

# Faith

Promoting a new synthesis of faith and reason



Holy Family with bird, c. 1650, by Bartolomé Estéban Murillo

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# On to 2022

## **The Church's Year begins in Advent.**

**This is a season of fresh beginnings. Let's look forward in hope.**

Let's not have any illusions about the next months. We do need an understanding that large numbers of people have been absent from church for a long time: for some children, it's a significant portion of their lifetime. Our Bishops have announced that the obligation to return to Sunday Mass returns on the First Sunday of Advent: the dispensation from the obligation, introduced because of the Coronavirus, ceases on that date.

But we also need a vigorous, upbeat, affirmative message about the centrality of the Eucharist as the "source and summit" of our faith (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 11), and as the great reality at the core of our lives as Christians. A strong mention of the need to confess sins and received absolution should accompany this: with churches open, and confessionals functioning, we need an offer of a flooding tide of sacramental grace pouring out over thirsty souls. This in turn means instruction: clear teaching on how to go to confession, with an assumption that for many, many people this is largely unknown territory.

## **Our rights and obligations**

We also need a clear affirmation of the right and obligation of Catholics to teach the Faith in the family, in church, and in Catholic schools. This need not be announced in any angry or polemical spirit, but it must be stated clearly as something positive and as contributing to the common good, confirming the human rights of families as stated in international charters.

And we need some events that will boost morale, public celebrations of our faith that will lift hearts and give witness. Looking ahead to 2022, these must be planned and organised. That hugely successful Eucharistic Congress in Liverpool in 2018 showed the way. And the best bit of it was in the pouring rain – that magnificent procession of the Eucharist through Liverpool, culminating in Benediction from the steps of the Cathedral. Everyone was soaked and frankly it was deeply satisfying: we all knew that this was something we had long needed and somehow it had a sort of cleansing message, and a sense of fresh beginnings. So let's now get on with the next adventure.

## Schools

When children returned to schools in Britain this past term, many had a sense of disconnection. Large numbers had not been involved with regular schooling for some months: a mix of online lessons, opportunities to return to school interrupted by random closures, and then the standard summer break, meant that the normality of belonging to a school community had been broken.

The sense of disconnection will be strengthened for those children who over the next weeks and months will be subject to further propaganda and hectoring, masquerading under the notion of being instructed in the correct “non-binary” way of thinking. Non-binary? That means not being allowed to understand the biological truth of the human race as male and female. Under cruel and absurd schemes imposed by lobby groups and funded by taxes, children and their parents are bullied and nagged into following an ideology they instinctively know to be wrong.

## The law

Catholic schools ought to have a confident sense of exemption from this. The law specifically allows and encourages Church schools to teach the fullness of the Faith. This, of course, includes the Church’s under-

standing of the importance and significance of humanity as male and female. There is no – absolutely no – good reason for any Catholic school to adopt an ideology that contradicts the truth of the Christian teaching on the human person.

The sense of confusion and frustration in schools echoes that of the wider culture in Britain. Morale is low. Politicians are held in contempt. Christianity seems marginalised. There is much talk of “mental health issues”. Many people are, frankly, miserable. Parliament was confronted with a plan for allowing “assisted suicide” and the very phrase has a ghastly ring to it that seems to echo with the general mood.

## Morale

Of course, boosting public morale is not what the Church was founded to do. But we do have some good news to offer. The Catholic Church must lift hearts with a programme that is focused on the Eucharist and speaks in uplifting and focused terms about the centrality of God and our dignity as men and women, made in His image and finding our true dignity and joy when we worship Him. We can and must do this. Our confused children, our ugly culture, our bleak sense of a loss of community and of purpose call for this with urgency. Let’s proclaim, teach and celebrate the truth of the Catholic Faith anew in 2022.



# Saint Joseph: Living affirmation of our human nature

**Timothy Finigan on the importance of St Joseph as this year dedicated to him reaches its conclusion.**

**The eternal Word of God, made flesh, is the Lord of the universe and the Lord of history. We believe and we know that God's eternal wisdom is a match for the mystery of iniquity, and we are confident that He provides the means in every age, to counter the errors and evils of the time. On our part, we must recognise both error and evil for what they are, and make use of the providential gifts that God has given.**

Since the work of the evil one is neither true nor reasonable, we do not expect it to progress in logical steps, and since God does raise up saints, we know that evil does not always progress or triumph, even in the short term. God's work, on the other hand, is both true and infinitely wise. We must trust the wisdom of God's provision for us to progress in the way that it is made known to us in the Church in response to changes in the world.

Devotion to Saint Joseph, and our understanding of his place in God's revelation, has developed greatly over the past few centuries. It finds a particular importance in our own time against the backdrop of grave errors concerning the human person, the sexes of male and female, the sanctity of life, both at its beginning and at its end, the right ordering of procreation, and the created reality of marriage.

## Development of devotion to Saint Joseph

By way of exception, the Coptic Church

celebrated the feast of Saint Joseph from about the fourth century, probably in recognition of the flight to Egypt, but generally it grew up later, gradually becoming popular from around the tenth century. In the late fifteenth century, it was introduced at Rome and then spread widely. During the three centuries after the Council of Trent, there was a steady increase in the solemnity attached to the celebration of St Joseph in the sacred Liturgy.

Blessed Pius IX in his Apostolic Letter *In-clytum Patriarcham* (1871) summarised the steps taken by his predecessors since the Council of Trent. In 1621, Gregory XV ordered the feast to be celebrated in the universal calendar, Clement X in 1670 raised it to a double of the second class. In 1714, Clement XI added a proper Mass and Office, and Benedict XIII in 1726 added Saint Joseph to the Litany of Saints. In 1847, just a year after his election as Pope, Blessed Pius IX himself extended the separate feast of his patronage to the whole Church as a second-class double. Later in his reign, Blessed Pius IX suffered the invasion of the papal states by the forces of Victor Emmanuel and became a prisoner of the Vatican. It was in this context that he prayed "for the overthrow of all evils in these lamentable times", and during the first Vatican Council, proclaimed Saint Joseph as Patron of the Catholic Church, having raised his principal feast on 19 March to the rank of a first-class double.





With the encyclical letter *Quamquam Pluries* (1889), Leo XIII began a process, which continues today, of Popes offering reflections on Saint Joseph's life and spiritual influence. Speaking of St Joseph being the spouse of Our Lady, the Pope said that he was not simply her life's companion, but also, by virtue of their marriage, a sharer in her sublime dignity. In relation to the Church, he pointed out that the Holy Family, the household which St Joseph governed with fatherly authority, contained in itself the Church at its beginning. Pope Leo affirmed that as a consequence, St Joseph regards all Christians of the Church throughout the world as confided to His trust and paternal authority. This is a deeper understanding of St Joseph than is often presented in purely scriptural approaches, but it prophetically helps us to appreciate the particular value of the Holy Patriarch in our own time, when marriage, the family, spiritual and doctrinal authority, and even our creation as male and female, are called into question or even regarded as something hateful to defend.

The twentieth century saw the Popes refer to Saint Joseph in answer to the question of political turmoil. The classical Latin term for "revolution", used by Cicero, is *res novae*: Pope Leo XIII headed his encyclical on revolution *Rerum Novarum*. In the wake of the first world war, Pope Benedict XV in *Bonum Sane* (1920) spoke of a widespread dedication to earthly goods alone, which as a consequence led to class hatred ("*mutuas-classium inimicitia*") and societal convulsions which were devastating large areas of Europe. He was referring to the communism which had grown as a consequence of the recent Russian Revolution. Pope Benedict XV offered Saint Joseph as the patron for those who earn their bread by labour, so that they "learn to consider passing current events in the light of future things that last eternally."

After the second world war, Pope Pius XII followed up on the concern about communism. In 1949, the Holy Office issued a decree stating that it was not licit to join communist parties, that those who did so were forbidden from Holy Communion, and that those who promoted such parties or their errors, incurred excommunication reserved to the Holy See. (AAS 41 [1949] p.334) On 1 May 1955, speaking to the Association of Italian Christian Workers, he warned them against the errors they would encounter, especially the "atrocious slander" that the Church is the ally of capitalism against the workers. He proposed the same remedy as Pope Benedict XV: prayer to Saint Joseph. He followed in the long path of increasing veneration for him by announcing that he would institute the celebration of St Joseph the Worker as a feast for May Day. (AAS 47 [1955] p.402-407)

At Vatican II, on 10 November 1962, Bishop Petar Čule of Mostar, pleaded for the inclusion of the name of Saint Joseph in the Roman

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Canon. The bishop had spent a number of years in prison under the communists in Yugoslavia, during which time he suffered serious injuries. Cardinal Ruffini asked him to cut short his speech, joking that it was holy and pious, and that he hoped that there were many saints in Yugoslavia. At the end of the session, the Cardinal gave rise to laughter in the hall by concluding the *Angelus* with an invocation of Saint Joseph. Three days later, Saint John XXIII made a surprise announcement, adding the name of Saint Joseph to the Canon. The announcement did not meet with universal applause; nevertheless, Saint Joseph has remained in the Canon, and in 2013 Pope Francis added his name to the other Eucharistic Prayers of the modern Roman Rite.

