



# Faith

Promoting a new synthesis of faith and reason

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# The Signs of the Times

**When the idea of a youth group as part of the Faith Movement was first being discussed, one possible name suggested was “The 72” (Luke:10).**

This was the 1970s and someone commented that it sounded like the name of a pop group. Others felt that giving such a specific number would, to the Scripturally illiterate, seem to be a rather random restriction on recruitment...

The Faith Movement has since grown and flourished: in 2022 as we mark the 50th anniversary of 1972, the regular “Faithvine” of news each month is filled with snippets about weddings, baptisms, priests’ appointments, and the like, as new generations follow in the footsteps of “the 72”.

Please God, we can hope that 2022 will see — as 2020 and 21 could not — some Faith Movement events. After these bleak times of lockdown and semi-lockdown, memories stir. Summer Sessions with afternoons in sunshine... inspiring talks and long thoughtful conversations, swimming and football sessions, beautiful Masses, processions with candlelight and glorious singing... and quiz-nights and concerts and more... and, usually, a great firework display on the final evening, putting a seal on another unforgettable gathering.

The Summer Session has been written into the memories of men and women now in middle age, or old age, who look back at fading pictures with laughter at 1970s haircuts or with memories of the first ceilidhs which established a tradition and transformed evenings which had formerly included rather underwhelming discos...

As we look to the future, there are of course new chapters to be written and new hopes. The key is the teaching and explanation of the synthesis of faith and science, God’s “master key” and the centrality of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The Church must always be alive to the “signs of the times”. It is easy for Catholics to misunderstand these. The phrase does not mean that we should become absorbed into the immediate worries and concerns of each decade. The Church was right, at the Second Vatican Council, to be aware of the larger things that were emerging, beyond the immediate concerns of the post-WWII Cold War, the horrors of Communism, and the threat of atomic war. Today, in ways that could not be seen in the 1960s and 70s, but was somehow



understood at a deeper level as being possible, the Church thrives with astonishing growth across Africa, faces renewed persecution under Islam, and sees new challenges in the era of immediate communication, the internet, and more. The Council equipped the Church for these things, somehow grasping the signs of “the times” as being more than signs immediately apparent in the 1960s.

In the 19th century, Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, believed passionately that the future security of the Church depended on the continuation of power in Papal States and the Pope as the temporal ruler of that part of Italy. St John Henry Newman did not share this belief, though obeyed his own bishop, Ullathorne, when told he must preach a sermon on the subject. The result was a carefully nuanced and wise approach which proved to be prophetic. The Lateran Treaty of the early 20th century resolved a problem which had seemed intractable in the 19th century.

At the end of the 20th century there was a sense of fear among many that the year 2000 would bring some sort of dramatic horror. A widespread notion was that of civic breakdown due to “Y2K”, the collapse of all computer networks at the calendar change. On-line discussions on this, together with a rash of paperback books and lots of general gossip, often focused on the notion that all of this presaged the End Times, with Christ’s return following an era of horror. It didn’t happen. The world’s computers worked normally. The real “signs of the times” are not always the things that capture the public or even the Catholic imagination.

The real “signs of the times” are not always the things that capture the public or even the Catholic imagination.

Meanwhile in both the 19th and the 20th centuries, and on into the 21st, the issue of “science and religion” throbbed and jingled in hearts and minds, in academia and in politics, in families and religious communities, both in the developed world and in the emerging former missionary lands with new generations asking the challenging questions. The issue was one which fomented Marxism, nourished the attacks on the Church under the Nazis, and fostered confusion and disillusionment within formerly confident Christian communities. Above all, it is a dominant issue among young people. To respond to it is to respond at a deep level to the “signs of the times”. The Faith Movement tackles this as its core mission.

Newman understood that questions concerning, for example, evolution and Genesis, were important, and that failure to explain and teach an authentic message would result in cynicism and disbelief. The signs of the times demanded a response to the questions being raised by a rising belief that “science” had disproved ideas once thought to be secure. The Faith Movement has this same understanding, and offers a coherent vision that moves forward to evangelisation of a world that needs Christ, Redeemer and Lord.

# A Fresh Look at Martin Luther



## Richard Rex looks at Martin Luther's work, half a millennia after the famous declaration at Worms

**Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther set off for his date with destiny, at the famous 'Diet of Worms' – which was very much not what it 'says on the tin'.**

'Diet' was the English word to describe the Reichstag, i.e. the parliament of the Holy Roman Empire. This occasional and peripatetic institution convened on 27 January 1521 at the German free city of Worms, in the Rhineland. Luther was summoned there to appear before the Holy Roman Emperor and the great princes of the Reich in order to answer for his novel and subversive religious teachings, which had been condemned by the authority of the pope in 1520. The hearing at Worms would give him the opportunity to recant, or else add outlawry to the penalty of excommunication already hanging over him.

Luther reached Worms on Tuesday 16 April (the papal representative there knew at once – because he heard the sudden hubbub in the town, the cheering of the crowds). Next day he was taken before the assembly. The proceedings were to be summary, to deny him the 'oxygen of publicity.' He was simply to answer two questions. Were the books circulating under his name indeed his? And if so would he recant the errors that had been identified in them? Despite all the efforts of the authorities, Luther seized the initiative. Undaunted by the occasion, buoyed up, no doubt, by his new faith and his confidence that whatever happened to him, it was for the sake of the 'gospel', he answered the first question (they were) and cleverly dodged the second. He was ready to retract anything that could be shown to be contrary to scripture, he said, but he wanted time to consider before answering in detail, as he would not wish to deny Christ before men. This appeal to natural justice worked, and he was granted a day's grace, which gave him time to plan his strategy. Faced again with the second question next day, he launched into a wide-ranging speech, justifying his writings under the pretext of categorising them, comparing his situation that day to the appearance of Christ before the Sanhedrin, and concluding with his great refusal:

Unless I am convinced by the evidence of scripture or by cogent reasoning – for I believe in neither Popes nor Councils alone, because it is plain that they have often erred and contradicted each other – I am overwhelmed by the scriptures I have myself quoted, and with my conscience thus taken captive by the Words of God, I neither can nor will revoke a thing, since



it is neither safe nor sound to do  
anything against one's conscience.  
God help poor little me. Amen

## The Luther Movement

A select group of princes sought to change Luther's mind in a private meeting a week later, but in vain, and on Friday 26 April, to the surprise of many, including perhaps himself, he was allowed to leave Worms safe and sound. Soon afterwards he went into hiding. A heroic account of his performance, *What Happened at Worms*, was in print almost at once, while the Reichstag itself dithered: the Edict of Worms that made Luther an outlaw was not agreed and promulgated until 26 May. No modern spin doctor or PR guru could have taught Luther and his supporters anything about 'controlling the narrative.' The authorities followed due process with measured tread: Luther was light on his feet. His incipient religious movement, already gathering impressive levels of popular support, now spun out of control, and within twenty years would take half of the Empire and all Scandinavia away from the Roman Catholic Church to form regional or national churches known to themselves as 'Evangelical' and to everyone else as 'Lutheran'. He would also inspire imitators and rivals who would go on to found a variety of other religious traditions, the chief of them being the 'Reformed' (otherwise known as Calvinist) and the Baptist (known to their opponents at that time as 'Anabaptist'). Latin Christendom, a seamless if somewhat tattered robe in 1500, became a patchwork quilt.

## What was it all about?

What it was really about was Luther's development of a fundamentally novel interpretation of the entire Christian religion, an interpretation usually summed up in the slogan 'justification by faith alone'. Most Christians today find this whole subject extremely difficult to understand, not least because only a small number of 'Evangelical' Chris-

tians still hold Luther's actual doctrine. (This is not to say that the number of 'Evangelical Christians' is small, but that only a minority of them understand and hold Luther's doctrine.)

Oddly enough, Luther's key doctrine did not figure in the papal condemnation of his teachings published in June 1520, perhaps because it was too delicate an issue to handle in a checklist of mostly blunt denials, such as his denial of free will and of papal primacy. But by May 1521 it was obvious to the English theologian John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone was the root from which sprang all his further deviations from Roman Catholic orthodoxy – though even he, intelligent and informed observer that he was, did not penetrate right to the core of Luther's novel and paradoxical teaching. In a sermon preached to the citizens of London, Fisher identified as one of the 'great grounds' of Luther's doctrine the idea that 'faith alone without works does justify a sinner'. 'Upon the which ground,' Fisher went on, 'he builds many other erroneous articles, and specially that the sacraments of Christ's Church do not justify, but only faith.'

