [now] be read in the intellectual Catholic press every week. For the same teaching on love and chastity we can go back earlier to the witness of Justin Martyr, and to the 'Octavius' of Minucius Felix. There is no doubting here that the only primary and truly perfect use of human procreative power is for the peopling of heaven and earth, in communion with the most pure creative love of Christ.

Heresies of Hedonism

Two principles of error in particular (though there are others) mark present derogation from the Church's traditional and Apostolic doctrine of chastity in the human person. One of them, interestingly enough, is found in the Pelagians against whom Augustine battled. The denial of Original Sin as a true fall from harmonious order between body and soul, in response to God's will, and the denial of the distinction in our human nature of soul and body, spirit and matter. If these two errors are linked, there is then found the basis for a convenient and utterly destructive hedonism. If matter and spirit are only one order of being and nature, then you can insist that the affection of loving is just one, linked and commingling experience of joy and pleasure. If the joy of spirit in the love of a deep and good partner, boy or girl, brings with it the delight of tenderness in caress and touch, you may accept it all as one. If the same 'twin' joys prompt and bring in genital arousal as well, - you may accept all three together as one affect, one 'loving' one total experience. And this is the modern lie. And once it is embraced, and it is, then you can no more forbid personal solitary perversion, homosexuality, or pre-marital sex than you can forbid all fornication or all adultery. Loving, in body and soul, and in all aspects of the bodily, has become one undivided pleasurable experience. And God help the children in such an age.

The other root of error, in denying Original Sin as a real lesion and damage to man's nature, denies that there is any preordained 'natural' law between the function of sexuality, and its obvious primary consequence - the child - and that wisdom of the soul that controls and dictates the order of rightfulness or wrongfulness in sexual use. These people fail to see, or will not see, that nature below man is not a haphazard coupling of desire but a seasonal harmony of times and seasons, governed by a Law of Control and Direction within the fabric of Nature herself. In man, the role of the spirit, was, and in Jesus Christ still is, to recognise that law of primary purpose, time, and season, and divine intent; and on the much, much higher level of human love, govern its times and its seasons in accordance with the will of God, and the order of goodness witnessed in His name by the Church. The perfect order of grace does not merely submit to the law of God's rightfulness witnessed by the Church in Christ's name. It goes further; as men and women become more perfectly formed in grace they personally recognise and accept, from the formation in them of the mind of Christ - that this is indeed the order of perfect good, human happiness, and beautiful loving.

Things Hidden from the Clever and Learned

There are those of us who know, and frankly know from experience in the Faith groups - but also out of them - that it is possible in the modern world to form boys and girls, married men and women, in the perfect love that the early Christians lived and taught; in the honest love that the Church's doctrine of sexual communion imposes upon men and women of today, in the solemn though controverted proclamations of the Popes, from Pius XI to the reigning bishop of Rome [Paul VI]. In addition we know that it also is possible to evoke, in young men and women the

vision of the higher love of total chastity for the Kingdom of God's sake. This order of love and of affection in ministry and in communion reflects most perfectly on earth the actual living of human love as Jesus himself lived it, as Mary, Virgin and Mother and Nun, lived it. This is the highest order of human love, and is the relationship to God and to men most fulfilling, even in this present life, in love, and in human communion.

In the more intractable pains and problems that can haunt womanhood, even in our own times of great power within medicine to help and to heal, one can make the point to the husband of whom very much indeed is being asked, that no spouse was more considerate before the truth and will of God, than was Joseph, husband of Mary. Nor was any husband more fulfilled in God, and in the deepest happiness of married life. Love, true human love (and Man was made to the Image of Christ), is so much more than genital sexuality; and the loss of erotic delight does not entail the loss of joy in the communion of love, nor in human warmth, and in tenderness exchanged. Indeed, one knows as a pastoral priest that the problems hinted at above do occur, and that 'natural methods of family planning' cannot always be the answer for a multitude of reasons. One knows from confidences in every parish that there are ordinary, simple, devout Catholic men, living through faith in God and his grace, just that attitude and standard that one has outlined above. They have also found in this 'gracious' achievement a more perfect, and more faithful love in marriage. Don't be afraid of the fences, don't be afraid of the doctrine of Jesus, and don't demean the noble perceptions and possibilities of ordinary people! It is the ordinary people who rise to great heights - because they rely on grace and God's word, and not on themselves. It was these people, the 'little ones' over whom Christ exulted that His Father had revealed these things to them, and hidden them from so many of the literary correspondents of *The Tablet* and the writers of the opinion columns of all the popular media!



Body and Soul

If matter and spirit, body and soul, are distinct orders of reality in human nature, and not just distinct aspects of one common energy, then this important truth will follow: until the end of time, there will be no difference between Adam and the last boy or girl born of woman in the law of holiness, good, and moral perfection, as it applies to the use and the enjoyment of the body. Man's nature is an absolute - in the sense of being final, objective, and fixed in its law of good and perfection. The body may have evolved - it seems much more likely that it did - but not the soul. In nature the soul is no different in the

first man and in the last of mankind. The soul, in its relationship to the flesh, and in its relationship to itself and to God, will mediate to the flesh the same one law of good, true and right proportion in the uses of the functions of the body, and the enjoyment of the natural pleasures of the body. The spirit in man is not only their ruler, but into the higher, harmonious peace with God of the spirit, must all the innocent pleasures of the flesh be integrated.

The effect of sin, of a spiritual disobedience to God, is to bring greeds, coarseness, addictive drives, and arrogance into the flesh and into the spirit in mankind. True, the Old Testament knew an easier morality of sexual unity and divorce, but it was not the one good order of God. It was of sin. 'For the hardness of your hearts', said Jesus the Christ, 'Moses gave you that law, but from the beginning it was not so', and he revoked it (Matt. 19.5). Humankind had been on earth a long time, even in the days of Jesus Christ, and Jesus did not presume that the progressives of his day had evolved a long way from that beginning - all the way in fact from monogamy to divorce. He talked about fall, sin, hardness of heart, and restoration. But then, Jesus knew He was more than a guru.

Roots of Relativism

Observe how error works in the theologian or lay person who does not admit a real distinction of matter and of spirit. For them there is an evolution of personality in mankind, the personality of a being who is one energy of matter and spirit. It is clear that this personality has 'evolved' somehow to free, intellectual and 'spiritual' knowledge. It is clear that in a large number of humans at least, there is the choice of a known good and of an altruistic, non-instinctual love. It is presumed that in this one, undifferentiated personality of 'man', the whole of the affective life evolves together as well. Therefore, spiritual love, tender love, erotic love, these are all aspects of just one affect: erotic pleasure, therefore, is not primarily or necessarily related to family and child, but to a 'unitive' personal fulfilment of one individual to another.