## Waiting for the development of doctrine

In 1989, for the centenary of *Quamquam Pluries*, Saint John Paul II wrote the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*. Last year, Pope Francis issued the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, marking the 150th anniversary of *Quemadmodum Deus*. Both popes offer extensive commentary on the Scripture passages relating to Saint Joseph and highlight his virtues. For example, Saint John Paul emphasises the sanctification of everyday life and the union of active and contemplative life modelled in Saint Joseph, while Pope Francis focusses on his refusal to look for shortcuts or for facile and comforting solutions.

At the same time, since the Council, the working of the mystery of iniquity has been seen particularly in those areas of life which have a relevance to Saint Joseph's manhood, his fatherly care, and his nature as a chaste husband. In those decades, a radical feminism has grown up which damages the relationship between men and women. The right ordering of procreation has been devastated by contraception. The sanctity

of human life has been violated at its beginning by widespread abortion, and at its end by the spread of euthanasia. The very nature of humanity as male and female is now under serious challenge in many countries including our own by the promotion of the idea of transgenderism. At the time of writing, some NHS Trusts have given the ludicrous instruction that mothers should be referred to as "birthing people."

This wide-ranging assault on the nature of the human person created by God is met head-on by the figure of Saint Joseph. We could deal individually with each of the evils listed and ask for Saint Joseph's prayers or look to his example, but we can also look at the place of Saint Joseph in the plan of God and find in him the answer to all of them at once in the providence of God.

Theoretically, it might once have been a puzzle why the figure of Saint Joseph was even necessary. Our Lady could have conceived and given birth to Our Lord without needing him to be a foster-father. To say that Saint Joseph was important to give security to the family, or to provide material sustenance was perhaps all that we might have thought of in the past. Now that our very human nature is called into question in various ways, Saint Joseph comes into his own as part of the providence of God in a more fundamental way.

Within the Faith Movement, we have always argued that the division of the sexes was part of the eternal plan of God for the incarnation of the Word. In order that God may become truly man while remaining truly God, it is necessary that The Woman, chosen from before all creation, and pre-



Holy Family with bird, c. 1650,  
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

served free from original sin, should co-operate with God for His conception and birth. The division of the sexes means that there are also men in creation. The second Adam, Jesus Christ is a man, the Son of Man, the eternal High Priest, and the one in whose priesthood men share until the Second Coming.

What I wish to suggest here, is that in addition to the male priesthood, the division of the sexes also makes necessary, in the same plan of God, the provision of The Husband. As an archetype, Saint Joseph is husband for the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster-father for Our Blessed Lord. The “birthing person” is a woman, created as such, and she flourishes in marriage, with a man who is himself created to be a man. Saint Joseph is chosen to be husband and foster-father in accord with the design of God’s creation.

The family is not an arbitrary construction, it is the way that God has chosen for us to be, so that ideally children can flourish with parents of both sexes. Certainly, there are mothers who manage without, for one reason or another, but the current cultural experiment in which the presence of a father is considered dispensable “for any just cause” is palpably disastrous. Now, even the very nature of the human person as male and female is under attack. Not only that, but a person may fall foul of the law even by questioning transgenderism. Saint Joseph stands as the ultimate negation of these societal self-harms.

It is indeed providential that the Church has venerated him with ever greater solemnity. If, as I believe to be more obvious now than ever, God has led the Church to develop such increased veneration in response to the evils of the day, it would be a shame if we failed to take notice. The special Year of Saint Joseph runs until 8 December, so there is still time to observe it with greater fervour.



Were the matter to have been raised in first century Palestine, Saint Joseph would have been sure of his pronouns and those of his wife and foster-son. He knew how to fight for the survival of his family, and not their destruction at the hands of a tyrant or in the course of a medical termination of life. His affection and love for his wife was properly ordered and followed the natural law. It was fitting for Popes to underscore his protection of the Church when it was being attacked, and his solidarity with workers at a time of growing communism. He is now an ideal focus as patron or protector of the whole human family and of the authentic expression of human nature created by God, male and female, for the Incarnation, for the family, and for the population of heaven.

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



# Love for Love: The Religious Sister of the 21st Century



**Sister Mary Diana Dreger, OP explores religious life for women today.**

**What would you say to a young woman who ecstatically just announced her engagement? “Why would you tie yourself down, give up all your other possibilities in life, and never again date any other man?”**

If you chose to say that, she would laugh. She has found the man to whom she wants to give her whole life. She is in love.

So why would any woman in 2021 forsake marriage, wealth, and the possibility of using her personal gifts and talents as she wants, to become a consecrated religious Sister?

For the same reason. She has found the Man to whom she wants to give her whole life. She is in love, not with an idea, an ideal, a way of life, but with a Person. Or better, Three Persons: God, in the fullness of His Divinity and the reality of His incarnate Humanity.

For the one who has been called by Him to live in an exclusive relationship, what wouldn't she give up for such a One?

A life consecrated to the Lord goes back to the earliest days of the Church, for both men and women. In the early centuries, we see women living in community, women ascetics or “mothers” of the desert, and even earlier the widows of apostolic times dedicated to the Church. But even in Jesus' own time, there were women who travelled with him from Galilee into Jerusalem, “ministering to him” (Matthew 27:55, Luke 8:13). How could they have done this without leaving behind home, family, and security – for his sake and the sake of the Gospel? (Luke 18:29-30). In their own way, they lived the backbone of the religious life: the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. But never are these counsels lived simply for their own sake. They can only be lived well in the love of the One who lived them most perfectly. A religious Sister in 2021 chooses to live as the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ because of His love for her, and her love for Him.

## Evangelical counsels

What is meant by “evangelical counsels”? These “evangelical”—that

is, Gospel-rooted—counsels are recommended to his followers by Jesus who himself lived these qualities: poverty, chastity, and obedience (*Lumen gentium* 43). They are “counsels” in the sense that they are advised, as opposed to “prescripts” presented as requirements. The counsels are helps to live the Gospel well. All the faithful are called to live these in a way that will assist them in following Christ. Thus a businessman recognizes his obligations to the poor, a married man is faithful to the exclusivity of his relationship with his wife, and all are to follow the commands of the Church.

But consecrated religious men and women live these evangelical counsels in a more radical way, not merely avoiding evil (such as miserliness, marital infidelity, and sins against the 10 commandments) but even giving up what is good for something better. They are grateful for God’s goodness in creating the material goods of this world, companionship and joy in married family life, and the freedom to direct their own lives. But they choose to deny themselves a share in these gifts because they understand themselves to have been called by the God who loves them to give themselves to him in complete self-offering. This self-offering takes shape in the profession of vows, responding to the call of the Creator with a reciprocal gift of the dedication of one’s life to him and to his Church (John Paul II to Women Religious in Washington, DC, 10/07/1989, 2).

## Poverty

The evangelical counsel of poverty calls one to be dispossessed of material goods. These are indeed “goods,” for the material world as part of God’s creation is recognized as good (God himself says this in Genesis), not as something evil. It is not set in opposition to the spiritual world in a dualistic manner. Still, the one called to religious life values the goods of this world, but chooses to renounce them. She has heard the Lord’s call as the rich young man did: “Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor...; then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21).

Why would she do this? It is because of that call: “Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). She sees in Christ the poor man who relied on whatever hospitality was provided by others and had nowhere to lay his head. She embraces poverty not for the sake of poverty, but for the sake of the Lord. She has heard his call and believed his word. Believed him. He emptied himself, giving up his rightful place as Lord of all, stripped of his divinity, to take on the poverty of our humanity. “He became poor that you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). And the religious Sister does the same today, as she did centuries ago. She gives up the riches of the world that she may be emptied in order to be filled with the riches of eternity. She is not

The religious Sister does the same today, as she did centuries ago. She gives up the riches of the world that she may be emptied in order to be filled with the riches of eternity.

simply looking forward to some treasure in heaven. No, even here on earth, letting go of material goods allows room in her soul that she might receive the spiritual gifts her Bridegroom wishes to bestow on her for her good and the good of others.

What does this look like in a particular religious community today? In the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Saint Cecilia of Nashville, Tennessee (commonly referred to as the “Nashville Dominicans”), a young woman who may have owned a car, had her own apartment, was connected to others through multiple devices and social platforms, and enjoyed her own culinary skills, leaves that all behind on entrance day. Her cell in the dormitory, separated from her neighbors’ by curtains, is an area of 6 by 8 feet. Her meals are simple and the same for all, with the menu set by the Sister assigned to cook. She has no cell phone or laptop or tablet. Her travel to school finds her with six others in a 7-seat van in silence, perhaps praying the rosary together. And likely she has never been happier in life.

Giving up her own job and salary means that she must trust that her needs will be supplied for, nonetheless. A vow of poverty implies belief in God’s Providence, in his providential love. His love makes it impossible for him not to provide for our needs – our true needs, not our wants that may have suggested a “need.” So we hear Jesus’ words: “do not worry about what you are to eat or what you are to wear. Are you not more important than the birds of the sky?” (Matthew 6:25-26). Yes, of course you are! The woman religious knows that if the Lord called her to this life, he will also provide for her. Thus, as she strives to detach herself from material things she also begins to know types of spiritual poverty, as she increasingly comes to rely on nothing and no one but the Lord.