What Fisher did not quite get was what Luther thought faith actually was. He understood well enough the claim that 'justification' (the realignment of the human soul with God) came about by 'faith alone' – without, that is, any contribution or cooperation on the part of the justified person themselves. He found it harder to grasp Luther's unprecedented understanding of what 'faith' meant. For Luther, faith was a trust in God's forgiveness so complete that each believer, through that faith, enjoyed total certainty that they were in a 'state of grace.'

If anyone doubts, and is not certainly  
persuaded, that they have the favour  
of God, then indeed they have it not.  
As they believe, so do they receive.  
For nobody can know that they are

in grace and have the favour of God, except by faith. If they believe this, they are saved. If they do not, they are condemned.

But this doctrine of certainty, which was the crucial issue to Luther himself, and which was the core of his appeal among intellectuals, was integrally connected to the exclusion of the human contribution ('works') from the process. Precisely because human beings were marked by original sin, the effects of which persisted even after justification, certainty of grace would never have been possible had the process of justification involved any actual contribution or collaboration on the part of its intrinsically unreliable human recipients. The vein of sin running through their every thought and deed would vitiate faith itself if it were in any way *their* action.

## The Logical Flaw

There are three fatal flaws in Luther's doctrine of 'justification by faith alone.' The first is logical. Because the certainty of grace that is central to his doctrine would simply not be possible if it depended to even the slightest degree upon any 'work' performed by the believer (any action at all, even a mental act or disposition), Luther has to exclude from faith itself any sense that it is a work or action done by the believer. But since the act of faith is classically expressed in the words 'I believe,' which go right back to the earliest recorded times of the Christian Church, this exclusion is at best paradoxical and at worst meaningless. Luther's doctrine makes of the act of faith an act performed by the Holy Spirit in that person and on that person. Thus far, the traditional understanding of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas can still go. But while Augustine and Thomas see the human person 'co-operating' with divine grace under the influence of that grace, so that the act of faith is also by that person and of that person, for Luther and his new theology, even granting that much gives too much of a role to the subject, introducing

a human element which, precisely because it is human, brings with it unreliability and thus uncertainty. For Luther, in the words of one twentieth-century Lutheran interpreter of his theology, 'Faith is an act of the human person in which the human person is entirely passive'. That is of course a literally meaningless statement – a contradiction in terms – but it is a statement which has to be made if Luther's understanding of faith is to be upheld.

## The Scriptural Flaw

The second flaw is scriptural. Although Luther maintained that his doctrine was the proper interpretation of the teaching of the Apostle Paul, and that the scriptural basis and character of his doctrine was plain and simple, Paul never actually wrote anywhere that justification was attained by 'faith alone'. In his own German translation of the Bible, Luther remedied this regrettable oversight in a cavalier fashion that his opponents regarded as tendentious or downright mendacious. He added the word 'only' ('allein') in his rendering of Romans 3:28: 'der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, **allein** durch den Glauben' ('Man is justified without the Law's Works, **only** through Faith'). This has been defended ever since with the explanation that it merely makes explicit what is implicit in the original Greek. This defence is problematic, though, given Luther's insistence on the 'plain sense' of scripture. Nobody before him had found Luther's meaning implicit in Paul's words.

More disturbingly still, justification by 'faith alone' is in fact mentioned once – just once – in the Bible. But on the one occasion where the words are used (James 2:24), it is not to affirm justification by faith alone, but to deny it. Luther's response to this difficulty was equally robust. He denied that the Epistle of James was properly 'apostolic' or even scriptural. Having already established to his own satisfaction that justification by faith alone was the very kernel of the gospel message,

he concluded that anything contradicting it was not 'evangelical', even if found within the pages of the Bible. He did not quite go so far as to leave James out of the Bible altogether, but he denied that this epistle carried any weight against 'the gospel' (as he now called his teaching). It was, in short, 'an epistle of straw'. Most Protestants have been reluctant to follow his example in so roundly censuring James. Almost immediately, ingenious arguments were excogitated to reconcile the words of James with the Lutheran interpretation of Paul. But Luther himself would have none of it. For him, the words of James were simply too plain to be explained away:

Many people work up a sweat reconciling James with Paul... But it doesn't work: they are contradictory. Faith justifies: faith does not justify. If anyone can bring those together, then I'll take my hat off to him and let myself be called a fool. (WA Tr. 3.3292a, p. 253)

## Psychological

The third fatal flaw in Luther's teaching is psychological. To inculcate 'certainty' is to insinuate doubt. We know from Luther's own later testimony that in the years leading up to his theological breakthrough moment (which came in early in 1518), he was plagued with anxiety over his spiritual state, prone to the obsessive confession of his unremarkable sins, and keen, in whatever time was allowed him by his commitments as a university professor (a profession apparently as overworked then as now), to seek reassurance through equally obsessive religious observance. Without necessarily invoking modern conceptions of the 'bipolar' or 'manic depressive', it is tempting to see in Luther the symptoms of some form of mental ill-health from which his new theology offered a therapeutic release. However, that insistence on certainty as to one's spiritual state also has a self-defeating element. After the initial endorphin surge of a conversion experienced in terms of Luther's teaching, doubts

seem to return. They certainly recurred in Luther's case, and he and his tradition developed an elaborate casuistry or sophistry to explain why certainty was not always certain. But they never called into question the appropriateness of 'certainty' (often rhetorically softened in English to the etymologically cognate but somehow cuddlier word 'assurance') as a term of art.

## Principles

As John Fisher pointed out in his sermon 500 years ago, 'justification by faith alone' was not the only fundamental principle of Luther's doctrine. Equally important was his insistence that only what was written in the Bible could be regarded as authoritative Christian teaching, and that therefore nothing that depended merely on ecclesiastical tradition could be credited with binding force. Luther was driven to 'scripture alone' in response to the ecclesiastical condemnation of his distinctive teachings. He was not prepared to submit to the judgement of the church, a refusal the church interpreted as sublime arrogance. But Luther denied that he was setting his own judgement above that of the community of the faithful. On the contrary, he maintained, it was scripture itself that was being condemned by the Church. His teaching was 'the gospel'; the papacy was condemning his teaching; therefore the papacy was condemning 'the gospel'. Luther's invocation of 'scripture alone' proved as attractive as his insistence on 'faith alone'. Scripture, of course, was universally accepted as divine in character and authority. So the logic of his argument that the Word of God should prevail in any theological argument over the words of men – even over the words of bishops, popes, and general councils of the Church, all of which were undeniably human – was immediately gripping. His claim gained even more traction in his homeland from the fact that he backed it up with a fluent new translation first of the New Testament (1522) and then of the entire Bible (1534). Thanks to the



invention of the printing press, Luther's Bible swept all before it and helped to shape the history of the German language itself. You could read the evidence for yourself! And if you couldn't actually read it yourself (for literacy was still very limited), then you probably knew someone who could read it to you.



Nicolò de' Tudeschi, generally known as 'Panormitanus'

Luther was able to bolster his claim with a sort of thought-experiment conducted by a fifteenth-century canon lawyer, Nicolò de' Tudeschi, generally known to scholars as 'Panormitanus' ('the guy from Palermo'). Taking his departure from the situation of the church on the night of Jesus's arrest, when the disciples had fled in fear and thus, as medieval exegesis saw it, defected from the faith, Panormitanus held that the church that night had only one merely human member – the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was therefore possible, he concluded, for the membership level of the entire church on earth to sink as low as one. It was also conceivable that any man or group of men might defect from the faith, as the disciples had done that night – even a pope, or bishops. Panormitanus was writing in the wake of the 'Great Schism' that lasted for decades around the year 1400, when the church was split into two camps by rival popes, so his idea was not quite so ridiculous then as it might seem now. Such defectors might of course teach dogmas that contradicted the truth of scripture. Panormitanus pursued his thought experiment further, postulating the case of a person who was called upon by such authorities to affirm some position incompatible with revealed truth. He concluded that, in principle, a single individual, armed with scripture, would be justified in conscience in resisting the serried ranks of the erring ecclesiastical hierarchy. Luther picked up this idea and made frequent reference to it in the early years of his public career. He saw himself as, precisely, that individual, armed with the plain text of scripture and maintaining God's truth against the might of the establishment. That was the role he was playing as he stood before the Emperor and the German princes at Worms in April 1521. He expected that role to be followed by that of martyr, for he was by no means certain of the safe-conduct that had been granted to him by the emperor. A century before, an imperial safe-conduct had not saved Jan Hus when he was condemned for heresy by the church council at Constance. There can be no doubting Luther's courage.