One dare not here begin to develop so lengthy a theme, but the reader will see at once that on this philosophy and theology of loving, there is no possible prohibition of any sexual 'sin'. In or out of marriage, sexual delight is part of loving: masturbation, homosexuality, paedophilia, all of it will be lawful, inevitable, and 'natural' for the boundaries of the sexual are as wide as, and have one common boundary, with 'love' itself. Neither have such people any power to put a natural law that prevents the utter coarsening of the nature of man from sexual perversion by pornography of every kind. There is no intrinsic law of nature in these matters. When the same philosophy of epicureanism is applied, quite logically, to all pleasures of the flesh as 'pleasure of the person', then the drink and drugs corruption of the young is inevitably upon us.



Magna est Veritas et Praevalebit

We must not be worried if 'Christendom' as an order reflecting one common theology of life and love among Christians is never restored again among Christians. There could be such a restoration, but it would be as partial and imperfect as that of the Middle Ages; it will never be the social reflection of the Kingdom of God and His Christ. In the Middle Ages, they had no power over the process of procreation, but there was grinding cruelty, torture, lust, and the plagues that follow from human coarseness in living. For even the total lack of hygiene in human society is a reflection of human concupiscence and greed. Animals do better in their order of habitat. The cruelties and coarseness of medieval sin infected the Church, and her unity of secular and sacred. She still bears the reproach. In the last century as well, the blight of drunkenness, child misuse, and abuse of womanhood was rife among the poor. They were so poor because of the vices of power and greed in the better off. It was not the Kingdom of God. It was marginally less evil as an order, because at least it would have been horrified by mass abortion and destruction of the morals of the child by modern newspapers, TV, and pornographic paperbacks in every sub-Post Office.

As the power of man over the procreative function becomes more absolute, as the power to separate pleasure from function becomes more absolute... we must expect the pride and evil of the First Heresy (Genesis 2:17 quoted) to be more terribly manifest. There may be, at least for a short time, a revival of Christendom as the social aspect of a revival of Christianity. This writer confidently thinks there will be. We should not, however, rely on that or rest in that. The Kingdom of God is first of all the rallying of good men and women, boys and girls, around the beauty of God revealed in Jesus: there is the Supernatural (and for man the only 'natural') order of good, true, and happiness. This is the Good News, to respond with

a gasp of joy to the full, true vision of love in the face of Christ; the joy of responding to the sheer beauty of personality it creates in good boys, girls, and youths. For a priest it is the supreme joy, apart from losing oneself in Christ at the moment of the Mass. The supreme joy is to tend such a noble love in the young, to feel and share it, and to know in its delight, that it is born of the mutual love of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. This is the love which is the Gospel and the Good Tidings of Great Joy. Don't play it down; don't be afraid of it, and teach its laws as a law of happiness!

There comes to mind the testimony of a good boy, a reasonably good boy, who was recounting the loss of his virginity with a girl who was no saint but only reasonably good as he was: 'and as soon as it was over, I knew, we both knew, we had been utterly selfish, and I was miserable before God'. Conscience itself responds to the Good News of God's right order of truth in fulfilment. Till the end of time, the Personality of Jesus will gather boys and girls, young men and maidens, the mature, and the old and venerable around this enormous, eternal, abiding Joy in God. 'Fear not little flock: it has pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom: in the world you will have distress, but fear not, I have overcome the world' (John 16.23). *Magna est veritas, et praevalerebit*, said the ancients: Mighty is Truth, and It will prevail. From the book of Genesis to *Humanae Vitae* (which actually was the end of the Council!) it has prevailed. The Bible is not the witness of the majority, but of the Word that saves the majority. Don't be afraid of the fences!

Fr Edward Holloway (1917-99) was a parish priest in the South of England and the author of *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* and other theological and philosophical works. He was the editor of this magazine for 22 years and the founder of the Faith Movement.



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From Across the Pond...

Fr Peter Stravinskas with reflections from the USA



Church/State relations

Anecdotal evidence informs us that a record number of American bishops and priests spoke with total clarity regarding the matters at stake in the election of 2020. Even if their counsel did not bear the hoped-for fruit, we should recall the wise and holy observation of St. Mother Teresa: “God does not call us to be successful, only faithful.”

All that said, now that Joe Biden has prevailed, what can the Church expect?

- **All the pro-life gains of the past three years will be eviscerated.**
- **The Little Sisters of the Poor, EWTN, and a host of other faith-based groups will be back in court, doing a rearguard action to defend their religious liberty – and that of us all.**
- **Our Catholic schools will not only have to be reconciled with the death of any and all parental freedom of choice initiative,¹ but can count on massively intrusive regulations designed to make our institutions carbon copies of the godless government schools, especially as that relates to human sexuality.**

¹ It may surprise many in the UK to learn that Catholic schools in America receive no financial assistance from the government. Various “school choice” initiatives over the past forty years have sought to remedy that injustice. Republicans consistently favor such programs, while Democrats oppose them.

In short, we must be prepared for the Church's exile into a catacomb existence. That said, we cannot – and will not – reconcile ourselves to such an existence. In an absolutely unprecedented move on the part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), a special commission was established to deal with what the hierarchy see as major points of contention which will emerge between the Church and the Biden Administration.

Hymns and things

The Committee on Doctrine of the USCCB completed work in September 2020 on a document dealing with the doctrinal content (or lack thereof) in hymns used in the Sacred Liturgy, released recently under the title of "Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church: An Aid for Evaluating Hymn Lyrics."² The document is a damning critique of the harmful diet many Catholics have been fed by the liturgical establishment of the past half-century. It should be noted that this text deals only with doctrinal concerns, not the musical quality of hymns, which is a different (but not unrelated) element for consideration.³

I deem this "guide" a long-awaited response to an alarm I sounded way back in 1999 when I wrote to the late-Cardinal Francis George of Chicago about the content in many hymns published in the Paluch Missalette. My reason for appealing to Cardinal George was that Paluch is located in the Archdiocese of Chicago and their publica-

tions carried the assurance that they were produced with ecclesiastical approbation. The Cardinal replied to my query on December 14 in detail. Among other points, he said that Paluch indicated that "all of their Missalette materials are reviewed by the Secretariat for the Liturgy at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops." However, he went to say that, according to the policy of that office, "no official approbation is required for hymns, songs and acclamations written for the assembly." In a hand-written note at the bottom of the page, he assured me that he intended to "take [my] letter to the BCL (Bishops Committee on the Liturgy)."

How bizarre that the lyrics of hymns used in the Sacred Liturgy would not be subject to review. Was that a function of the laziness of personnel at the BCL? Was it passively to allow these harmful texts to poison the spirituality of Catholics in the pews? Was it their suspicion/awareness that 'the Deep Church' which included the liturgical publishers would not heed their interventions?