One spiritual author captures the concept of divine providence with a simple statement: *God can't keep his eyes off of you.*

This is God in love with the creature he has made, delighting in her, and so she is ever in his gaze. And he is ready to do anything for her that is for her good. The woman religious embraces a life of poverty because she loves her creator, and she knows there is no greater good than what he will give her. In exchange for herself, he gives himself (cf. Romans 8:32). And she can want nothing more.

## Chastity

For many the vow of chastity is the primary definition of religious life. But the truth is we are all called to live chastely. The single person, the married couple, and the widow or widower are each responsible to live chastity as defined by his or her state in life.

But there is something more for the religious who makes the vow of chastity. She is renouncing marriage and all it entails: the exclusive marital relationship with one man and the possibility of bearing children. Again, this is not because marriage is evil. Marriage is a sacrament instituted by Christ, and so it is of the highest good. Rather, the religious is called to forego the good of marriage to live in an exclusive relationship with the Lord himself, and to nurture the supernatural life of others by her prayers and actions. In this way she sees herself as bride of Christ and a spiritual mother to all. Free from limitations to one man and to her own children, she has the freedom to give herself in totality to all (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 12).

By the vow of chastity, the Nashville Dominican, as with all women religious, commits herself to lead a celibate life for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. This vow requires



guarding internal and external actions in such a way to present herself as she truly is, a woman dedicated to God and to all his children. Before anything else, she lives a life of prayer, intimate converse with the Lord which grounds her in her true identity. The day begins in prayer: private meditation of 30 minutes, followed by singing together Morning Prayer and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. So the Sister finds herself face-to-face with the Lord her spouse at the very beginning of her day. All this, every day—before breakfast! She lives in a convent with her Sisters, so that fraternal charity may support each one in her committed chastity. The majority of the house is designated as “cloister,” that is, for the exclusive use of the Sisters, so that the distractions of the world may not draw their attention from him. Whether inside or outside the convent, a Sister is careful by her words and actions to live so as to convey her complete and total dedication to the Lord and to his Church.

This dedication of herself to the Lord is possible only because of a gift of grace. John Paul II emphasized this initiative of God when he spoke to women religious in the United States:

...[F]ar more important than your love for Christ is Christ's love for you. You have been called by him, made a member of his Body, consecrated in a life of the evangelical counsels and destined by him to have a share in the mission that Christ has entrusted to the Church: his own mission of salvation. (John Paul II to Women Religious in Washington, DC, 10/07/1989, 5)

The religious Sister is called, made, consecrated, and destined by him. Christ is the one who acts, the one who gives the gift. This text makes concrete the words of Jesus: “You have not chosen me, I have chosen you” (John 15:16). The choice is on the part of the Lord. Acceptance is on the part of the religious. The religious could not make such a choice were it not first a gift of God.

Considering religious life from this perspective leads the Sister to a sense of overwhelming gratitude. She has been chosen by almighty God to receive a gift that makes it possible to give herself exclusively to him. This is really not about denying herself the joys of married life. She is not giving up love. She is embracing Love with her whole being.

Chastity is decisively positive, it witnesses to preferential love for the Lord and symbolizes in the most eminent and absolute way the mystery of the union of the Mystical Body with its Head, the union of the Bride with her eternal Bridegroom. (*Evangelica Testificatio* 13)

The religious Sister witnesses to everyone what every love really should be. Her love for the Lord is “a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ” (*Vita Consecrata* 88). Recall that when Saint John Vianney asked a simple peasant what

he did in prayer, he revealed, “I look at him, and he looks at me.” The perfect model of this is the reverential regard for each other in the Three Persons of the Trinity. The religious Sister lives ever mindful of the Lord in this mutual, loving gaze.

## Obedience

By the vow of obedience, the religious Sister commits herself to obey legitimate superiors and all that concerns the observance of the vows and the constitutions of the community (Canon Law 598, 601). That is, on the day she professes her vows for life, she makes a permanent and lasting choice to submit herself to the life of her community under a rule approved by holy mother Church. The Church is the mystical body of Christ on earth, and Christ promised to be with her forever. The religious offers the full surrender of her own will in faith, as a sacrifice of herself to God, following the example of Jesus who came to do the will of his father (*Perfectae Caritatis* 14). She finds the will of God expressed in the rule of her community and the rightful commands of her superiors.

While some may argue that this violates human freedom, the Church instead recognizes the mystery of obedience as a path to true freedom (*Vita Consecrata* 91). Religious obedience has as its model Christ's obedience to the Father. With the perfection of his intellect and will, Jesus knew perfect freedom; and so not in spite of that freedom but because of that freedom he could say to the Father, “Not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). In the person of Christ himself, we see that “there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom” (*Vita Consecrata* 91).

The religious sister has entrusted herself to the God who loves her, protects her, nurtures her, and calls her ever closer to himself. And she does this by using her “in-

tellect and will and the gifts of nature and grace to execute the commands and fulfill the duties entrusted” to her (*Perfectae Caritatis* 14). She believes God has called her to this particular religious community and that he will continue to manifest his loving will for her in the context of this life.

As a Nashville Dominican Sister, this total offering of one's will is most notable each spring when Mother hands out the assignments for the coming academic year. Each Sister scans the several pages of text to find her own name listed designating her as a teacher or student or school administrator or with a house duty. On the daily level, obedience means rising at the bell at 5:00 AM, keeping silence at the designated times, joining with the community in prayer, eating what is served, doing one's house duty with attention, and even attending recreation with the intention of making the time enjoyable for all. We are reminded to do all that is required “in a supernatural spirit,” that is, in a manner that is “prompt, joyous, and complete” (Constitutions of the Sister of Saint Dominic of Saint Cecilia, Nashville, Tennessee, 31). And so, if one had intended to spend some free time walking with a Sister she hadn't seen in some time and a superior asked her to take an elderly Sister to the doctor, she can smile and say, “Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will” (Hebrews 10:7, Psalm 40:7-8).

Yes, the world may see this as an offence against the autonomy of the human person. But for a person of faith, the dignity of the human person is strengthened by the vow of obedience, as she lives





in the true freedom of a child of God and comes to a greater maturity (*Perfectae Caritatis* 14). This is a woman who has placed a radical trust in the working of the Holy Spirit. She firmly believes that God has called her to this life with him, and that he will not leave her without the means to be faithful. He always wants her good, that is, he always wants her happiness. And so in joy she says, "Jesus, I trust in you." That trust, that love, is manifested just as Jesus witnessed to his love for the Father: "I always do what pleases him" (John 8:29). Jesus is her model of loving obedience.

## Why?

Why would a woman in the year 2021 make profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a religious Sister? For the very same reasons women have done this for many centuries. First, she is loved by God. She is loved not merely as one of the many countless humans he has created but as an individual person. He willed her into being and holds her in existence with intention, because she is dear to him. He delights in her. Not for any personal quality of hers or for the deeds she has accomplished using the gifts he gave her. We might say he loves her just because she is. But really, she is because he loves her.

Second, this woman wants to make profession as a Sister because she knows she is loved by God. This is a distinct reason from the first, although obviously dependent on it. Every person in the world is always loved by God. But how few actually know this and live it! A woman who chooses to give her life to the Lord can do so only because she knows him and knows she is loved by him. The possibility of surrendering herself in real poverty, exclusive chastity, and free obedience depends on her trust in his love.

Third, the woman who becomes a professed religious can do so only because she is chosen by God for this life. He provides the graces necessary to live religious life, to fulfill her vows, to be faithful to her consecration. For "her" consecration is really his. It is God who has set her apart for this holy work; he is the agent, the actor, the subject of the verb "to consecrate." For who can set apart anything to make it holy except the holy one himself (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II 88, 7 ad 1)?

There is one act left on the part of the religious Sister, an act renewed with each conscious act: to accept the Lord's gift, in gratitude and joy. Doing so, she sings as Mary did, "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked on the lowliness of his handmaid... the Almighty has done great things for me!"

And "Holy" is His name.

**Sister Mary Diana belongs to the Dominican Sisters of Nashville, USA**

## From Across the Pond...

### Fr Peter Stravinskias reports from the USA



#### Ad intra

##### Eucharistic “coherence” or “consistency,” cont.

In light of recent “extremely extreme” statements of Joe Biden on the abortion issue, word has it that some bishops who initially had opposed a document of the episcopal conference on this topic now see the need more clearly.

A draft of the document has been shared with members of the executive committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), with a view to its being shared with the full body at their November meeting.

##### Catholic school governance models

It has occurred to me that my UK readers may benefit from a brief overview of how Catholic schools are governed in the USA.

Most elementary/primary schools are still parish-based, which means that the parish priest is the final voice, both civilly and canonically; parent advisory boards usually figure in the equation. The principal is responsible for the day-to-day running of the institution, with regular, frequent communication between pastor and principal (unfortunately noted in the breach more than in the observance in too many cases).

Inter-parochial schools are generally served by a board of pastors, with lay representatives from the participating parishes. "Regional" schools operate in a similar fashion. Schools owned by Religious fall under the aegis of the sponsoring congregation. "Independent" schools, established by laity, but acknowledged as "Catholic" by the local Ordinary, usually have a board of parents and others with vested interests, along with a priest, to ensure maintenance of Catholic identity.