## A Self-defeating success?

It was Luther's instant success that made his ultimate failure inevitable. What he wanted was to bring the whole Church back to the 'gospel' – as he understood it. But his interpretation of the gospel, for all the force that his inspiring rhetoric could lend it, was not the 'plain and simple' reading of the Bible that he imagined. It never even came close to convincing everybody. However, the hermeneutic he developed in order to protect his theological message against condemnation by the ecclesiastical authorities turned out to be doubly self-defeating. With his demonisation of 'human traditions' in the name

of the divine authority of the Bible, Luther simply sawed through the branch on which he perched. For the Bible was one of the earliest and oldest traditions of the Church. The Church's veneration for scripture was older than any formal definition of which books actually constituted it. In the clamour generated by Luther's trashing of so many traditions, it was easy to overlook the retention of others, and to dismiss Catholic questions about infant baptism, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the rest as silly logic-chopping. But what Luther could not prevent was other people playing him at his own game. Infant baptism was evidently the constant practice of the Church, and Luther of course retained it, as did Zwingli and Calvin. But it was certainly not explicitly mandated in the Bible, and it was easy for others to dismiss it as 'human tradition'. The doctrine of the Trinity was consistent with the Bible, but was anything but explicitly formulated within its pages. Luther of course retained it, as did Zwingli and Calvin. But others would apply his logic to the Trinity within a decade of his stand at Worms, and dismiss it, too, as 'human tradition'.

**Ultimately, belief in the divinely inspired status of the Bible was itself a human tradition. The Bible contains claims for the divine inspiration of the scriptures, but no divinely inspired list of its own contents.**

In Luther's lifetime, scriptural authority was only challenged by self-styled prophets who claimed direct personal inspiration from the Holy Ghost. In the very long term, though, his logic would be taken still further by those who asked, perfectly legitimately, why anyone should defer to ancient texts any more than to ancient traditions. Luther had to bring down tradition in order to hold up scripture (as he understood it). But his demolition of tradition ultimately

brought scripture down with it, leaving only the 'individual' of western modernity and postmodernity. By 1700, the right to 'private judgement' in the interpretation of scripture, a notion Luther indignantly repudiated, was axiomatic among many Protestants

While Luther hoped for a corporate revival of Christianity along the biblical path he had charted, his theology was a recipe for individualism – as his opponents loudly proclaimed. Justification by faith alone was a wholly internal affair: you, and you alone, could know if you had faith, that is, if you were saved. Others might form a reasonable conjecture about your state, but without immediate access to your experience, they could not be certain about your certainty. It was much the same with the plain and simple meaning of scripture. How was it that not everyone could see that plain and simple meaning? There was an explanation. You could only see the plain and simple meaning if you had the gift of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit was only given to those who had faith; and, as we have seen, you knew if you had faith. Between them, Luther's fundamental principles were therefore a recipe for individualism and a charter for egotists. Anyone who had a distinctive interpretation of scripture and a confidence in their own spiritual condition was armoured against any risk of refutation. It was Luther's egotism that blinded him to the radical individualism of his teaching. He was so sure he was right that he could not imagine anyone having the same confidence in anything else. Within ten years of his condemnation by pope and emperor, Luther could see for himself that confusion and controversy raged within Christendom as never before. He never realised, however, that this was a harvest of his own sowing. Luther might not have lived on a 'diet of worms', but he had certainly opened a can of them.

**Professor Richard Rex is Professor of Reformation History at the University of Cambridge**

# Science and the Catholic Faith

## Dermott O’Gorman offers a meditation on the Epiphany

**It is always interesting to hear the story of someone who has journeyed from atheism to Christianity. One of the most interesting recent such stories is that of Professor Francis Collins. He is one of the world’s most prominent scientists and was the leader of the Human Genome project.**



A self-described ‘obnoxious atheist’ in his student days, his study of CS Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*, his experience of beauty, and finding an explanation for morality, all led him to the conclusion that God must exist and that He has communicated Himself in Jesus Christ. Collins said: “I saw in the very science that I so loved something that I missed, that the universe seemed to cry out for a creator... [it] had a beginning; it follows elegant mathematical laws. Those laws include a half dozen constants that, [if they were different], there would be no possibility of our planet existing.” Collins’ questioning then went on from, as he described, saying that God must be an amazing physicist, to “but does he care about me?” His study went further as he recognised or met a person who not only claimed to know the answer, but to be the answer — Jesus Christ. And so, one day, kneeling on a grassy verge whilst walking in the mountains it all made sense in his heart as he recognised, as St. Paul tells us, that “before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ.”

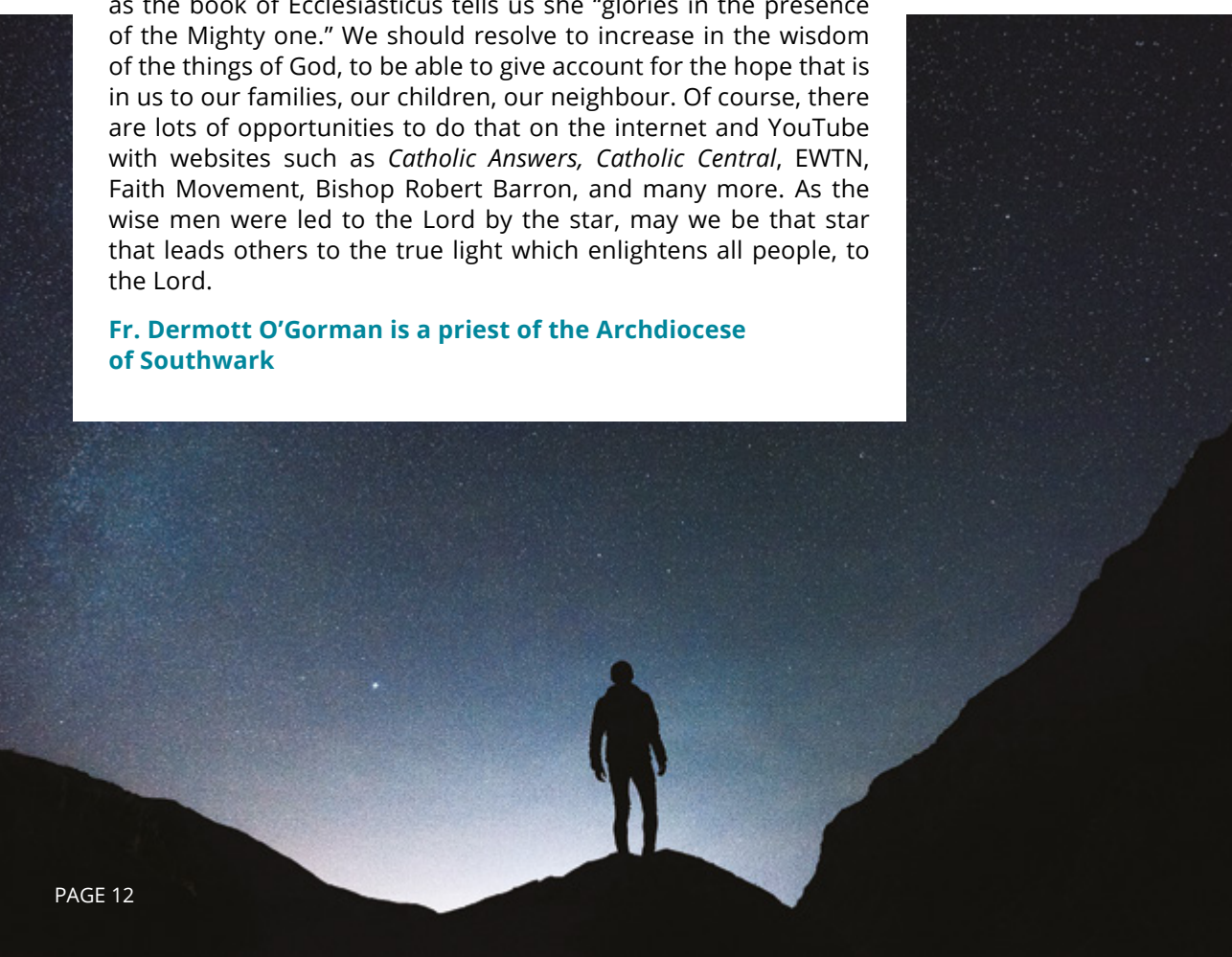
Our faith requires us to engage both our brains and our hearts, as St. John Paul II put it in his encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* (On Faith and Reason): “faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to contemplation of the truth.” The caricature of our faith spouted by prominent atheists such as Richard Dawkins — who erroneously claims that Catholics must see the Genesis creation account as literal — is frustrating. As Collins rightly said, the Book of Genesis was never meant to be a scientific textbook, and thus the God of the Bible is also the God of the Genome. Galileo, Descartes, Mendel, Newton, Darwin, Le Maitre are all alongside Collins — famous scientists who saw not conflict between God and science. And indeed, the great scientists who we celebrate on the feast of the Epiphany saw no conflict. Like Collins’ conversion story, it was their science or astronomy that led them to God, to Christ, to the truth who is referred to as the ‘Word’ in our Gospel which comes from the Greek word *logos*. They saw in the intelligi-