Hans Urs von Balthasar linked truth, beauty and goodness, referring to them as "three sisters."⁴ While the musical quality of hymns deals with beauty, the lyrics deal with truth. Hymnody is one of the most significant ways the truths of the Faith are taught and reinforced. The fourth-century heretic Arius knew this and so committed his heresies to singable ditties for the consumption of the people.⁵ In "Only the Good Die Young," Billy Joel pilloried "you Catholic girls" because "you start much too late" (that is, sexual

2. My impression is that this is not as serious a problem in the UK as in the US, however, I have no doubt that the American virus has also infected British liturgical life, at least to some degree. Of course, if we had adhered to the norm set by the Fathers of Vatican II, namely, the primacy of Gregorian Chant, we would not have any of these problems.

3. For a depressing documentation of this situation, the barn-burner of Thomas Day is a must-read (or re-read): *Why Catholics Can't Sing*.

4. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), Volume I, 18.

5. "Arius...devised a brilliant plan: publish prose and verse to carry his heresy. He wrote his heretical songs and poems in a book called Thalia ("banquet") and passed it along to travelers and workmen. The heresy spread like fire. The Arian heresy reached into the life of the Church, plagued the political system, and found a home in the theology of many Christians." (Brady Raccanello, "The Church: Arius the Heretic," Clay, 13 November 2017, Retrieved from: <https://clay.at-tps.org/2017/11/13/the-church-arius-the-heretic/>)

activity) – a 1970s version of “shaming” through song. Put simply: Attention to what we sing is not an exercise in nit-picking.

Now, we are poised to cull the evaluations of the doctrine committee. The document begins by linking truth and beauty, following the logic of von Balthasar. In fact, even the title of the paper is instructive: “Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church.” Sometimes one could get the impression that one wag got it right by asking, “Is it ‘What’s the place of music in the liturgy’ or is it, ‘What’s the place of liturgy in the music?’” And so, we are reminded: “There is a necessary and direct relationship between the living Word of God and the Church’s worship. Thus, the sacred texts, and the liturgical sources which draw on the living Word, provide something of a ‘norm’ for expression when communicating the mystery of faith in liturgical poetics, or hymnody.” Calling on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (which, in turn, is having recourse to Vatican II’s Sacrosanctum Concilium), the text teaches:

The harmony of signs (song, music, words, and actions) is all the more expressive and fruitful when expressed in the cultural richness of the People of God who celebrate. Hence “religious singing by the faithful is to be intelligently fostered so that in devotions and sacred exercises as well as in liturgical services,” in conformity with the Church’s norms, “the voices of the faithful may be heard.” But “the texts intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine. Indeed they should be drawn chiefly from Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources.” (1158)

In the bishops’ document, we are reminded that “Christian tradition, both Eastern and Western, has from antiquity been acutely aware that hymns and other songs are among the most significant forces in shaping – or misshaping – the religious and theological sensibility of the faithful,” as we have already seen. With that in mind, the document lays out “two general guidelines” for evaluating hymns:

- 1. Is the hymn in conformity with Catholic doctrine?**
- 2. Is the hymn expressed in image and vocabulary appropriately reflective of the usage of Scripture and the public liturgical prayer of the Church?**

These two standards are designed to support the liturgy as what the Catechism calls “the privileged place for catechizing the People of God” (1074). Hence, the bishops warn:



It is important to avoid language that could be easily misconstrued in a way that is contrary to Catholic doctrine. The poet always has a certain “licence” for language chosen to serve an aesthetic purpose. But in assessing whether a paraphrase or restatement is an appropriate use of poetic license or an inappropriate distortion, Guideline 2 can provide assistance.

While the direction given is quite needed, it is regrettable that, not only in this instance, but frequently throughout the document, one finds the expression, “to be avoided.” If a text is theologically problematic, it should not be “avoided”; it should be banned.

The paper grounds its critiques in a 1997 document of the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism, under the direction of the late Archbishop Daniel Buechlein, which “identified a consistent trend of incompleteness and imprecision in catechetical texts being published at that time in the United States,” in ten “categories.”⁶ The current committee “piggy-backs” on those same categories in their review “of approximately 1000 hymns composed and published mostly in the period 1980-2015.”

The first area of concern, with the most egregious errors, involves Eucharistic doctrine – not surprisingly since that area also reveals the most distressing data about present beliefs of even regular Sunday Mass Catholics. And so, the bishops refer to deficiencies in this area as “by far the most common and the most serious.” Their observation demands heeding their full assessment:

Catholics nurtured on a steady diet of certain hymns will learn from them that at Mass we come together to share bread and wine, which remain bread and wine, a common meal, even if under special circumstances. They will learn that the bread and wine signify in some vague way the presence of Jesus, but they will not be given a basis to understand the Catholic belief that the Eucharistic elements can be worshipped because under their appearance is a wholly unique, substantial presence of Christ. These hymns correspondingly also downplay or eliminate entirely reference to the Sacrifice of Christ, His Priesthood, and His status as both Priest and Victim, as well as to the role of the ministerial priesthood in the Church. A steady diet of these hymns would erode Catholic sensibility regarding the fullness of Eucharistic teaching, on the Mass as Sacrifice, and eventually on the Church, as formed by that Sacrifice.

Couldn't have said it better myself!



⁶ It is good to report that, as a result of Archbishop Buechlein's committee, one would be hard-pressed to find any deficiencies in any catechetical texts in use today.

The report takes particular aim at the recurring reference to the Eucharistic Species as “bread and wine” and names names. Some of these gems of Eucharistic heresy: “God Is Here! We Are His People” – “This hymn speaks of ‘symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace.’ We hear that, ‘as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.’ Bread and wine are still bread and wine.” “All Are Welcome” would have a congregation sing these inspiring words: “Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat; A banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet ...” After gagging, theological reality hits, as the document notes:

Someone who sings this song frequently would have a hard time imagining that the Eucharist can be and is worshipped or is in any sense a “sacrifice.” The hymn is also objectionable throughout on ecclesiological grounds as well, since it repeats the phrase “Let us build a house ...” as though our actions make the Church. This hymn shows the relationship between faulty Eucharistic theology and faulty ecclesiology.

Trinitarian doctrine in many “contemporary” hymns is also “deficient,” reflected most clearly in “a reluctance to use ‘Father’ for the First Person of the Trinity.” Here, the bishops are being kind; I would replace “reluctance” with “refusal.” Calling the First Person “Creator” is a reductionist effort since all three Persons can be called “Creator.” Needless to say, the ham-fisted attempt to avoid masculine pronouns for the Divinity is the surest sign of a non-biblical understanding of the Holy Trinity. We are also reminded of the directive of Liturgiam Authenticam and the follow-up instruction of Cardinal Francis Arinze in 2008 that “Yahweh” is not to be used in Catholic worship since it was (and for Jews, still is) the unspeakable Name.

A third problematic area involves “deficiencies in the doctrine of God and His relations to humans,” most manifest in hymns that conflate the Godhead with His creation, which is to say, the divine transcendence. A most extreme example of this is found in “God Beyond All Names.” First of all, there are many names for God, which are revealed in Sacred Scripture. This song, however, goes a step farther and would have us sing: “God Beyond All Names ... All around us we have known you / All creation lives to hold you/ In our living and our dying/ we are bringing you to birth.” Huh? We hold God? We bring God to birth?