Regardless of the governance model, the diocesan bishop has ultimate authority for the liturgical life of the school, catechesis, and faculty suitability (e.g., a "morals" clause). A handful of states require all teachers in all schools to be certified by the state. In no instance, does any state have authority over curriculum or staff in a Catholic school. We suffer the penalty of having to pay our own way, but the independence from government control is a worthwhile exchange.

We suffer the penalty of having to pay our own way, but the independence from government control is a worthwhile exchange.

As I believe I have noted before, a very strong movement exists to promote parental freedom of choice (supported by many faith traditions, as well as by those with no faith commitment) through voucher programs or tax credits. There is no support for government monies going directly to any Catholic school, lest he who pays the piper call the tune. Financial assistance to parents, yes (since they are the primary educators of their children); direct funding to Church institutions, never.

### Covid restrictions and Catholic schools

Due to our independence from the State, our schools have been able to chart their own course regarding the pandemic. Nearly all our schools remained open for in-person classes throughout the crisis. Most of our schools have adopted a policy on masks which leaves that decision to parents. Where government officials have balked and attempted to enforce their own policies, many dioceses have sued in civil court and, in nearly every instance, the courts have validated the freedom of our schools to function according to our own lights.

### Catholic school enrollment data

As I reported before, the pandemic was a blessing in disguise for Catholic education as parents sought less draconian measures for their children, resulting in serious enrollment boosts in dioceses around the country. The even better news is that upwards of 90% of those parents have kept their children in our schools for this new year. The Boston Archdiocese which saw an increase of 4000 students at the height of the pandemic has seen yet another increase – of 1000 for this year. The much smaller Diocese of Charlotte (North Carolina) enrolled over 600 families over the summer!

## Bishop denies politician Holy Communion

Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces (New Mexico) denied a pro-abortion politician Holy Communion, as did the legislator's proper pastor. Needless to say, that action drew sharp criticism from the usual suspects, while loyal Catholics and other pro-lifers applauded the Bishop's decision. I am happy to say that I taught the Bishop New Testament Greek when he was a seminarian!

## Archbishop blasts a Catholic university for hosting Joe Biden

Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of Cincinnati said he was not consulted and would not have given permission for pro-abortion President Joe Biden to appear at Mount St. Joseph University this summer. The news of Biden's plans to host an invite-only town hall gathering drew heavy criticism from Catholics and pro-lifers alike.

## Ad extra

### Clergy sex abuse

The ever-reliable "Media Report" ran this headline: "Iowa Atty General Report Confirms the Obvious: Sex Abuse in Church Is Ancient History." The article shares the following information:

An exhaustive report from Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller ([https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/media/cms/ClergyAbuseReport\\_81C76B10D7916.pdf](https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/media/cms/ClergyAbuseReport_81C76B10D7916.pdf)) examining alleged Catholic sex abuse dating back to the 1930s has confirmed what clearheaded folks have long known: Catholic sex abuse is a thing of the past – even if it is in the continual present by old media types.

Miller's report found that since 2002 – now nearly two decades ago – a mere five priests in Iowa have even been accused of abuse; and of those, only one accusation was even deemed credible.

Of course, the state attorney general's report received nearly zero attention from the media, once again just underscoring that our media is no longer a trustworthy source of information, if it ever was, but just a collection of left-wing cranks pushing their political agendas on the rest of us under the guise of news.

What is true of Iowa is the universal situation in the Church in the US, leading me to say repeatedly and in full honesty: The safest place for a child in our nation is in an institution of the Catholic Church.

## Catholic school teacher in same-sex marriage

A federal district court on August 11 rejected a lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, filed by a former Catholic school guidance counselor, who had been fired for entering a same-sex marriage contract. Judge Richard Young of the Southern District of Indiana ruled that the former Roncalli Catholic High School counselor, Lynn Starkey, qualified as a minister of religion; thus, the Archdiocese and school were exempt from federal workplace discrimination prohibitions, regarding her termination of employment.

The Archdiocese was represented by the very competent and fierce defender of religious freedom rights, the Becket Fund. Becket argued that "Catholic schools exist to teach the Faith to the next generation, and they can't do that effectively if the law forces them to employ teachers who oppose core aspects of the Catholic Faith."

In a related development, in the case of *Demkovich v. St. Andrew the Apostle Parish*, a former parish employee sued both St. Andrew's and the Chicago Archdiocese for discrimination after he was fired in 2014 from his position as music director and organist for having entered into a same-sex marriage.

In a 7-3 ruling, a full panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals found that due to the so-called “ministerial exception” in federal civil rights law, the Court could not adjudicate Demkovich’s claims. Once more, the Becket Fund succeeded in defending the interests of the Church. “Worship is sacred,” said Daniel Blomberg, senior counsel at Becket, which represented the Chicago Archdiocese. He went on: “That’s why worship leaders who select and perform elements of worship are ministers of the faith, conveying its teachings to the faithful. That’s also why the church—not the state—gets to make sure that its music ministers are directing its congregation in a way that’s faithful to its beliefs.”

### **“Catholics for Choice”**

This dishonest organization, consistently repudiated by the American hierarchy, again provided disinformation to the general public by asserting that the bishops do not reflect the laity in their anti-abortion stance. In point of fact, surveys have consistently shown that “self-described” Catholics are evenly split on the issue, while practicing Catholics are overwhelmingly pro-life.

Years ago, I prevailed on George Gallup, Sr., to divide his sampling of Catholics into practicing and non-practicing, in the belief that significant attitudinal differences existed between the two groups. Gallup discovered that my intuition was on-target.

### **Tax-funded abortions**

The battle to maintain the Hyde Amendment, with its nearly half-century ban on federal funding of abortion, continues apace. Not a few Democrats also support its maintenance, reflective of the general population who have the position, “If you want to have an abortion, don’t make me pay for it.” Interestingly, the parish church

of Pious Joe Biden, St. Joseph’s on the Brandywine in Delaware, regularly has an item in the parish weekly bulletin urging the faithful to petition their congressional representatives on behalf of the Hyde Amendment; that notice greeted Holy Joe on one of his recent visits to the church.

### **Abortion-free venues**

More and more cities have declared themselves “abortion-free zones.” Most remarkably, the entire State of Texas did this legislatively. The Texas law authorizes any private citizen to sue doctors and clinics who perform abortions on women more than approximately six weeks after a woman’s last period. The Texas law also allows any private citizen to sue people who assist women in obtaining an abortion after that time period. To the absolute chagrin of pro-aborts, the Supreme Court of the United States, in a 5-4 decision, refused to block the law (three of the justices in the majority opinion were Trump appointments).

A similar law, emanating from Mississippi, protects babies in the womb at fifteen weeks. The US Supreme Court has agreed to hear oral arguments on that case in the current term. All eyes are on this case because, as feared by the pro-abortion lobby, the Court could rule in such fashion as to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the infamous decision of the Court in 1973, which has enabled over 65 million children in our nation to be murdered in the womb.

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



## Should we be Assisting Patients to Die?

### Father Michael Nazir-Ali looks at the dangers in the proposed legislation

**There have been seven attempts in Parliament to change the law on assisted suicide in the last twenty years or so. Each time, the proposed change in favour of physician-assisted suicide has been decisively defeated, but the issue keeps returning. I cannot think of any other piece of legislation which would be given so much parliamentary time in spite of such repeated rejection by Parliament. One has to ask why.**

Behind these attempts to change the law stands the dominant belief in personal autonomy: Everyone has the right to make decisions about their own bodies and this, say the proponents of change, should extend to the right to end one's life at a time and manner of one's own choosing. Although the Meacher Bill, like some of its predecessors, restricts the provision of assisted suicide to those diagnosed with a terminal illness and where the prognosis is for death to ensue in six months or less, the doctrine of autonomy and the belief that there is a 'human right' to end my life in the way I choose,

will inevitably lead to an extension of assisted suicide for other reasons as well. Indeed, in some jurisdictions like Holland and Belgium, this is precisely what has happened. Several cases have been reported of physician-assisted suicide for conditions like depression, failed gender reassignment, the onset of blindness and even autism! More worryingly, a significant number of physician-assisted deaths, in countries like Belgium, have occurred without consent from the patient! This is the state replacing autonomy and judging which lives are worth living and determining for which resources should be allocated.



### A burden?

In several areas where assisted dying is permitted, such as Oregon and Washington State in the US and in Canada, increasing

Both the classical and modern forms of the Hippocratic Oath, require physicians to value and preserve human life, not to destroy it.

numbers of elderly and vulnerable patients are choosing assisted dying because of the fear of being a burden on family and carers. In such cases, the 'right to die' is rapidly transmuting into the 'duty to die' to relieve the spouse, the family or even the state of having to care for the person who is ill.

There are difficulties also with the terminology that is used. What is a 'terminal' illness and how accurate are the prognoses? There is medical evidence that predictions for certain diseases can be wrong and we all know of cases where people have survived for much longer than their prognosis stated-sometimes for years! Depending on our point of view, we can call this 'remission' or a miracle. Even if death is to occur within a short period, that is not a reason to hasten it prematurely. The Christian-inspired hospice movement has led the way in showing us how, with good palliative care, counselling and spiritual assistance, 'last days' needn't be 'lost days'. They can be vital in preparing for a good death, in 'mending fences' with relatives, colleagues and friends and in spending quality time with the family. In most cases, pain can be relieved and, in others, made bearable. If all else fails, there is sedation where the intention is not to kill but to relieve pain, even if death results because of it.