bility of the stars a sign of intelligence which led them to its source. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI delved into the meaning of the word *logos*, which he says means the same as 'mind.' To say the world comes from the *logos* means that the world is intelligible. As he says: "even before we make sense of anything, meaning is there, God is there." The discovery of law in the universe points to a lawgiver, to a supreme mind.

Elvis Presley said of truth: "Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't goin' away." The Lord Jesus Christ, the humble babe in the crib, holds the truth to our existence. He is indeed the key to the meaning of the universe, not a cultic leader but a cosmic figure. As the St. John so beautifully puts it: "grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ through whom all things came to be." But truth makes demands and we can deny it or be closed off to it. Wisdom is different from intelligence, just as the street sweeper can be wiser than the astronaut. Wisdom is knowledge of divine things (as St. Augustine said), and openness to such, as the book of Ecclesiasticus tells us she "glories in the presence of the Mighty one." We should resolve to increase in the wisdom of the things of God, to be able to give account for the hope that is in us to our families, our children, our neighbour. Of course, there are lots of opportunities to do that on the internet and YouTube with websites such as *Catholic Answers*, *Catholic Central*, EWTN, Faith Movement, Bishop Robert Barron, and many more. As the wise men were led to the Lord by the star, may we be that star that leads others to the true light which enlightens all people, to the Lord.

**Fr. Dermott O'Gorman is a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the humble babe in the crib, holds the truth to our existence. He is indeed the key to the meaning of the universe, not a cultic leader but a cosmic figure.



## From Across the Pond...

### Fr Peter Stravinskas reports from the USA



#### Ad intra

##### School Choice

As regular readers of this column should know, the Church in the United States has been fighting for educational choice and parity for over 150 years. As I have repeated *ad infinitum*, we do not want State monies flowing into church or school coffers because we have learned from the experience of other countries, such subsidies always come at a high price.

Hence, our push has been for direct aid to parents (as the primary educators of their children and thus by nature apt to choose the most appropriate educational setting for their children).

Yet another consideration: Through the 1960s and 1970s, such aid programs were perceived as uniquely “Catholic” concerns and enemies of school choice played the anti-Catholic card, to great advantage. Interestingly, the Southern Baptists –

notoriously opposed to anything that could have the remotest benefit to Catholics – historically argued that any aid to “sectarian” schools (that adjective always signals nasty and unfair debate; the neutral term is “faith-based”) was a clear violation of their cherished “separation of Church and State.” Ironically, they controlled the so-called “public” schools of the South; once they lost their stranglehold on the government schools and began to open their own “sectarian” schools, they have a new and more “enlightened” view of constitutional law: They now favor school choice!

When we add our traditional allies in school choice initiatives, namely, Lutherans and Orthodox Jews, we have an impressive ecumenical and interfaith coalition. Beyond that, totally secular folk are now totally disabused of the notion of how wonderful the government schools are – one of the positive side-effects of the “pandemic” as they saw, first-hand, the abysmal state of “public” education.



As a result, the past year saw the expansion or introduction of choice programs in 18 States, coming in the form of either tax credits or vouchers: Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, West Virginia. Noticeably absent are almost all States of the Northeast, where the teacher unions have almost absolute dominion and where Democrats reign supreme.

If the predicted “red wave” of Republican victories for both the House of Representatives and Senate materialize, we can expect federal programs to surface.

### School Choice – A Particular Case

In December, the Supreme Court heard a case originating in Maine; this presents a fascinating situation.

Unbeknownst to me – and apparently thousands of others – many rural communities in Maine do not have their own schools and thus “farm out” their students to nearby municipalities, paying them tuition. More to the point, parents are permitted to select any school – “public” or “private.” There is one hitch, however, a “private” school cannot be a “sectarian” school (there’s that mischievous designation again). Several parents are plaintiffs in the case; none use Catholic schools (but their contention would hold for any faith-based school).

Justice Brett Kavanaugh (himself a product of Catholic schools, like five other of the Justices as well!) weighed in: “That’s just discrimination on the basis of religion right there at that – at the neighborhood level... I think it’s important on this public discord or strife issue to emphasize that, as I understand it, they are seeking equal treatment, not special treatment. They’re – they’re saying don’t treat me worse because I want to send my children to a religious school rather than a secular school. Treat me the same as the secular parent next door. I think that’s what they are asking for, is equal treatment.”

Given the questions raised by the Justices, it appears that the Maine policy will be declared discriminatory, opening the way for broad programs of support for parental freedom of educational choice.

### Another “Fake” Catholic in the Biden Administration

Secretary of Health and Human Services, Xavier Becerra, announced that his Department would be revoking any religious waivers for faith-based child welfare groups and altering enforcement provisions for religious liberty. Fox News asked Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler (Texas) for his reaction to Becerra’s announcement: “More brokenness from so-called Catholics... maybe we should send him a Catechism.” That says it all.

They’re saying don’t treat me worse because I want to send my children to a religious school rather than a secular school. Treat me the same as the secular parent next door.

## Assessments of China

Many pessimistic assessments of an accelerating campaign against religion and the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in mainland China have surfaced, including a warning from former Ambassador-at-Large on International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback (a Catholic convert), who described the Chinese Communist Party-led government of President Xi Jinping as “evil.”

In an interview with the Jesuit *America* magazine, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York had this to say about the Holy See's approach to Communist China: “My gut also tells me that you can't negotiate with these people. It could be extraordinarily counterproductive.”

## A Last Democrat Hold-out

Former Congressman Dan Lipinski of Illinois spoke at a conference at Notre Dame University in November, reflecting on his attempt to remain in the Democrat Party, while holding to his pro-life convictions.

Impressively, he observed:

For sixteen years, with God's grace, I tried however imperfectly to play my part as a Catholic in Congress...I went to Congress knowing that I would face challenges within my party on some non-negotiable issues. I forthrightly proclaimed my position on these issues and said that I would not change. This caused consternation among the sectarian partisans in my party, who viewed me with suspicion and saw my refusal to always follow the party line as betrayal. I was committed to being a Catholic first, before being a Democrat, and people recognized that. I had more than one constituent come up to me and say... “You vote Catholic.”

Lipinski was effectively drummed out of the Democrat party of death, as Cardinal Dolan has termed them.

## Covid-related school closures

We thought Covid-excuses for not having in-person classes were over and done. Well, guess again. With the post-Christmas return to school, we now find government school teacher unions around the country (but especially in Chicago) declaring the impossibility of returning to classrooms, out of – here's always the catch-phrase) “an abundance of caution.” More rational voices – more concerned about children than lazy teachers – point to the Catholic schools that have almost universally maintained full, in-person education – with no deleterious effects on anyone in their school communities. It must be all the “Hail Marys”!