Fourthly, the bishops zero in on “a view of the Church that sees her as essentially a human construction.” Here the document brings to our attention two pieces:

“Sing a New Church” – Refrain: “Sing a new Church into being, one in faith and love and praise.” This implies or even states outright that the Church is essentially our creation. It also leaves open the possibility that there could be a new Church replacing the old one.

“As a Fire is Meant for Burning” – Verse 1: “As a fire is meant for burning, With a bright and warming flame, So the Church is meant for mission, Giving glory to God’s name. Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care, We join hands across the nations, finding neighbors everywhere.” This seems a seriously deficient account of the evangelizing mission of the Church, particularly, the rejection of preaching “our creeds and customs.”

Fifthly, the text calls attention to “hymns with doctrinally incorrect views of the Jewish people.” This deficiency is rather odd since one would assume that would-be “Vatican II Catholics” would almost bend over backwards to accommodate religious

differences. However, not a few of the post-conciliar tunes have views of Jewish complicity in the death of Our Lord that would make the Fathers of Trent blush (e.g., “The Lord of the Dance”).⁷

Lastly, we meet “hymns with incorrect Christian anthropology.” This section, in my estimation, is the weakest of all as I believe that dozens of “contemporary” songs betray a defective notion of the human person; in fact, many of them come to us through the Protestant charismatic movement. Here we must recall that Martin Luther’s basic issue with the Church was not theology, per se, but a view of the human person. Thus would he proclaim that humanity is nothing more than a “massa damnata” and the individual Christian merely “a dunghill covered by snow.” Sacred Scripture, on the other hand, proclaims that a Christian is “a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). Therefore, for my money, the biggest offender in promoting an “incorrect Christian anthropology” is none other than the “go-to” hymn for all kinds of disasters,

“Amazing Grace,” by the English clergyman, John Newton, wherein we are to sing of the God who “saved a wretch like me.” Wrong, a baptized Christian is not “a wretch”; he is precisely what St. Paul asserts, namely, “a new creation”⁸; even more, we are Our Lord’s “friends” (John 15:15).

The report ends with a fine summary of what this effort has been about:

The Second Vatican Council was quite emphatic about the importance of sacred music in the Church’s liturgical worship: “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 112). The Council also made it clear that this great value derives precisely from the union of music and words: “The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy” (n. 112). When the Council exhorts composers to “produce compositions which have the qualities proper to genuine sacred music” (n. 121), chief among these qualities must be the use of words that are appropriate for liturgical worship.

7. Thus, the so-called *Roman Catechism* (produced in response to the call of the Council of Trent) teaches: Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the Cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts.... *Our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews.* As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” We, however, profess to know Him. And when we deny Him by our deed, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on Him. (emphasis added)

8. It is probably more than accidental that the remote motivation for Newton’s composition of “Amazing Grace” was his gratitude for having been saved from shipwreck – not unlike Luther’s vow to become a monk, were he to be saved from a life-threatening storm. The lesson might be that we ought not to forge a theology out of perilous circumstances.

A final assessment: This is a most welcome contribution to the life of the Church in the United States, however – and it's a big "however" – this is, in all likelihood, too little too late. From my initial expression of alarm to Cardinal George in 1999, we find ourselves over two decades later with a document that, most regrettably, has no teeth in it – there is no enforcement mechanism. As a result, the people guilty of these abuses will just say, "Thanks, but no thanks," and move along on their merry way, continuing their ecological pollution of Catholic worship. This paper will be helpful, however, for embattled laity and priests at least as an authoritative document with which to push forward the battering ram of opposition to these heretical texts.⁹

Life in Lockdown

When the pandemic first struck, American bishops were among the first to close down operations. I suspect that this was done for two reasons: first, better to do it on your own, rather than appear to cower before governmental action; second, to avoid law suits over "wrongful death" or "reckless endangerment" allegations.¹⁰ With the passage of time, not a few priests and bishops began to resist the draconian demands, even going so far as to the Supreme Court of the country (where satisfaction was won). While reasonable governmental requests for the sake of public health are not problematic, demands made without any scientific data behind them or inconsistent policies treating religion as "non-essential," can and should be resisted.

Pastors who kept their churches open (even if not offering public Masses) for Eucharistic Adoration, who continued to administer the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick, and who were available for counseling and spiritual direction, have had no difficulties in returning to normalcy. Let's be clear: those were generally parishes that were vibrant before the onslaught of the Wuhan virus. On the other hand, parishes on life-support prior to the plague (most often due to clerical sloth), will in all likelihood never recover. Interestingly, American Catholics who tend to express their approval or disapproval of parochial life through the Sunday collection have spoken loud and clear in this instance as well. Anecdotal data coming to me reveal that one priest



9. Four appendices are included: Archbishop Buechlein's "ten common deficiencies in catechetical materials"; a summary of Catholic teaching on the Eucharistic Presence, on the Trinity, and on the Church's doctrine on the Jews in regard to the death of Christ (all gleaned from the Catechism of the Catholic Church).