There are serious concerns that assisted dying laws do not adequately protect those with mental illness or personality disorders and that many physicians do not know how to deal with depression in those who have been diagnosed as terminally ill. There is also evidence that the provision of physician-assisted suicide has a deleterious effect on society's programmes for suicide prevention more generally.

### Undermining trust

At its recent meeting of representatives, the British Medical Association has changed its position from opposition to physician-assisted suicide to one of 'neutrality' in the debate. We can ask whether this is, in fact, a signal towards greater acceptance of the practice and how this can be so, given the World Medical Association's strong opposition to the practice, reiterated as recently as 2019. Both the classical and modern forms of the Hippocratic Oath (the latter in the form of the Geneva Declaration), moreover, require physicians to value and preserve human life, not to destroy it. The participation of doctors in suicide or euthanasia is bound to affect the doctor-patient relationship and will, undoubtedly, undermine the trust that patients have in doctors regarding the standard of care they may expect. This will be particularly true when assisted dying is extended to chronic or mental illness or to disability of one kind or another. There may well be concern whether the availability of physician-assisted dying is first about patient welfare or whether it is about the resources of the health system.



## Worried

Evidence from the US and Canada shows that doctors are worried about their mental health if they participate in physician-assisted dying. In Britain, the BMA's own survey shows that a majority of doctors, who expressed an opinion, were unwilling to prescribe lethal drugs to patients. There is similar evidence from the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg). This is often due to doctors' concern about their own mental health.

There are, of course, religious reasons for opposing assisted dying. These have to do, for example, with the Judaeo-Christian teaching that we are made in God's image and that this confers inalienable dignity on us which is inviolable, except in strictly specified conditions such as a just war. Religion also emphasises our interdependence rather than radical autonomy and the signals given to society which may endanger the weak and vulnerable. More recently, however, Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rabbi Jonathan Romaine and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have argued, in an article in the *British Medical Journal*, that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures do not prohibit assisted suicide and that it may be part of our religious obligation to help people to die when they wish to do so because of unbearable pain or indignity because of loss of control over bodily function or even 'discomfort'.

## Intention to kill

Against this, it has to be said that the commandment "You shall not kill" is without qualification and has to be understood as such if there is not to be a slippery slope to a permissive free for all imperilling the person at the earliest and latest stages of life and also the weakest in society whose lives may be thought to be 'not worth saving'. The killing of the innocent is never sanctioned in any part of the Bible and there is no recognition of the 'right to die'. Humans belong to their Creator and to each other in family and society. The only instances of alleged killing to relieve someone of terminal suffering are

viewed entirely negatively (Judges 9:53-56, 1 Sam 31:3-5 and 2 Sam 1:1-16).

Carey et al argue that humans have already taken over God's prerogative in creating life *in vitro* or postponing death through medical intervention so why should they not now take over his prerogative to determine our time of death? Indeed, they contend that it is part of our duty as made in God's image to 'play God' if it helps those in distress. To this we can say that such thinking is very near the hubris of the original sin. It is certainly true that it is part of our duty, as stewards of creation, to relieve unnecessary suffering wherever and whenever we can. It is also the case that medical treatment can be withdrawn if it is not making any difference. The injunction not to kill does not mean trying to keep alive in all circumstances. As they say, there is, indeed, a time to die, but that does not mean actively bringing about someone's death. Switching off a life support machine when it is not serving any useful purpose and prescribing drugs to bring about death are two quite different actions. In one the intention is not to kill, even if we know that death will result. In the other, the intention is to kill.

## Moral tradition

The writers repeatedly claim the support of opinion polls as if that is all that is needed in making moral decisions! As we have tried to show, however, there are weighty religious and philosophical considerations against physician-assisted dying, not to speak of the many medical and social dangers outlined above. No intervention can be convincing in this matter if it does not take moral and spiritual tradition seriously. It has largely been a religious impulse which has brought us highly developed systems of palliative care in the hospice movement. Let us use these to deal with pain and suffering rather than going down the dangerous road of assisted dying.

**Fr. Michael Nazir-Ali is a member of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham and former Anglican Bishop of Rochester.**

## The Faith Movement Vision

### Fr Roger Nesbitt sets out the vision of the Faith Movement



**The identity and motive of the Faith Movement is to promote a theological vision of Jesus Christ as Lord of the cosmos and of history, and Lord of the individual mind and heart.**

When someone asked Jesus what the greatest commandment of the law was, he replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). The whole of our human nature is involved - our understanding as well as our will. One of the tasks of preaching the Gospel, then, is to show how our faith makes sense to our minds. We do not have to deny our human reason or our modern scientific knowledge in order to believe in God. In fact, quite the contrary is the case: All reality and all truth proceeds from the one God, and so must constitute one perfect harmony. The more we discover about the amazing world we live in, the more we discover the even more amazing God who created it (cf. Wisdom 13:3-5).

However, this runs clean contrary to the popular opinion of the matter. It is commonly assumed, although quite incorrectly, that science contradicts religion - even that science has disproved the existence of God - and the discoveries of Galileo and Darwin amongst others are often held up as proofs of this.



## Abusing science

There are several reasons why popular opinion takes this view. One reason is that many of those who promoted the scientific ideas were atheists, and used - or even abused - the science to promote their own ideologies as well. But another contributory reason was that those who were arguing the case for God were using philosophy and theology which had been worked out several hundred years before the advent of modern science. In fact, their philosophical principles, although brilliantly developed by St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, were largely those of Aristotle, who lived around 350 B.C. As a consequence, their system of thought - their synthesis of faith and reason - was not adequate to cope with the new questions arising from modern science.

As a result of these difficulties, some people resorted to 'modernism', which involved abandoning those Christian doctrines which seemed to be at odds with modern knowledge: others chose to ignore the problem altogether and concentrate on other, less controversial areas of theology. However, neither of these strategies was a satisfactory response to the situation. What was required was a new synthesis of faith and reason, utterly faithful to the deposit of divine revelation, yet showing the deep and beautiful harmony between the truths of revelation and the truths of the natural world.

As a consequence, their system of thought was not adequate to cope with the new questions arising from modern science.

## A solution

The Faith movement offers its vision as a solution to these issues. It is our conviction that these ideas show the unity of God's work of creating the universe and of saving us through Jesus Christ. We know - and Fr Holloway always explicitly said - that these ideas are only a beginning; others will work them out more fully and perfectly. But if they do genuinely synthesise the Catholic faith and modern scientific knowledge then they are of tremendous value, for they vindicate the truth of our faith. More than this, because every deeper understanding of God is not just of academic interest, these ideas will lead to a deeper personal relationship of trust, love and holiness with God. They will also lead to a clearer understanding of the moral life, and will attract others to Christ - for our response to God involves the whole of our human nature as a unity. This is the experience of those involved in the Faith movement. We know personally that this vision has in fact borne fruit in our own spiritual lives and in the lives of others. This is the reason that we try to promote this vision.

## God's Master Key: the Unity-Law of Control and Direction

The central principle of the theology of the Faith movement is to show the majestic unity of God's plan of creation and salvation. It is a plan



formed “before the foundation of the world”, a “purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (cf. Eph 1:4,9-10) All God’s works proceed from the one wisdom of God, and are centred on the Incarnate Jesus Christ: “All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col 1:16-17) This one wisdom, which comes from the will of God, and which orders and directs all things for his purpose, is therefore a law for all created things. Fr Holloway called this law a “Unity-Law of Control and Direction”; his mother called it “God’s Master-Key”.

The Unity-Law of Control and Direction is thus the central idea in the theology of the Faith movement. It is breathtaking in its simplicity but contains great power and depth to develop and to unify faith and reason for this age of science. It has an enormous impact in the whole of theology, philosophy, apologetics and catechetics, especially in regard to their vital relationship with the scientific vision of creation. In the space available here, it is only possible to provide a brief overview of this vision. For a much fuller treatment the reader is referred to Fr Edward Holloway’s book, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis*.

## Concept of the Unity-Law

The term ‘Unity-Law of Control and Direction’ may appear rather complicated, but it is designed to show the unity of all God’s works. An explanation of the individual words will help to bring out the overall meaning.

The will of God for all things is a command or law, as Ps 148 indicates: “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, shining stars... He commanded: they were made. He fixed them forever, gave a law which shall not pass away.” For material things this law appears as the laws of science; for man and the angels it is a moral and spiritual law too.

But the idea of law implies something more: God’s plan for the universe, and for man, is not a chaos but a cosmos; it is ordered and harmonious, as science has shown us. There is therefore a law in the mind of God which orders all things through supreme wisdom and intelligence, and does so in a unified way. We know from science that the various laws of nature link up into more fundamental ‘super-laws’. For example, electricity and magnetism are known to be aspects of one single reality, described by one law. In fact scientists are currently trying to formulate a single ‘Grand Unified Theory’ which will describe the behaviour of the whole physical universe in one law - and there is every hope of eventual success. This same pattern of unification can be seen in the way that all the moral laws are summed up as love of God and love of neighbour (cf. *Mark 12:28-31, Romans 13:8-10*).