## Pro-life Ecumenism

The earliest organized opposition to abortion-on-demand in America came from the bishops of our nation. In fact, the National Abortion Rights Action League targeted our bishops as Public Enemy Number One and attempted to resurrect the historical anti-Catholicism of the country to garner support for their cause. With the passage of time, Evangelical Christians (our traditional “enemies”) began to join us in abortion clinic protests. While initially “turned off” by our recitation of the Rosary at such events, not a few came to an appreciation of that prayer form – and not a few even ended up as Catholics. Eastern Orthodox have also become more visible in the fight. Some observers have pointed out that our annual March for Life in Washington, coinciding with the Supreme Court's Roe decision on January 22, 1973, always falls within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18-25.

Support for the sanctity of human life also transcends Christianity, with Orthodox Jews, Buddhists, Hindus (and even secularists), forming the pro-life alliance of the nation.

## Parental Rights and Abortion

This past December, J.B. Pritzger, Governor of Illinois signed into law a bill no longer calling for parental notification regarding the potential abortion of underage girls. The Bishop of Springfield (capital of the State), Thomas Paprocki – both a civil and canon lawyer – reacted in the strongest of terms: “... the government has provided evil the cover of darkness in which it thrives,” he said. “The Devil desires darkness and despises the light. It is striking how much this legislation does to provide cover, secrecy, and darkness over evil deeds.” He also noted that the law basically gives a “free pass” to sex traffickers by making it easier for them to abuse young girls and cover up their crimes. Zeroing in particularly on the legislation’s violation of parents’ rights, Bishop Paprocki declared: “This is a right and responsibility that God grants, and which no government can take away. In attempting to do so, this legislation acts directly against God’s will, which is the very definition of evil.”

## Catholic High School and a Walk-out

In a highly unusual and most embarrassing situation, this past November Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco held an all-school assembly featuring pro-life activist Megan Almon. During the assembly, a number of students walked out in protest of the event. Subsequently, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone went to Riordan High School to meet with student leaders in small groups on November 8.

One of our proudest boasts in the States is that our Catholic high school students are proudly pro-life, which has been noted with dismay by enemies of life. Hence, this is a gross anomaly. The Archbishop’s letter to the school community, published in *First Things*, is a model of pastoral leadership and deserves a wide reading: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/11/an-open-letter-to-the-students-of-archbishop-riordan-high-school>.

Given the anomalous nature of this protest, one can only conclude that this “walk-out” was orchestrated by outside sources.

## Ad extra

## Pious Joe’s Ratings

Biden’s approval ratings with practicing Catholics and Republicans have been abysmal, from Day One. It appears the rest of the country has now caught on to the smoke-and-mirrors game. Ole’ Joe can now boast of the lowest approval rating of any president in modern history – below 36%, as of this writing.

## The Supreme Court and Abortion

With the Supreme Court’s hearing of the Mississippi law banning abortion after 15 weeks – and the seemingly positive reaction of a majority of the justices toward the law – serious commentators are looking toward a post-Roe climate.

However, one of the consistent objections raised to the possible overturn of *Roe v. Wade* (the infamous decision that legalized abortion in all fifty states) is that such a development would upturn the quasi-sacred notion of judicial “precedents.” In “Precedents Are No Obstacle to Overturning *Roe v. Wade*,” an op-ed by Robert P. George and Christopher Kaczor, the authors argue that if there is a textbook case for overturning precedent, *Roe*—and its 63 million victims—qualifies.

They quote the liberal Erwin Chemerinsky who summarized several key reversals:

The power of these examples is that they are non-partisan. Liberals and conservatives alike can agree that the court was wrong in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* in holding that slaves are property and not citizens, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in upholding separate but equal and in *Korematsu v. United States* in ruling in favor of the authority of the government to evacuate Japanese-Americans from the west coast during World War II.

They add: "Overturning a Supreme Court ruling is scarcely unheard of or even particularly novel. The Court has done it nearly 150 times." They note that Roe is as contentious and divisive today as it was in 1973, perhaps more so. Further: "The Court's unwarranted exercise of raw power did nothing to temper the division and much to enflame it. In that respect, as in others, it profoundly resembles *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, and deserves to join that infamous ruling on the ash heap of history."

### Cause for Rejoicing on the Pro-life Front

At times, the obstacles to the good in society can seem overwhelming, which makes highlighting "good news" so important, lest we lose heart.

With that in mind, Christian Action News this past December posted the following accomplishments on behalf of life:

- **Over 100 pro-life state laws were passed in 2021**
- **41 sanctuary cities now outlaw abortion**
- **Scientific facts support pro-life convictions**
- **3D & 4D ultra-sounds support life**
- **Pro-lifers have more children than pro-aborts**
- **Most Millennials are pro-life**
- **In the last seven years, 550 abortion employees have quit**
- **Pregnancy care sites outnumber abortion mills 7 to 1**
- **36 abortion mills closed in 2019**
- **In 1991, there were 2,176 abortion mills; in 2020, 712**
- **Planned Parenthood lost 400,000 donors in 2019**

### More Abortion Politics

The State of New Jersey has reached two new lows (with its "Fake" Catholic Governor): Now, non-doctors can perform abortions. In the final hour of the legislative session, a radical piece of legislation was passed, essentially enshrining abortion rights into law – regardless of what the Supreme Court may say on the matter.

The City of Boston – in a genuine act of perversion – now gives its employees twelve weeks of paid leave after an abortion.

On a happier note, Ohio Governor Mike Dewine (a serious Catholic, with eight children) has signed a bill requiring life-saving means to be used for babies who survive an abortion.

A new report from American Life League found that the average salary of a Planned Parenthood CEO at its 53 affiliates increased 89% over the past nine years, and two of its national leaders made more than \$1 million. Yes, as is ever the case, follow the money!

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



# CALLING ALL RE teachers in secondary schools!



The 2022 **Schools Bible Project** offers an opportunity for student to encounter Christ in the New Testament. With no complicated lesson-planning, this is a simple and attractive project which has been run successfully in schools across Britain for over 30 years. Pupils are invited to study an incident in the life of Christ as described in one of the Gospels and to write an account of it as if they had actually been present.

There are **cash prizes** for schools and individual **book prizes** for the students. The main prizewinners are invited to London to receive their prizes following a tour of Parliament and Tea at Westminster. A number of runner-up prizes are also awarded.

**1st prize: £550 for the school • 2nd prize: £350 for the school  
3rd prize £150 for the school • 4th prize £100 for the school**

*For further details visit: [christianprojectsocu.org.uk](http://christianprojectsocu.org.uk)*

The Schools Bible Project is organised annually by Christian Projects, an ecumenical charity bringing together representatives of the mainstream Christian denominations in Britain.

Chairman: Mrs Joanna Bogle DSG Vice Chairman: Lady Benyon Bursar: Mr Norman Paisley  
Trustees: The Baroness Cox Mr Harry Spencer Smith



## Why is evangelisation so important?

**Father Michael Nazir-Ali examines a central topic for today**



**These days the word 'mission' can mean almost anything the Church says or does. It can include the simple presence of a local church in a community or dialogue with individuals and groups of people, especially those from other Christian or faith traditions or social action for justice and peace in our nation or the world.**



With such a wide understanding of mission, why should evangelisation or evangelism remain important, nay central, to our understanding of mission? To put it another way, do not these other ways of engaging in mission also have an evangelistic dimension to them? It is true, of course, that every aspect of mission, if it is truly faithful, has an aspect of witness to it. Thus presence bears witness to a community founded on faith in the crucial events of salvation history. In dialogue, we listen attentively to our neighbour's story, even as we witness to our own and in the struggle for social and economic justice, we are witnessing to nothing less than the justice of God and its demand on us and on every society.

### Intentional Evangelism

While acknowledging all of that, intentional evangelisation remains essential in the overall and continuing missionary task of the Church at every level. By intentional evangelism, I mean sharing the good news of salvation through word and act, through writing, acting or music, with a view to bringing people to faith in what God has done,

in the words of the Absolution, through Jesus Christ in reconciling us to himself when we were still stuck fast in ignorance and rebellion against our Creator (2Cor5:19-21). Such an intention is both at the centre of mission and its foundation. Without it, mission would be so weakened as to be like a house built on sand apt to be imperilled with every wind of change.