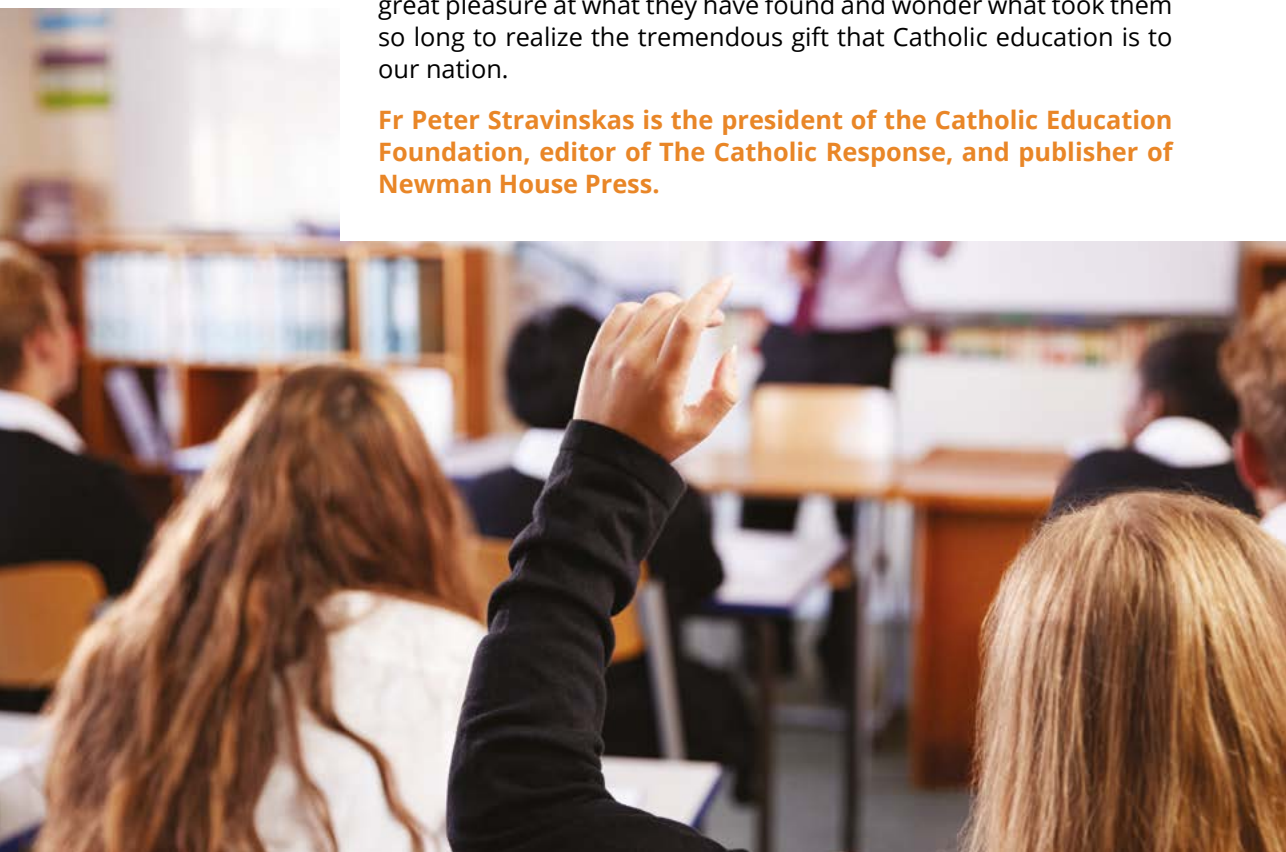
10. Americans are notoriously litigious, so it is not inconceivable that a gentleman who hadn't darkened the door of his aged grandmother since his First Holy Communion would sue the Church for causing Granny's death from Covid since the Church remained open and she attended.

experienced a 36% increase in giving over the same time period a year earlier; another had a Christmas collection of \$40,000 (three times that of Christmas 2019); while yet another almost had to be taken to hospital on Christmas morning after receiving a check for \$150,000 (with a note thanking him for tending to the needs of his flock in less-than-optimal conditions).

Catholic schools also made the news as nearly all our schools remained open for full, in-person education – while most of the government schools settled for “virtual” instruction (and many of those districts couldn’t even get their act together for that little bit for weeks or months). What has made the difference? Our teachers are with us out of conviction, taking as much as a 40-50% cut in salary from the so-called “public” school scale.¹¹ The public school teachers’ unions are all-powerful (they certainly helped get Biden elected) and mightily pushed back against in-person classes. As a result, many dioceses witnessed unparalleled enrollment increases since parents most definitely want their children in school.¹²

While this is welcome news, I have also cautioned principals to be careful about taking in too many students from the government sector, lest the ethos of the Catholic school be compromised because the government schools are well-known for lack of discipline, lower academic achievement, and – needless to say – promotion of immoral behavior. On the other hand, not a few Catholic school administrators inform that the new parents have expressed great pleasure at what they have found and wonder what took them so long to realize the tremendous gift that Catholic education is to our nation.

Fr Peter Stravinskis is the president of the Catholic Education Foundation, editor of *The Catholic Response*, and publisher of Newman House Press.



POEM

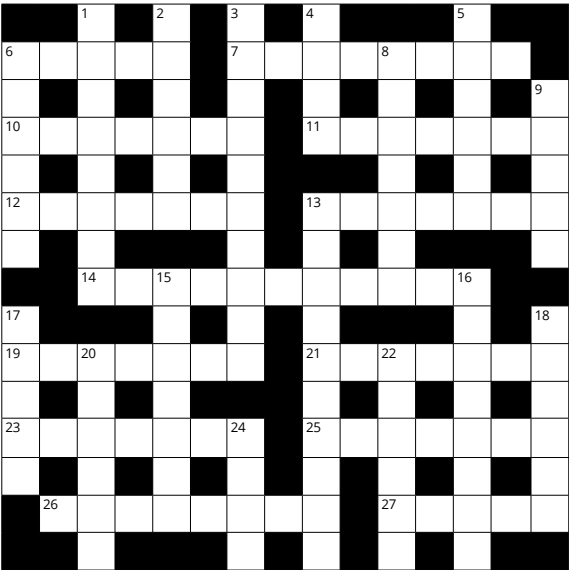
Ash Wednesday

by A. Hill

This day drear, once a year,
Warns us all that Lent is here.
What to end? Alms to send,
What timely task to intend?
What is meant, every Lent
By a purpose to repent?
Why the fast? Will it last?
Can I make up for the past?
Will I dare, now to wear,
Cloth of sack or shirt of hair?
Or will I, with a sigh,
Merely act as years gone by?
Forswear sweets, transfer treats,
Talk of taking more retreats?
Hasten still, passed the ill,
Those to whom my heart is chill?
To purge sin, search within,
Find excuses wearing thin.
Self control, aids the soul,
But it does not make it whole;
That's achieved, saints believed,
By the one who's undeceived.
This Lent strive, be alive,
Then you need no Tuesday shrive.
Let it cost, leisure lost,
Hands held out and bridges crossed,
In this way, as you pray,
You'll draw nearer Easter Day.

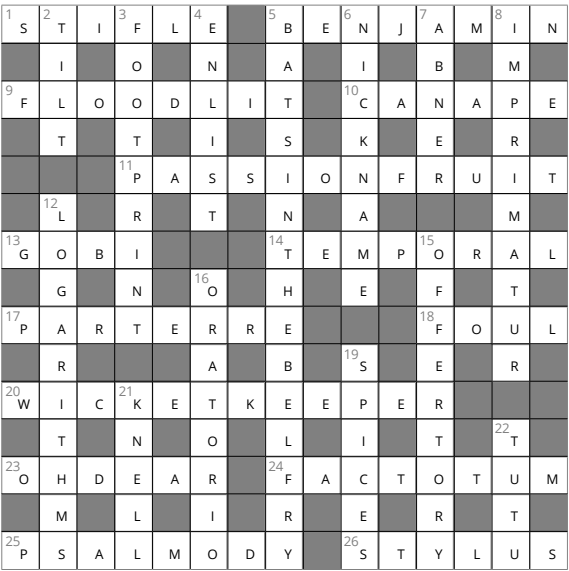
Crossword 27
by Aurora Borealis

We invite you to complete this crossword.
The clues in bold involve general religious knowledge.
The others are cryptic clues with secular answers.



A prize will go to the sender of the first correct solution opened by April 1st 2021. Entries may be the original page or a photocopy. Entries should be sent to 45 East St. Helen Street, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 5EE. Please include your full postal address.