## One transcendent mind of God

Ultimately everything in the universe, from atoms to man to the Incarnation of Christ, proceeds from the one transcendent mind of God. As a result the laws of science, the higher moral law, and the even higher spiritual order must link up into one supreme Law in the mind of God. In other words, this law must be a **Unity-Law**. At its lower end it will embrace the laws of physics, chemistry and biology; at its highest application it will embrace the relationship of man to God, including the Church and the sacraments. In the end the law is only fulfilled in God made flesh, Jesus Christ, who is the very centre, meaning and purpose of the Law.

It is called a Law of **control** because each of God’s creatures receives the control or influence it needs to achieve its destiny from its interactions and relationships with its environment. In these relationships each thing finds its existence and meaning. This is true whether it be an electron within an atom, a plant seeking the warmth of the sun, or man seeking the warmth of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

It is called a Law of **direction** because the whole universe manifests a purpose and a goal. This is clearly seen in the development of the material universe, from the Big Bang to the formation of galaxies, stars and planets, in the emergence and evolution of life, right up to the evolution of man. Everything in the universe discovers its true direction through interaction with its material environment. And clear direction for man is also provided by God through revelation, from the dawn of history to its culmination in Jesus Christ, the One who is to come and who is the Way, the Truth and the Life for man.

### Manifestation of the Unity-Law: from Creation to Jesus Christ

We now need to look at how God has worked out his great plan of creation and salvation, and so consider in particular how modern science is in complete harmony with the truth revealed by God. We need to ask: why did

God create the material universe and how does he sustain it in being and harmony? How is man different from the animals? How does it come about that man has a spiritual soul? How does God provide for man, who is both matter and spirit? What is the ultimate meaning of man and of the whole universe? The next sections will present an outline of how the plan of God was unfolded through the UnityLaw of Control and Direction from the beginning of creation to its ultimate fulfilment. They attempt to show the seamless unity and coherence of God's wisdom and purpose, and to show that all of creation only finds its true meaning in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

**This was initially published by the Catholic Truth Society as part of a pamphlet in a series on the New Movements in the Church. It will be concluded in the next issue of FAITH magazine. Fr Nesbitt is a priest of the diocese of Southwark.**

### POEM

Moonless darkness stands between.  
 Past, the Past, no more be seen!  
 But the Bethlehem-star may lead me  
 To the sight of Him Who freed me  
 From the self that I have been.  
 Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;  
 Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;  
 Now beginning, and alway:  
 Now begin, on Christmas day.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

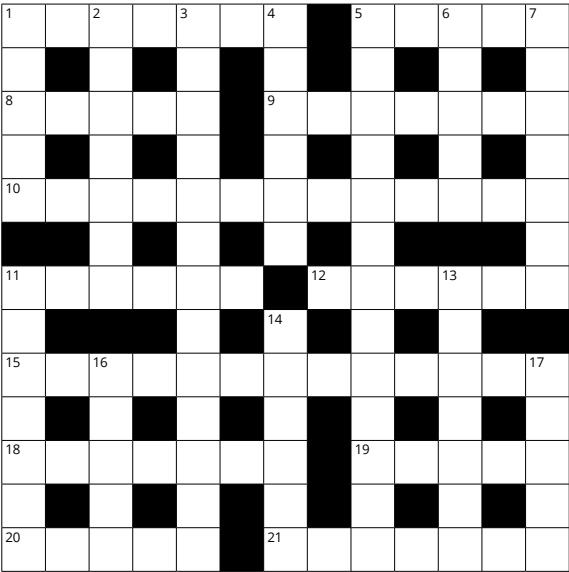
Crossword 31

by Aurora Borealis

We invite you to complete this crossword.

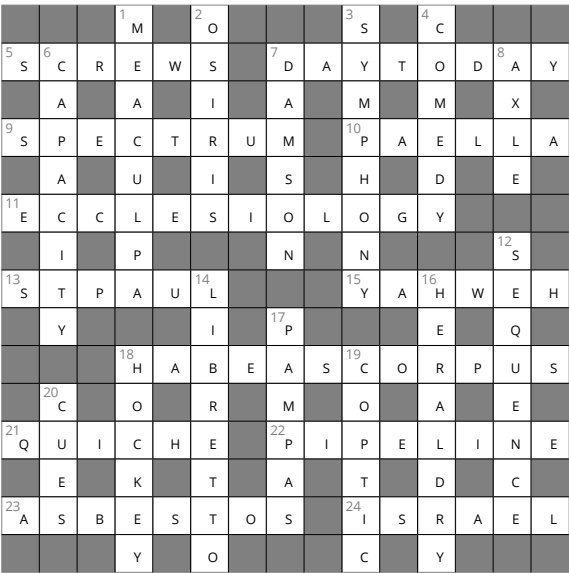
The clues in bold involve general religious knowledge.

The others are cryptic clues with secular answers.



A prize will go to the sender of the first correct solution opened by December 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 30 was Mrs L.W. of Milton.



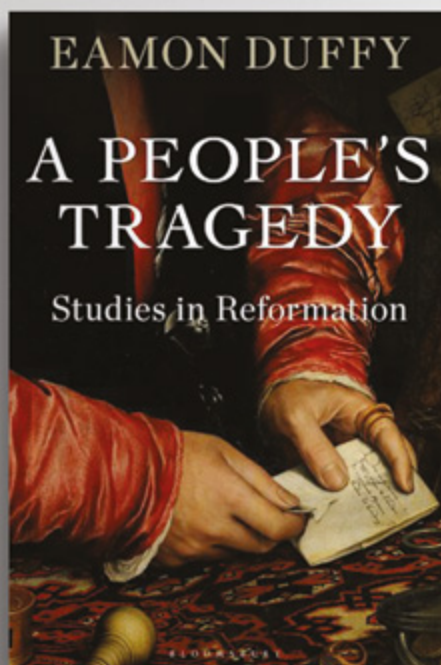
Across

- 1. Cleric has sister enveloping body (7)
- 5. No time for sign of shame in old letter (5)
- 8. Animal starts to run headlong in ring (5)
- 9. I'm on archaeological dig finding king (7)
- 10. Pencil and paper, perhaps, make it quite clear (5,3,5)
- 11. Spectacular cooking method with meat inside hollowed out flue (6)
- 12. Month followed by a very English series of notes (6)
- 15. Do those with opposing views keep everything in the dark in cupboard? (6,7)
- 18. Story to illustrate a theological or moral point (7)**
- 19. Table of sacrifice (5)**
- 20. Voice starts to emulate nice old Roman (5)
- 21. Old tape screwed up reveals developing creature (7)

Down

- 1. Man supports a hundred going up tree (5)
- 2. Sailor gets up twice with one French article, revealing eastern treasure seeker (3,4)
- 3. Part of car gives nasty surprise before bar, sober in mix-up (5,8)
- 4. The buying or selling of religious privileges (6)**
- 5. Directors of Kent town advertise like this (8,5)
- 6. Turn right with most of gear, arriving at Russian town (5)
- 7. Jumper, say, is at outskirts of Hartlepool over French summer (7)
- 11. Fine American situation for whinger (7)
- 13. Extreme woman goes up and gets food colouring (7)
- 14. French perhaps, acute, grave (6)
- 16. Brother of Moses (5)**
- 17. That part of the Divine Office said at the third hour (5)**

***A People's  
Tragedy: Studies  
in Reformation***  
by Eamonn Duffy



Bloomsbury  
Continuum  
264pp  
£18.00

## Understanding the Reformation

### Review by Richard Whinder

There are few historians who can claim to have changed the way we understand a particular period of history, but Eamonn Duffy is one who can. When his master-work *The Stripping of the Altars* came out in 1992, it changed the whole way the English Reformation was understood and taught (your reviewer was an undergraduate history student at the time and saw for himself the change it brought about). Before Duffy's work, the 'Establishment' view of the Reformation lingered – the late medieval Church was fundamentally corrupt and had lost the adherence of the faithful: long before Henry VIII delivered the *coup de grace*, the whole rotten edifice was crumbling away and needed only a few sharp jolts to bring it tumbling down.

### Fresh thinking

Duffy showed something quite different – a Church still full of vigour and life, actively responding to the challenges of a new age, still broadly supported by the great majority of its people. The English Reformation was not so much a popular movement as a political action imposed from above. It is true, other histori-

ans had paved the way for this fresh thinking (Professor Jack Scarisbrick and his *The Reformation and the English People* deserve an honourable mention). Nevertheless, it was Duffy who established a new consensus, and it remains largely unchallenged to this day.

Following the success of *The Stripping of the Altars*, Duffy published *The Voices of Morebath* in 2001 which applied his thesis to a small village in England, showing the devastating effects of the Reformation on one tight-knit community. As his reputation became established, Duffy began to publish works not only on history but on theology, liturgy and spirituality. He even lectured at the Pontifical Universities in Rome (once again your reviewer was one of his students). In general, these works were characterised by a deep but accessible scholarship, a certain nostalgia for the days of Latin liturgy and traditional piety and – somewhat paradoxically – a slightly unfortunate penchant for the liberal theology of the 1960s and 1970s (although rarely taken to excess).