## Recollection

One reason for rehearsing God's mighty acts in history, especially in the person and work of Jesus Christ, is to bring us to a recollection of who we are. In both Testaments, such remembrance or recollection is most important. In the Hebrew Bible, words derived from *zakar* provide a whole range of meanings for such remembrance or recollection. It can mean, remembering God's past mercies to his people. It can also mean bringing the people to God's remembrance and it can mean reminding God of what he has done for us in the past and pleading that he should not forget us now. *Anamnesis*, similarly, can mean both a remembering and a reminding, a recalling of a past event so that it is effective in the present. In the Eucharist all of these aspects of remembrance come together. Thus it is not only food for the faithful but it is, as the liturgical acclamation says a proclamation: "We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes". This missionary aspect of the Eucharist should never be minimised: here the Church not only remembers the rock on which it is founded but witnesses powerfully to all that God has done for the salvation of the world. It is no wonder that many are drawn to faith simply by being present at Mass!

However it comes about, evangelism is certainly about reminding people of their dignity and worth as made in God's image and likeness, even when that has been obscured or disfigured by human waywardness and obstinacy. The late Kenneth Bailey, in his inimitable way, in *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: Literary-cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, shows how this emerges powerfully in the Parable of the Prodigal in Luke 15. As a result of his adversity, the rebellious son 'comes to himself' or 'comes to his senses'(v17). Bailey, as ever aware of the oriental tradition, points out that the Syriac has "he came to his *nefesh*" ie he recovered his soul! Both old and new Arabic translations and commentaries agree, using the word '*nafs*' here.

Evangelism is certainly about reminding people of their dignity and worth as made in God's image and likeness.

## Repentance

Such a recognition of estrangement from his true self can be seen as the beginning of repentance: he remembers his previous state in his father's house and compares it to his present miserable condition. The climax, however, to this repentance and renewal, according to the Eastern Commentators, is not reached until his experience of

his father's unconditional love and forgiveness and his restoration to sonship. Having recognised his need, he discovered in his father's embrace that love which alone had the power to make him whole. *Anamnesis*, or recollection, then leads to *metanoia*, to a complete turning around towards God our Father, the very source of our existence. As with the Prodigal, we are restored to our rightful place and we can begin to live as we were always intended to.

*Metanoia* or repentance gets a bad press these days being thought to be puritanical and life-denying. In the Bible, and in the teaching of the Church, though, it is something positive, not only a turning away from what is destructive for us and others but a turning *towards* what is good, healthful and life giving for ourselves and for others. It is to recall our essential worth but also how far we have fallen short of it. It is to open ourselves again to seek what God wants us to be. It is the sharing and hearing of the Gospel which makes such a turning again possible and it is believing the good news which leads to wholeness and fullness of life for us (Mk1:15 and John10:10).

## Spiritual Aspirations

We are, by nature, spiritual beings who seek ultimate explanations for the universe and of ourselves we cannot always be satisfied with description posing as explanation. Once we realise that such explanations lie outside of ourselves and the limitations of our observations of the world, we are led to wonder, awe and worship of what we believe to be the cause of our very being. However much material and social distractions, damaging and damaged relationships and undue self regard suppress this aspect of our nature, we are, in the end, *homo adorans*, that is, made for worship either of the true and only God or else of substitutes, products of our own minds, or an aspect of creation itself, worshipped in place of its Creator (Rom1:25).

Such aspirations find expression not only

in religious traditions but also in music, art, literature and history. Once again, it is true that such aspirations are affected by our fallen state and can be misstated or misdirected away from their true end. It is difficult to disentangle what is genuine in the expression of such aspirations from what are false accretions. The coming of the Gospel, in word, act and person, reveals what is false and idolatrous but it also fulfils whatever drives people towards the truth of their Creator and Redeemer and towards a fuller appreciation of their own destiny. The authentic replaces what is distorted, the real the shadow, what is found instead of what is sought, however diligently, by human effort alone.

It is a matter of record that when people come to faith in Christ from a specific spiritual tradition, they see both that much has to be given up, if their following of Christ is to be faithful, but that there is also that which can be seen as leading them to Christ. This may be something in their previous religious practice or the scripture of their former adherence or even their questioning of the tradition in which they once stood. There are thus both positive and negative to their beliefs and aspirations before their conversion. It is then the sharing of the good news and the believing of it which leads to their awareness that all their authentic spiritual aspirations and hopes have been fulfilled in Christ. We may say that this is the personal dimension of the cosmic doctrine set out in Eph1:10 which declares that God is bringing everything in heaven and on earth to a head or to fulfilment in Christ (*anakephalaiosis* or recapitulation). As is well known St Irenaeus develops this Pauline teaching and, in addition to the fresh start for the Cosmos in the Incarnation, there is also the summing up and the renewing of humanity in Christ which is central to his thought.

We can say then that if the Gospel is not proclaimed, the deepest longings of the human heart remain unfulfilled, whatever

our personal and social achievements and accomplishments may be.

## Assurance and Salvation

The sharing of the Gospel does not lead only to a recognition of our true being and destiny and how we have fallen short of it, nor even to our turning from darkness towards the light, from self loathing to a healing love. It doesn't only fulfil our deepest spiritual longings. It is also about our final safety in the hands of our Heavenly Father, revealed to us in Jesus Christ as saving love. We need to know that in Christ, the suffering of God has overcome our enmity with him, recreated a new humanity reconciled to him and has thus dealt with the root of ours and the world's alienation (Rom8:18-25). The Bible tells us that we *have* been saved and are with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph2:5,8,9). Jesus, the Good Shepherd, assures us that he will not drive away anyone who comes to him, that he will never lose anyone in his care and that he will raise them up at the last day (John6:35-40, 10:4,9, 14-16, 27-30). So those who have put their trust in Jesus and in what he has done for us are already in a place of eternal safety. But it is also true that this salvation, with God's help, has also to be worked out daily, as we invoke God's promise for ourselves and for those around us to change us from the inside out (Phil2:12-13). Finally, this salvation we know now in Christ is to be gloriously completed in the day of Christ's coming. We live in hope but with the assurance based on Christ's resurrection from the dead (1 Cor15:51-57).

It should be made clear that this assurance must be accompanied by right belief, love of neighbour and right conduct (1John 3:10, 4:2 etc). Pope Benedict XVI, in his lectures on St Paul, *Paul of Tarsus*, tells us that Martin Luther's teaching regarding justification by faith alone is true, if it is not opposed to faith working out in love (Gal5:6). According to Benedict, faith is putting our trust in Christ and thus being united with him and

conformed to him who is himself sacrificial love. In such a fellowship with Jesus, faith generates love towards God and our fellow human beings, whom he loved so much that he laid down his life for them. This is, indeed, a fulfilment of the Law.

## Giving an account of the hope in us

For all of the above reasons, evangelisation is a necessary aspect of the Church's continuing missionary mandate. We can even say that presence, engagement, education and social service, as manifestations of the Church's mission, are not complete unless they are also occasions for witness. This does not and should not mean that whatever the Church may have to offer in terms of material help, education or advocacy is somehow conditional on hearing and accepting the Gospel. Such conditionality would be unworthy proselytization and not genuine evangelism. It does mean, however, that people should know why Christians and the Church are involved in serving their neighbours in this way or that.

I am sometimes asked why the Church and its agencies are involved in education and medical work. We need to be able to tell those asking that it is the following of Jesus which leads to such service and he calls everyone to follow his example. Clergy and lay ministers are sometimes asked by people to pray for them. They should, of course, do this in the name of Jesus but they can also ask those asking for prayer to put their trust in the one who heals, feeds and saves.

## Homes and Hospitality

Homes are key to Christian hospitality: opening our homes to neighbours, friends, colleagues and even strangers can lead to deep conversation and lasting effects. The use of books, films, DVDs and music can result in a discussion of meaning, the uniqueness of the person, the Church's

teaching on justice and peace and much else besides. Feasts and fasts can also lead to opportunities to explain the faith to those who may be observing the seasons but with no clear idea why they are doing so!