The winner of Crossword 26 was A.H. of Wallington.

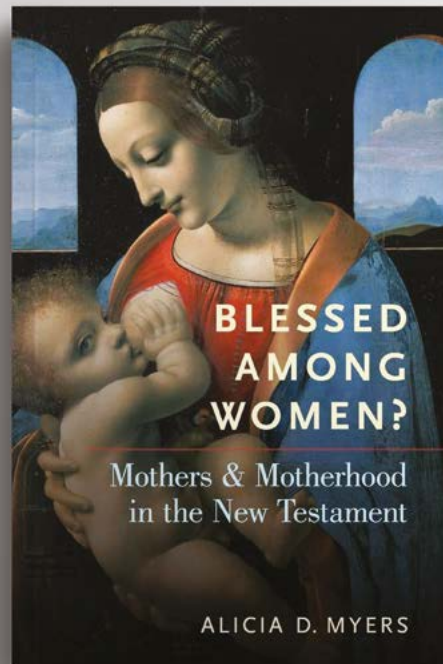


Across

- 6. And I, an Athenian, produce a goddess! (5)
- 7. Doctor, pc, let out one in eight (8)
- 10. In effect, inside factory (2,5)
- 11. Short general prayer occurring in the Mass (7)**
- 12. Fifty one goes into coins for customers (7)
- 13. Describing the shape of the rounded east end of a church (7)**
- 14. Without one, secure and lock witch (11)
- 19. Last of crew, oarsmen get keep fit equipment (7)
- 21. Closed pit in the east makes one's name put forward (7)
- 23. Press most of extra material for mineral (4,3)
- 25. Surname of Paul VI (7)**
- 26. Dora has one snake - people scattered! (8)
- 27. Minor Old Testament prophet (5)**

Down

- 1. Fifty percent biography, a measure of decay (4-4)
- 2. Tintin could produce dance (3-3)
- 3. Recipients of a letter from Paul (10)**
- 4. Love twitch of the ear (4)
- 5. Finale comes after supporter said to be a great guy! (6)
- 6. Arrive at outskirts of Deepdene with Italian nobleman (6)
- 8. Chapel is sexton's place to hide coat (7)
- 9. A tax on coral ring (5)
- 13. Adherent to a moral theory which rejects obedience to laws (10)**
- 15. If you're in this, you're in league (7)
- 16. International body infiltrates small port (8)
- 17. These two never meet (5)
- 18. He has atomic number two (6)
- 20. Orthodox art is emblematic (6)
- 22. Place mike on top of decapitated fruit tomorrow (6)
- 24. Cupid gets sore back (4)



Blessed Among Women? Mothers and Motherhood in the New Testament
by Alicia Myers

Oxford University Press
240pp
£19.99 Paperback
£79.00 Hardback

Was Mary inferior?

Review by Pia Matthews

The premise of this book by Alicia Myers is not new. Myers argues that maternal language in Scripture, particularly in the New Testament, the Pastoral Epistles, and non-canonical early Christian literature is not merely imagery or metaphor. Rather, maternal language is both theological and exposes the debates over gender identity for Christ-followers. This premise builds on authors who have already shown that maternal language is theological. What is new is the way in which Myers uses what she calls a 'gender-critical lens' aided by her extensive knowledge of ancient medical and philosophical literatures to uncover gender identity debates and to explore how gender constructions inform theology.

According to Myers, gender analysis uncovers an ambivalence towards mothers and motherhood that was common in the ancient Mediterranean world and replicated in the New Testament and early Christian non-canonical literature. However, at the same time Myers argues that the New Testament offers differing paths of discipleship where motherhood is not the only or even desired option as it is in non-Christian ancient literatures.

'Audience criticism'

Myers wants to move away from problematic understandings, for instance that the masculine is the perfect or that salvation is a process of masculinization, or that motherhood is the mark of salvation for women. She challenges the notions, persisting she argues into contemporary western societies, that motherhood represents ideal womanhood as submissive to husbands, and is both a proper 'choice' and aspect of personal fulfilment for women; fatherhood is showing masculinity by controlling women.

Myers investigates Hellenistic and early Roman texts as well as Aristotelian and Hippocratic texts, notably texts related to medicine and biology. Rather than claiming a relationship of dependence between these non-Christian texts and early Christian writings, Myers explains that she uses 'audience criticism', a method that attempts to locate ancient expectations to understand better the New Testament. Myers acknowledges the limitations of her methodology in attempting to recreate the conceptual world of her ancient audience. Nevertheless, she concludes that her analysis repeatedly shows ambivalence toward mothers and motherhood that is grounded in a larger suspicion of woman in the ancient world.

Female redundancy and deficiency?

The term ambivalence perhaps characterises the book. While Myers argues that early Christian writings offer different paths to discipleship, and those paths are allegiance to Christ rather than husbands, she maintains that there is still inferiority of all things female. Women remain problematic because they can never be truly masculine. Myers observes that these new paths of discipleship may have emerged from a sense of the immi-

nent return of Christ, but they also suggest the redundancy of biological reproduction and reflect the problematic presence of female believers. Myers asserts that by prioritizing God's household over all other biological and kinship relationships and eventually reassigning mother activities to the Mother Church, the divine male paterfamilias reinforces female submission. Moreover, by male appropriation of maternal activity, notably through using breast feeding as an imagery for Christian teaching, teaching given by Jesus and male disciples, masculinity may have been reframed but it still perpetuates the equation of perfection and masculinity. On the one hand, Myers claims that early Christian writings reproduce the dominant gendered narrative, yet Jesus presses against this because of his antifamilial sayings, his willingness to suffer for others, and his call to discipleship that is not predicated on simply having children. On the other hand, Myers argues that this still affirms female deficiency.

Presuppositions

Although Myers takes a fairly rigorous approach to her non-Christian texts, her chosen methodology does not allow her to interrogate her scriptural texts, and her treatment of these texts therefore seems simply to act as supports for her presuppositions rather than the result of deeper research. Notably, when Myers explores themes in John's Gospel she dismisses any other interpretation than the one supporting her thesis. So, for instance, John's account of the conception and birth of Jesus and the dialogue between Jesus and Mary at the wedding at Cana serve only to indicate how Jesus's biological mother is kept at a distance. There is no reflection on deeper theological interpretations.

Sometimes Myers makes rather tenuous claims to press forward her argument, especially her contention that maternal

bodies are theology, yet the literal roles of women are downplayed or appropriated by males. For instance, she admits that John's Gospel does not use the language that she relies on to make her claims concerning breastfeeding, but in her opinion an implicit interpretation is sufficient; she thinks that Jesus's instruction to his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood can be linked to the nourishment given by breastmilk. Moreover, she has a rather limited reading of some scriptural passages, for instance 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5. Scripture scholars have pointed out that unlike his contemporaries, St. Paul indicates that women are indeed free and equal, because he asks women to submit *themselves* to their husbands for the sake of family and social order. This is not a question of gender inferiority; rather it is so that the important Gospel message is not highjacked by the equivalent of today's media focussing on the more scandalous aspects of a story where social order is upturned.