### Duffy at his best

The work under review is the latest of his writings. The first thing to be said of it is that it is a collection of essays – and like all such collections, some parts are better than others. But, taken as a whole, it is worthy of Duffy at his best. Some of the essays re-visit the author's greatest work. I recommend in particular the opening chapter 'Cathedral Pilgrimage: The Late Middle Ages'. In the desecration of countless shrines, and the destruction of popular pilgrimage, writes Duffy 'one of the most vital and persistent institutions of medieval Christianity was snuffed out, some of the greatest names in English history mocked and dishonoured, and a resonant symbol of hope and healing banished from

the great buildings that had sheltered it for half a millennium. Who can doubt that the English imagination was poorer for it?'. Who, indeed?

Other 'properly' Reformation essays touch on the dissolution of Ely Priory, the history of the English College in Douai, and the writing of the King James Bible. In later essays, grouped under the heading 'Writing the Reformation', Duffy looks at the way the Reformation has been understood and studied over time. These later essays, it must be said, are perhaps more niche in their appeal – 'James Anthony Froude and the Reign of Queen Mary', 'A. G. Dickens and the Medieval Church' – but Duffy brings to them all his customary scholarship and accessibility.

### Hilary Mantel

In the last chapter of the book, 'Writing the Reformation: Fiction and Faction', Duffy touches on Hilary Mantel's treatment of St Thomas More in her trilogy of books featuring Thomas Cromwell (*Wolf Hall* etc), which have been dramatized to much acclaim by the BBC. Duffy is wontedly polite but clearly shares the view of Dr David Starkey (no friend to Catholicism) that Mantel's depiction of St Thomas More is 'a deliberate perversion of fact'. As noted, Duffy is more courteous, but leaves the reader in no doubt that Mantel's depiction of St Thomas More is fundamentally false – based in part on an uncritical reading of



Sir Thomas More by Hans Holbein



Professor G. R. Elton and still more on a rather childish desire to upset Catholics, whose faith she once shared and has since rejected.

## Walsingham

Lastly, it is worth drawing attention to the penultimate essay, 'Walsingham: Reformation and Reconstruction'. Here Duffy examines the remarkable re-kindling of Marian piety in Walsingham in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a place for both Catholic and Anglican devotion. This chapter is especially worth reading at this present moment, after an extraordinary period of pandemic and lockdown which has shaken every national institution – the English Catholic Church included. It was certainly providential that,

in the dark days of March 2020, with lockdown in full effect and public worship prohibited, England was once again dedicated to Our Lady of Walsingham. True, the event took place without the pomp and ceremony we might have hoped to accompany it – but it happened. And, as Duffy's essay helps to make clear, the history of Walsingham is in a way the model for the history of the Church herself. For just as new life sprang up, most unexpectedly, amidst 'the wracks of Walsingham', so too the Church retains the power of Resurrection, even in the most unlikely times and circumstances.

**Father Richard Whinder is a history graduate and Parish Priest of Holy Ghost Catholic Church, Balham, London.**

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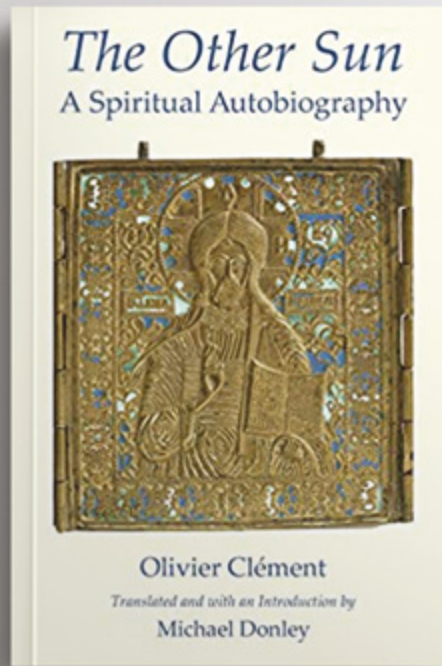
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## Insights from Orthodoxy

### Review by Mark Vickers

**The French have a thing about Russia and about Orthodoxy. Perhaps it derives from folk memories of a questionable road trip back in 1812. Or possibly it appeals to latent Gallican tendencies. The British, by contrast, are far more insular. I confess to having previously known nothing about Olivier Clément. Born in 1921, he came from a region of southern France where Catholicism had ceased to be a living force in the sixteenth century. Protestantism gave way seamlessly to an atheistic socialism. Clément was raised, he admits, 'a Mediterranean pagan,' a votary of the 'religion of the sun.'**

His spiritual memoirs, originally published in French in 1975, chart his journey to Orthodoxy via Marxism and the religions of the East. Ultimately, neither convinced. Marx had nothing to say about death. The East failed to give sufficient prominence to personal freedom and responsibility. Clément came to appreciate that he was seeking for the inter-personal relationship which is to be found only with the God of Moses and of Jesus Christ.

### Orthodoxy

Why did Clément turn to Orthodoxy rather than Catholicism? His

contact with Catholicism in childhood and youth was minimal. In the pre-Conciliar period he was seeking after truth and beauty and meaning. Scholasticism failed to capture his imagination. He queried the exclusive depiction of the crucified Christ. The West, he alleged, had compartmentalised theology, liturgy, spirituality and social action which were intended for mutual nourishment. He claimed mid-twentieth-century French Catholicism to be legalistic and worldly. Protestantism he thought little more than a staging post to religious scepticism.

In Orthodoxy he found song and poetry. He found greater emphasis on Trinitarian theology, the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit. Clément was captivated by the light and openness in the face of Christ which he found in Orthodox iconography.

## The cosmic Christ

He speaks of 'the cosmic Christ,' something those in the Faith Movement would wish him to have developed a little further. Clément simply could not believe that literature and culture were the product of 'the blindest chance.' Meaning and justice were not achieved by 'the evolution of matter.' From the perspective of who appreciates art and beauty, Creation pointed to an intelligent mind responsible for the universe. From intuition, rather than deduction, Clément sensed an 'inner connection' of all that is.

Orthodoxy seemed to offer the mysticism of the East, while firmly rooted through Scripture and the Church Fathers in the Person of Christ. Clément valued in Russian Orthodoxy 'the ability to perceive the extraordinary nature of the ordinary.' Asking him to define quite what he meant by this would for him, no doubt, be evidence of the legalistic Latin mind.

## Western influences

Yet Clément was in no sense a closed or fiercely nationalistic proponent of Orthodoxy. He speaks fondly of St. Thérèse of Lisieux and Charles de Foucauld. He was fortunate to be formed by Russian theologians open to Western influences. His great mentor, Vladimir Lossky, was a doctoral student of Étienne Gilson, wrote on Meister Eckhart and venerated St. Francis of Assisi. Lossky helped Clément to arrive at an adequate understanding of the human person in the light of Trinitarian theology and Christology. His Orthodox faith was deeply ecclesiastical and Eucharistic.

Clément willingly admitted the historical weaknesses of Orthodoxy and its need to learn from both Catholic popular piety and social action. He praised the positive developments of the *ressourcement* which contributed to the documents of the Second Vatican Council. If Clément found unattractive pre-Conciliar Scholasticism, he was far more alarmed by a tendency of post-Conciliar Catholicism to abandon doctrine in its entirety.

## Challenging

This work adopts an approach which is novel and challenging to Latin Christians. It can also be frustrating. The style is discursive. There is a failure to develop insights, to tell the narrative in a structured and chronological manner. There are many references to Russian theologians and French academics which mean little to most Anglo-Saxons. (Helpfully, the editor and translator, Michael Donley, provides copious footnotes.) One is left wondering at times what represents Clément's own thought and what is that of his teachers. Then what to make of statements such as Marx and Nietzsche are 'in the Church' when they protest against consumerism and hedonism?

The chronology meanders, but the work effectively ends with Clément's baptism on All Saints' Day 1952. He wrote forty books in total,

seeking to engage theology and modernity. He was Professor of Church History at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and, as a layman, taught at the Orthodox seminary in Paris. Before his death in 2009, he responded positively to St. John Paul II's invitation to other Christians to contribute towards a common understanding of the Petrine ministry. Clément did so from the basis of Christology and Tradition. He hoped that Catholicism might rediscover Orthodoxy as part of its own tradition. He deserves a hearing from those of us previously unfamiliar with his thought and works.

**Fr. Mark Vickers is parish priest of Holy Ghost & St. Stephen, Shepherd's Bush in the Diocese of Westminster. He has published a number of works on Church history. His forthcoming book is *Doing God? The Personal Faith of the Prime Ministers, Balfour to Blair*.**

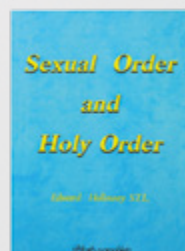
## CATHOLICISM: A NEW SYNTHESIS

Edward Holloway's major work in which he shows in detail how orthodox Catholic theology can be synthesised with the philosophy of evolution to produce a coherent understanding of Catholic Christianity for the modern age. The thinking behind the Faith movement, this theological vision has been inspiring Catholics, especially the young, for over 50 years. It provides a way forward for the Church to meet the intellectual challenge of the modern secular worldview.