More recently, we have seen how hospitality is key to those being prepared for baptism through RCIA or some other means. The runaway success of the Alpha and other courses is also, at least partly, due to the fact that they take place in the context of a meal.

## The congregation as an agent of evangelism

While the witness of the individual Christian and of the Christian home is hugely important, as Lesslie Newbigin has written, the congregation is the most important agent of mission in its area and beyond. What he means by this is that the good news of a meaningful creation, a costly redemption, the renewal of human lives and the recreation of a reconciled community becomes believable when a group of men, women and children live it and manifest it day by day in their life together. Teachers, evangelists, apologists and preachers can enable and assist but they cannot replace the congregation in interpreting the Gospel to those around it.

An effectively witnessing congregation will be one of praise for the one who is immeasurably greater than ourselves and who is continually bringing order from chaos, beauty from ashes, redemption through suffering and life from death. He is the true origin of all of those values about dignity, equality and liberty which the world claims to have but does not acknowledge its source. As Stephen Sykes once said, it is those who praise God in church who are most likely to praise him in the world.



Thanksgiving is, of course, a special form of praise: as those who are constantly being renewed in our Christian lives and in receiving and using the gifts of the Spirit, we should be seen to be a thankful people. Such thanksgiving can take many forms, including giving for the Church's mission, to those in need and as a vital aspect of corporate and personal prayer. From the time, however, that Jesus, before he suffered, took bread and wine and gave thanks to God (*eucharisteo*), the Eucharist, or the giving of thanks, has come to be especially associated with the Church's celebration of the Supper of the Lord. (Mk14:22-24 and parallels and 1Cor 11:23-26). Eucharist is an appropriate word to use because, as we remember and receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice in the Cross, we are moved to give thanks for all that God has done but especially for what he has done in Christ. According to St Paul, this giving of thanks is also a proclamation (*katangellos*) of the Gospel (1Cor11:26). Here, we are not only acknowledging God's gracious favour towards us but it is also a means of witness to a watching world that what God has done for us, he can also do for them! This missionary dimension of the Eucharist should never be lost.



The congregation (and, indeed, the wider Church) is also a community of truth. It must be equipped to tell the Christian story effectively. It lives by and assesses everything in the light of divine revelation as recorded, once for all, in the Scriptures and lived daily in the life of the community of the faithful. This means that, while it should remain engaged with its culture and context, it cannot simply capitulate to them but must maintain a healthy critique of contemporary fashions in the light of the Gospel and its values.

The local church, as well as the wider Church, must be a place where there is a commitment to justice and compassion. Christians cannot argue for a just and fair social order if the Church itself is not seen as a fair and compassionate community. It must, therefore, be seen as a community of hope where people can experience a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. Because it looks for and prays for the Kingdom to come, it must stand against every denial of hope and it must reject every philosophy that leads to nihilism and every system of thought which leads to a denial of human capacity, agency and freedom.

## Preparing the church for mission

Both the local and the wider Church need, of course, to be prepared for mission: gifts have to be discerned and people enabled to exercise them. Those called to specific lay and ordained ministries need adequate formation for the ministries to which they have been called. Even educators need education and trainers have to be trained!

How will such a community engage in mission to those around it? One way that has been suggested by Raymond Fung, formerly of the World Council of Churches, in his programmatic work *The Isaiah Vision*, is for the local church to develop a common agenda with the community around it.

This can include local concerns about the elderly or students. It could be joint work about relieving the needs of the poor in the community or enhancing the local quality of life. There could even be global issues, as was the Christian-led Jubilee campaign for the debt cancellation of poorer nations. Whatever the contents of the agenda, Christians and churches should be clear that they are participating because of their view as to what makes for human flourishing. When landmarks are reached, the celebrations should have a Christian character to them and when there are difficulties, others should be invited to join in the Church's prayer for strength to address them and live through them.

Ann Morisy, similarly, a community theologian in the city of London, in her book *Beyond the Good Samaritan*, tells us that the Church should not merely replicate what the social, medical or educational services may be offering. There must be added value which witnesses to Christ, whether that is in the content of what is being delivered or in our attitude towards those needing or using the Church's facilities or services. Thus a holiday club for children would certainly be educational and entertaining but some of its material for stories, plays or music may be drawn from the Bible or the lives of the saints or Christian pioneers like Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole, the Martyrs of Uganda or Vietnam and countless others. An outing to a beach for the elderly might end with a well known hymn and a brief epilogue. Church buildings, used by the wider community, should always provide 'bridges' to the community of faith based there in terms of information about worship, study groups and approaching celebrations or commemorations. A discreet presence, from time to time, of clergy and lay people, during the use of these facilities, can also be fruitful in making connections and helping people to cross the threshold into the worshipping life of the community.

## Planting churches

Sometimes, a worshipping community has to be established in an area otherwise deprived of Christian witness. This must be done with eyes open to the difficulties: those who undertake to pioneer such communities should be prepared to face having to leave comfortable parishes and congregations. The relevant authorities must make sufficient financial provision for the nascent community, until it can become self supporting. It is often a good idea to have an audit of the wider community as to what they expect the Church to do for them. This may help the new community to establish its mission priorities in an informed way and gently to draw people into the life of the church. At some stage, a 'parish mission' may be appropriate. This could draw upon resources in the religious orders or on the expertise of lay people in addressing contemporary issues which may be of interest in the wider community from a distinctively Christian and Catholic point of view. There can be concerts, exhibitions and well known settings of the Mass, used in a genuinely liturgical setting, something which even classical music 'buffs' may not have experienced before but which may alert them to the spiritual aspect of the music they love.



Above all, resources need to be allocated to discern the gifting, calling and forming of people in the church such that as much ministry as is possible can be supplied by the community itself so that it is not wholly dependent on visits by priests, if they are not fortunate enough to have a resident priest themselves. There is no reason why lay people cannot lead in prayer, Bible Study, evangelistic events and in the preparation of people for baptism and marriage, as well as taking part in ministries of consoling the bereaved and counselling those whose minds and lives have been disturbed. They can also be in the forefront of serving those in need of food or shelter or just friendship.

## Hospitality and Embassy

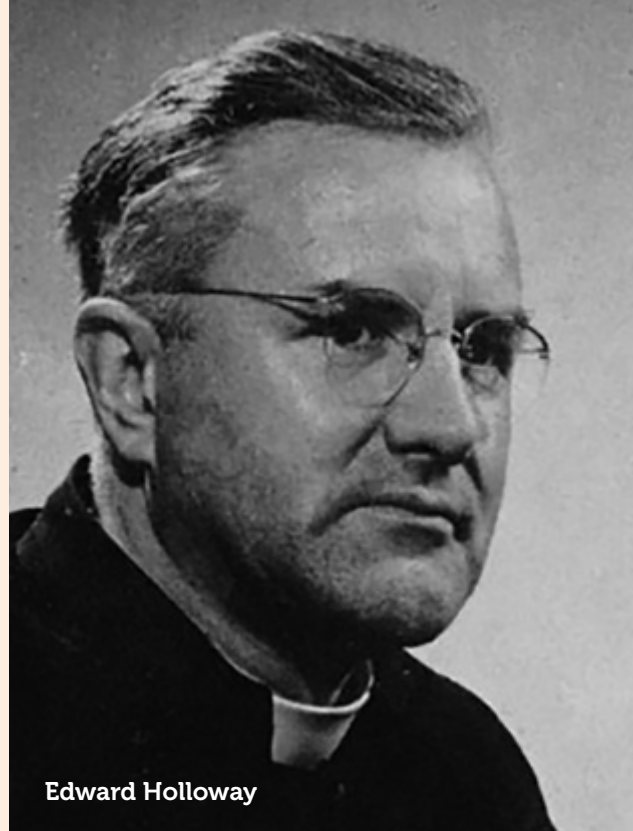
In all of this, the balance between 'hospitality' and 'embassy' has to be kept in mind: sometimes we need to go out to where people are, whether it is their place of work or leisure or, indeed, their homes. At other times, we need to be prepared to welcome them into our churches and homes. By doing so, we are already sharing something of the good news of Jesus with them and, hopefully, disposing them to respond with assent to and trust in the one who is the only subject of our witness.