Obedience or love?

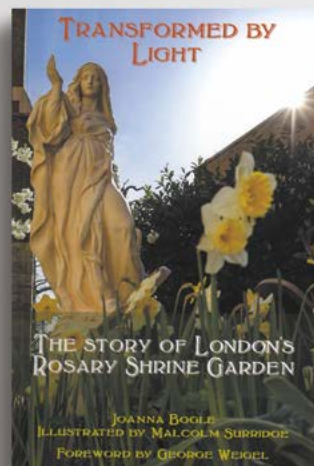
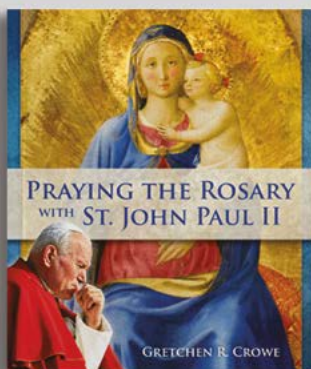
Rather than simply accepting Elizabeth's proclamation of Mary's "blessed" state, Myers seeks to ask why and how, hence the title of her book. Given what she sees as the emphasis among ancient writers on female inferiority that has to be controlled by men through pregnancy and motherhood, Myers makes the point that Mary is blessed because she obeys, not because she is mother, before Mary then disappears from the Gospel narratives. Hence the ambiguity Myers finds in the New Testament: women disciples remain problematic.

However, a significant question to ask is about the nature of Mary's *fiat*. Is this just about obedience or is it about love? After all, discipleship, as St. John says, is about love. Certainly, research into gender, imagery and theology is an important project. Nevertheless, the difficulty about embedding the Gospels in gender constructions is that the message that Myers wants to get across – that there is 'a need to be oriented toward life, the source and continuance of which is located in God alone' – risks becoming lost in the narrative.

Dr Pia Matthews lectures at St Mary's University, Twickenham, and St John's Seminary, Wonersh. She has recently published *Discerning Persons - Profound Disability, the Early Church Fathers, and the Concept of the Person in Bioethics* (Franciscan University Press).

***Praying the Rosary
with St. John Paul II***
by Gretchen R. Crowe

***Transformed By
Light: The Story of
London's Rosary***
by Joanna Bogle



Praying the Rosary:
Our Sunday Visitor
128ppo
£12.36

Transformed
By Light:
Gracewing
98pp
£9.99

A Marian pope and a garden

Review by Emily Dytor

For many Catholics the Rosary is a daily “must” in their prayer life. Others have a Rosary in their house somewhere, but can’t remember the last time they picked it up. Whether you are part of the first camp, the second, or somewhere in between, *Praying the Rosary with St. John Paul II* (Crowe) and *Transformed by Light: the Story of London’s Rosary Garden* (Bogle) can help to deepen and enrich your prayer life.

Living out the Rosary

Crowe opens her book telling us that John Paul II began his papacy with these words: “*The Rosary is my favourite prayer, a marvellous prayer, marvellous in its simplicity and its depth.*” The Rosary was a pillar of St. John Paul’s spirituality, and he inspired many to pray it daily, promoting it as a means to be drawn into the contemplative heart of the Holy Mother and thus to be drawn into the heart of her Son. Crowe provides a brief biography of John Paul’s life (written by Russell Shaw) before beginning reflections on each mystery of the Rosary, starting with the Joyful Mysteries. Each mystery is accompanied by a short quote from Scripture, a photo of Pope John Paul II, the spiritual fruit of the mystery, a recommended Scripture passage to look up and read, and a reflection by the Holy Father.

At the back of the book, Crowe provides the basic prayers of the Rosary, making this a good tool for those new to the Rosary, as well as for those more familiar with it. The Scripture passages, reflections, and pictures for each mystery draw one into deeper prayer and meditation upon the Christian life. Each picture is connected to a mystery: for example, the Nativity shows the Pope kissing a baby's head, and the Scourging at the Pillar shows him convalescing in a hospital bed after his assassination attempt. The images give tangible examples of a Saint living out each mystery of the Rosary. All in all I find *Praying the Rosary with St. John Paul II* a beautiful and well-organized prayer tool which I will come back to again and again.

Our Lady of Cana

Bogle introduces her book with a succinct history of the Dominican Blackfriars' establishment in London, providing intriguing historical facts about Catholicism in England. Today the Dominican church, Our Lady of the Rosary and St Dominic, dating from 1883, is one of the largest in London. It contains three chapels dedicated to the traditional Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries of the Rosary but is obviously missing a chapel for the Luminous mysteries which weren't created until 2002. This is where the story of London's Rosary garden comes in: the garden, dedicated to the Luminous mysteries, was created to fill this void. Bogle describes all that went into planning the garden. One learns about the many interesting and beautiful symbols used to represent different aspects of our Catholic faith, starting with the reasons as to why a garden is a fitting setting in which to pray the Rosary. The statue at the very heart of the garden is Our Lady of Cana and the association with Cana, Bogle explains, is important not only because it is the second of the Luminous mysteries, but also because of the intimate link between Cana and Mary's intercessional role in initiating the redemptive mission of Christ, which is at the very core of the meaning of the Rosary.

Horticultural contemplation

Next you get a brief meeting with the American-born Catholic convert sculptor of the Cana statue, Cody Swanson, and discover how his deep faith and love of beauty drew him to this work. We then learn what went into planning the flowers and layout of the garden and gain an appreciation for the contemplative process of religious horticultural creation. Bogle includes a brief history of the Rosary, in particular the Luminous mysteries, and a biography of St. John Paul II.

One of the most interesting chapters to me is about the history of devotion to Mary in England, which was very prevalent before the

desecrations of Henry VIII and which has been somewhat renewed by the Catholic revival of the 19th century. I also really enjoyed, and was surprised to read about all the plants that have [forgotten] Marian names such as *Fruitful Virgin* (wild strawberry), *Our Lady's fingers* (Honeysuckle) and *Our Lady's garlic* (chives) amongst several others. I should also mention that throughout the book there are lovely watercolour pictures.