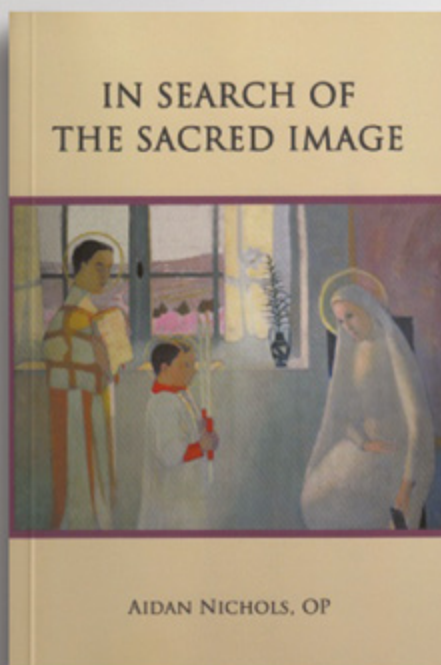


## SEXUAL ORDER AND HOLY ORDER

The Church through the ages has always taught that priests should be male. But in an age when woman has, through the cultural and intellectual development of society, been able to vindicate that status of equality with the male which was always hers by right of nature and grace, we have to look for the intrinsic reasons behind the works and words of God in Christ about the priesthood. Fr. Holloway explores why human beings are created male and female and the role of sexuality in God's self-giving to us which climaxes in the Incarnation and the Eucharist.



*In Search of the  
Sacred Image*  
by Aidan Nichols, OP



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## Sacred art must return to the sources

Review by Katherine Turley

**Fr Aidan Nichols is well known for his writing on art and faith. In this book he walks the reader through the complex story of the nineteenth and early twentieth century European rediscovery of medieval art and the attempt to recreate a sacred art modelled on and inspired by the aesthetics of the “Primitives” – those painters who pre-dated the High Renaissance: artists like Fra Angelico, van Eyck, Giotto and Cimabue, and, in Russia, writers of the old icons, such as Rublev.**

It is also the story, incidentally, of the convergence of the “Primitive style” with the interests of the early twentieth century avant-garde: “Never have I seen such a revelation of mystical feeling,” wrote Matisse in 1911 on seeing some of the Old Russian icons, including Rublev’s *The Trinity*, newly cleaned. “Nowhere have I seen such a richness, such a purity of colour [...] . We must come here to be instructed. For it is with the Primitives that it is proper to seek inspiration.”

The “searchers” of the sacred image of the title are, first of all, then, those nineteenth and twentieth century artists, theorists, and art historians who, seeking fresh inspiration for a new age, turned back to learn from the style and iconography of the medieval period. The aesthetic they discovered there, founded on creation and the revealed glory of Christ

in the Incarnation, was largely confused and swept away, Fr Nichols has long argued, by abstraction, architectural modernism, and “the minimalist practice of iconography.”

But the “searchers” of the sacred image are also ourselves. Or should be. While the book is an historical study – and a complex and demanding read – it is, as Fr Nichols says, driven by a liturgical, catechetical and doctrinal impulse. What lessons for sacred art can be learnt from the nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic *ressourcement*? What sacred images should surround the faithful during the liturgy and be available to them in instruction, meditation and prayer? These are the questions that underpin the study.

### The crisis of sacred art

The book covers the period of sacred art from the early nineteenth century to the end of the Second World War. It builds, therefore, on Fr Nichols’ monograph on the Victorian art critic and painter John Ruskin, *All Great Art is Praise: Art and religion in John Ruskin* (2016), and leaves off where his essays, *Redeeming Beauty, Essays on Sacral Aesthetics* (2007), which tell the story of the “crisis of sacred art” in the 1950s and beyond, begin. Comprising six chapters, it opens with the story of the early twentieth-century rediscovery of the early Russian icons painted before the westernising influence of naturalism. Cleaned and glowing, many of these fourteenth and fifteenth-century icons were displayed to great acclaim in an epoch-making exhibition in Moscow in 1913, news of which was carried back to the West by artists such as Matisse. The discovery of the dazzling colours and pure lines that lay beneath repainting, metalwork and dirt are presented as a kind of analogue to the rediscovery of western medieval art and the foundation of nineteenth-century movements such as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England, the Nazarenes in Germany (initially based in Italy) and later in France, and the Beuron School, attached to the Benedictine monastery of Beuron in Swabia.

### Maurice Denis

If the reader is hoping to see some of the images spoken of, they will not find them here. This is a book as much about the reception of art, the narratives and counter-narratives that shape taste and sensibility, as about art itself, and the story, perhaps necessarily, is carried in frequent quotations from secondary sources. These, arguably, are themselves part of the tale. The only reproductions of images to be seen are on the front and back cover. These are details from the painting of Maurice Denis, “Le Mystère Catholique”, and from his decoration of the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Vésinet, both painted in 1899. Denis was a devout Catholic, a supporter of Maurras’ *Action française*, a theoretician and painter, and an admirer of both Byzantine art and the Italian Primitives (and, in due course, later styles). The images on the covers give a tantalising, but perhaps not altogether convincing, glimpse of the artist whom Fr Nichols describes as representing “probably the furthest a Western Catholic can go in the direction of a fully adequate sacred art, lacking as he or she does a background in the canonical iconography of Byzantine-Slav Orthodoxy, the most successful of all historic styles the Church has employed.”

Denis’ early, ardent diary entries written after visiting the Louvre in 1886 where he discovered Fra Angelico, reveal his theological acuity and why Fr Nichols foregrounds him: “Painting is an essentially religious and Christian art.” The proclamation of the Word Incarnate must be made, the Second Council of Nicea, the Icon Council, attested in 787, both by word (language) and visual image. The teaching was reaffirmed in Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and in its companion text on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As Fr Nichols has put it elsewhere, the Church is “‘iconifier’ – bearer of images and mother of artists”; she must take up this role again. In his youthful diary, Denis expresses a similar insight: “If this character [of painting as essentially a religious and Christian art] is lost in our impious age, it must be refound. And the means is to return



to honour the aesthetic of Angelico. [...] we must make an effort, a great effort, to lead back art to its great master who is God"; and he goes on to reflect, "the Church, holy souls, must inevitably grasp that realism and naturalism ... are incapable of satisfying them." What is needed is the "Christian vision of the real". It must show us images, that is, of transfigured humanity, of the Saviour, above all, and the Saints.

The high challenge in producing such art is acknowledged by Denis in his mature work, *Théories*, published in 1919:

I would like people to know what difficulties, what snares an artist meets who, in the absence of *traditions de métier*, is constrained to orient himself among false doctrines and paradoxes and to seek by reason alone the study of the Masters the means of ordering his effort.

Together with Georges Desvallières, Denis founded a school of sacred art along the lines of an apprentices' studio. The initiative may be paralleled with the Confraternity of St John the Evangelist, founded by Lacordaire from his priory near Viterbo in 1839. Its founding Rule asked that painters, "touched by the spectacle that the world presents", place themselves under the patronage of St John who "penetrated most deeply into the mysteries of the divine beauty and love, those eternal objects of the contemplation of true artists".

## A sacramental view

Fr Nichols draws some conclusions as the book closes. What is needed is a more profound reception of the teaching of Nicea II and a "deeper sacramental view of the image" by the Christian West, without which "the criteria of its critics can only be inadequate indeed". He stops short of calling for schools of Christian art falling within the territory of every Bishops' Conference, a suggestion he made some thirty years ago in an article that should be read alongside this book, "On Baptising the Visual Arts: A Friar's Meditation" (New Blackfriars, 1993). A short, stimulating and important article, it holds, in seed, many

of the reflections in this book.

*In Search of the Sacred Image* is a challenge. It is so in two senses: the story of the currents and counter-currents of artistic endeavour, debate, aesthetic evaluation and re-evaluation of sacred art during the hundred and fifty years covered is exceptionally complex. Even as condensed and synthesised by Fr Nichols, the story told makes for a dense, demanding read. The dependence on lengthy quotations from secondary sources to carry the narrative forward (though arguably part of the story and perhaps unavoidable in a relatively short book covering a long period of sacred art) can fatigue.

## Intimate connection with the liturgy

The book is a challenge, however, in a more important sense. It presents itself as a point of departure not arrival. Exhausted by the still not fully resolved "crisis in sacred art" of the 1950s (and other more recent global crises), we are encouraged to *ressourcement* – to return to the sources. To revisit, that is, the Church's rich iconographical traditions, reviewing them to see how they may enrich and catechise us and above all "voice" the Divine Liturgy. Vatican II's *Sacrum Concilium*, the document on the Liturgy, explicitly states that the distinguishing feature of sacred (as differentiated from religious art) is its intimate connection with the Liturgy.

Fr Nichols is good at book titles. This one recalls the Psalmist's injunction: "Constantly seek his face" (Psalm 104/5:4), and its peerless Augustinian gloss: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are made restless until they rest in you" (Confessions 1:1). It also testifies to Fr Nichols' own attentive responsiveness to the pronouncements on art and faith by our last three Popes, and to his own persevering search for the divine image.

**Katherine Turley studies and writes about medieval literature and art; she is an Oblate of St Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde.**



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