More than a garden

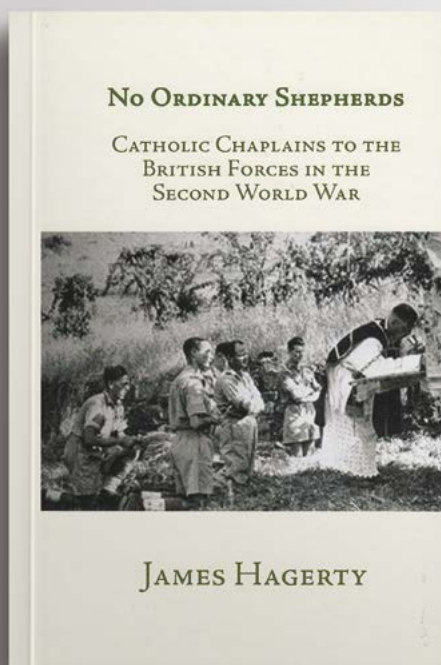
The antepenultimate chapter gives practical advice from Popes on how to pray the Rosary and inspiring reasons why the Rosary is such a valuable prayer. In the final two chapters (like Crowe), Bogle provides all the mysteries and basic prayers of the Rosary as well as reflections for each mystery, this time from writings of St John Henry Newman, again making it a beneficial prayer tool for both seasoned and novice Rosary prayers alike.

In summary *Transformed by Light: The Story of London's Rosary Garden* is a relatively quick and certainly enjoyable read which offers much more than just a story about a physical Rosary garden, but metaphor and analogy for prayerful meditation, fascinating history, and beauty to inspire.

Emily Dytor is a full-time mother of three young children.



*No Ordinary
Shepherds: Catholic
Chaplains to the
British Forces in the
Second World War*
by James Hagerty



Gracewing
492pp
£25 (Hardback)

'Boys! It's me!'

Review by David Baldwin

"You have been caught up in the maelstroms of war and thrown into the perils of battle and the temptations of a soldier's life. No ordinary Shepherds of Souls are needed here." Those words of Pope Pius XII addressing U.S. chaplains in Rome in June 1944 prompted this very fitting title to James Hagerty's wide-ranging, meticulously researched book on Catholic Chaplains ministering to the British Armed Forces during the Second World War.

I have got to confess that when I first thumbed through this very handsomely produced, weighty book, my heart sank a bit – it looked exceedingly scholarly – as a dry, dusty and niche-like tome for the specialist historians. But ... not a bit of it. I was hooked right from the beginning, because here is an easily accessible account that successfully combines the wide picture encompassing WW2 with the backcloth of ecclesiastical and inter-Service politicking, as well as the fascinating and often heroic stories of individual chaplains, on land, air and sea, in Europe and the East.

Spiritual rations

You are led effortlessly through the natural progression of events: the state of chaplaincy in the Armed Forces in the lead-up to the War;

the episcopal tensions of providing sufficient priests for a hugely expanding war-fighting military force – to forestall a Catholic soldier being, “robbed of spiritual rations at this hour of trial.” I was struck by the significant part played by priests from religious orders, and the large part played by priests from the Irish Republic.

Accompanying the individual Services, we are taken through the chaplains’ roles and experiences during all the major campaigns. The part of chaplains on Home Service is also explored, as of those interned in prisoner of war camps – German, Italian and Japanese; the challenges facing Army chaplains in post-war Germany; and then, for all chaplains, the prospect of demobilisation: “When the war is over... shall I have the courage to readjust myself to the monotonous humdrum life of a monastery after the excitement, glamour, freedom and devil-may-careness of Air Force life?”

‘Golly! I’d better do it’

There are interesting observations on how differently each Service regarded, and treated, their chaplains, as well as the contrasting experiences that chaplains in each Service faced: the Naval chaplain on a large shore establishment, or some sea going, but with all the ‘ship hopping’, rarely getting to know their ‘parishioners’; the Army chaplains invariably right in the thick of it on the front line, sharing the horrors of land combat; the Air Force chaplains at the operational bases anxiously awaiting returning sorties but unable to share first-hand the combat experience of the aircrews (with one notable exception, who on a bombing raid witnessed “hell on earth”).

But it was the many detailed accounts of individual chaplains’ personal experiences that enhance and bring this book to reality: “Life,” wrote one, “was rough in the extreme but the work is very consoling.” Many received gallantry awards. Fr Reginald Moore, awarded the Military Cross during the siege of Monte Cassino, reflected: “There was a

wounded man near our front lines, screaming in agony. The commanding officer said someone would have to go out and bring him in. So, I thought, ‘Golly! I’d better do it. So I did. Simple as that.’” There were those who found it difficult: “The life of a chaplain with a forward unit is one of great strain. By profession and by training a priest is a man of peace. He has not the excitement of fighting in the battle to sustain him.”

Common bond

The chapter on Memories, Reflections and Assessments, draws this wealth of narration neatly together. There were moments of poignancy, highlighting the shock that many chaplains experienced – when sent from dioceses and religious orders – and being thrown straight into the rigours and idiosyncrasies of military life – in barracks, or the horrors of battle. They soon realised that military considerations always took priority, that temptations abounded in many guises whilst living outside the strictures of the parish or monastery. But above all, there was that common bond struck between the fighting man and the padre, and illustrated many times: as one chaplain serving in a warship under imminent German air attack testified: “...within ten minutes there was a record crowd reciting the Rosary on deck” - their prayers were answered as a thick sea mist enveloped the ships.

The desire of many Chaplains to relate directly with the men is also vivid: “There was no doubt that being a parachute chaplain made all the difference... He could truly say he was one of them, and the men for their part, liked to feel that chaplains were undergoing the same trials as themselves”. And this spirit lives on, as I can personally testify, having taken two Naval chaplains through the gruelling Commando course, both ‘suffering’ alongside the recruits, with no fear or favour, and gaining that ultimate respect from ‘the boys’ knowing that the green beret they wore was hard won.

Military and priestly

And on from winning their green berets, I saw on many occasions our chaplains 'getting stuck in', exemplified by this incident during the Falklands war. Units of the Royal Marines Commando Brigade were poised below the Falkland Islands' mountain strongholds of the Argentinian forces the night before they launched their major assault. The Marines in the defensive positions round the Commando Headquarters of one unit recognised the plaintive cry of their Padre, who was cautiously making his way back in the dark from visiting the forward rifle companies: "Boys! It's me! Don't shoot, because I've forgotten

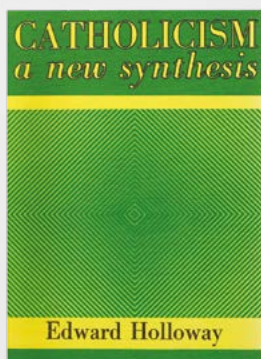
the f***cking Password!", which can but only demonstrate the epitome of "that common bond between the fighting man and the padre, for both fought in the same battle".

"The military and priestly life fit in well together as they both call for the same characteristics – perseverance, loyalty, courage, and a deep regard for one's fellow men."

David Baldwin is a Retired Royal Marines officer and Falklands War veteran. He has written several booklets on Pilgrimage for the Catholic Truth Society.

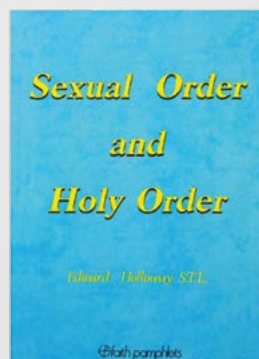
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