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

## Holloway on...

### The theme of priesthood Part 1

**Father Edward Holloway explores  
the Sacrament of Order**



Edward Holloway

There are sacraments which we know confer a *character* — the Fathers who wrote in Greek prefer the word *seal* — not just on the soul but on the Christian person which includes the flesh as well. Through this ‘sealing’ or consecration is defined the essential relationship to God of this sacrament and its grace or status. The ‘character’ of Baptism is the seal of the ‘divinization’ of man through our incorporation into Christ as both Son of God and Son of Man. These twin titles make Jesus Christ the Priest-King of all human stock. This membering into Christ, through both the Divine and the human nature in Him, is through the likeness of his Passion, Death and Resurrection; it proceeds through the washing and cleansing of men from Original Sin and, where applicable, actual sin. The first effect of this membering into Christ is membering also into the Church through the adoption of sonhood or daughterhood to the Father, through the Son, in their mutual love, the Holy Spirit. Through this incorporation into Christ, as states the anointing with chrism of Baptism, we participate in Christ’s

life as priest, prophet, and king for humankind. Thus, the ‘seal’ of Baptism is the *essential* consecration and configuration of the human person flesh and spirit, into God the Word made flesh. Incorporation into Christ is one in essence with the ‘supernatural’ order, for by this we are made in Christ ‘co-sharers of the Divine Nature’ (2 Pet. 1:4). No other status or sanctifying sacrament of Christ in the economy of the Church can be received except through this fundamental ‘sealing’ to the Image of God in the Person of Christ. Thus Baptism is the character or seal of perfection, of ‘divinization’ as the Greeks prefer to call it, which is restored in and through the Redemption of Christ. Every other sacramental character or grace is consequential upon this supreme character of being *born again* through water and the Holy Spirit.

### Confirmation and Order

Confirmation, it seems to me, cannot be ranked as a ‘sealing’ unto God on the same level as Baptism, though I have not found any

development of this theme in the theological Manualists. It is not essential to the salvation and incorporation of man into God through Christ in the same way as Baptism, and of course Baptism *does*, must, confer the Holy Spirit. When I was a young priest we did not confer this sacrament upon babies or adults who were dying. It was a less worthy custom, but the Holy Spirit could not have allowed to fall into disuse for centuries any grace or status vital to the life of the Church. We recall that the Fathers of the Church were wont to refer to Confirmation as the 'perfection of the seal', i.e., the seal of Baptism. Confirmation would seem to confer a status in the order of a consequential, a further 'dignity' in the language of an older Scholasticism, that enhances the status of Baptism. It seems best described as the character or dynamic relationship to God through Christ which goes with the *personal* work — i.e. work *proper* to the Person of the Holy Spirit — within the Church, consequent upon the Ascension of the Lord. It strengthens the Christian personality to resist evil and bring in the mature fruits of the grace of Baptism. Just as much it is the seal of empowerment to teach and preach with 'power from on high' the Good News of the Kingdom of God revealed in Christ. To its seal of status we would refer the words of Christ: *"He will receive of Mine and show it to you."* While this text refers primarily to the specific mission of the Holy Spirit within the Magisterium of the Church down the ages, it conveys consequentially in its own personal character, the apostolic power of witness in the individual Christian.

## The Sacrament of Order

Order likewise would seem to be a character (the seal of a status) which, while essential to the very constitution of the Church, conveys a grace which in terms of our individual Christian perfection is a further enhancement (in the philosophical category of the 'accident') of the graces given in Baptism and Confirmation. In the footnote to the Faith Pamphlet *Sexual Order and Holy Order* I have a comment

derived in part from Emile Mersch, S.J., *Theology of the Mystical Body*, explaining that while the call to Holy Order, to the work and friendship of Jesus personally as his *apostle*, is a supreme privilege and joy, it does not divinize a priest ontologically, i.e. in the order of his human personality, one whit more than the layman or laywoman. Our Lady did not possess any degree of the character of Holy Order, but no dignity, status, or sanctity in heaven or upon earth is equal to hers. In the Declaration concerning *Women and the Priesthood*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [1976] makes the same point - well after the publication of the Faith Pamphlet, may one add. In heaven it is the saints, those who have most heroically conformed themselves to Christ through the characters of Baptism and Confirmation, who are the highest: not the ministers as ministers.

Order then, is the sealing unto service, the character of ministry as a grace for others, but in that very act of loving service, a privileged degree in the sanctification of one's very self: *"To whom very much is given, of him very much will be required back"*... (Luke 12:48). Our personal holiness through Order must the more closely resemble Him whom we touch and handle. The priesthood (and we are not considering the degree which is the Diaconate in this article) is never conferred as a title of honour. If a bishop does not need more priests he may not ordain them. It is a ministry of love within the ecclesial ministry of Christ, essential to the Economy of God Incarnate which is the Church. Apart from Order, sanctity of the highest degree can be won by that sealing (consecration) unto the Son of God and Man given in Baptism and Confirmation, especially when lived within the three vows of perfection. This is said to clarify a theological perspective, not to diminish the dignity of a vocation which calls to the familiar friendship with Jesus in his mission upon earth. We live in an age when Jesus is calling urgently to many a 'rich young man' to sell up and follow Him and share in His treasure. It is precisely because of our spiritual

conditioning as sons of God, and lovers of his Holy Spirit, that hearing the call, and meeting the gaze of Jesus - "who looking upon him, loved him" (Mark 10:21) - that we leave all other things and follow Him only, down the arches of our years.

## Perspective on the Character of Priesthood

We ask what exactly is this *character* or *seal* conferred by those sacraments which give some intrinsic conformation either to the natures and Person of Christ, or to his active mission, in the Christian personality? I know no book more carefully or more beautifully researched than that of my one-time Dogma professor, Fr. Bernard Leeming S.J., *Principles of Sacramental Theology*: I refer you to it. Myself, I do not follow my old master in his theories of sacramental causality. I dislike theologies of 'title', 'sign', 'modality' and intentional 'entitlement' etc. They are too human, man-made. The Divine is always divinely direct and 'simple'. I would prefer the direct, physical perfective causality taught by St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet, I know nothing more beautiful or full than Bernard Leeming's work on *the inner meaning* of the character in those sacraments which confer such a status. He told me he found it with delight in especially the Greek Fathers of the Church. I would express it this way. The sacramental 'character' is always a relationship to God, through the Person of Jesus Christ, in the order of the Incarnation. Jesus, we know, is the *Sacramentum Mundi*, the Sacrament or Holy Liturgy of ontological (i.e., of very being) communion between the Father and mankind. Baptism conforms sinful human nature, reconciled in the Person and *in both the natures* of the Person of Christ, to the image of the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit. This seal, image, or character conferred is specifically that of Christ as Son: Son of God, and Son as source, origin, and Head of mankind.

Subject as always to correction, I would suggest that Adam as 'unfallen' was created with the *character* of the Son of God and Son

of Man, in being made into the supernatural order, together with the entire Universe which expected Christ as its Crown, the Heir to the Ages, the final term of its glory. The womb of woman is the sign and symbol of that status of the Universe. Baptism restores what is lost by the Fall, lost to our nature and to our individual persons. From the nature of the Incarnation as an economy (God in the Flesh) and the nature of man, there is required in the external ecclesial order an operative sign of our restored status. Cleansing and Redemption must be part of that sign of the restoration of God's grace and gift of status, for it affects the ontological order, the lifting of man's being into 'sharing the Divine Nature'. Adam was membered to Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3). Baptism members us into Christ again after our loss of status. Thus we become 'a royal people, a kingly priesthood', deputed to the honour and love, the worship and joy of God through Christ our Priest-King. We do so for our own persons and nature, but we do it also for the inanimate creation below humankind which over the ages has ministered the body to our souls. This Universe cannot speak God's glory of itself, but it does so through us, in whom it is taken up into the spirit, and that human nature taken through Jesus Christ into the very being of God: in the words of the fourth Eucharistic Prayer, "*we shall sing your glory with every creature through Christ Our Lord, through whom you give us everything that is good.*"

## Consecration to God

The Fathers of the Church speak of the characters of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order in terms of consecration to God. This is either the hallowing of basic nature, as in Baptism, or concerns the vocation of the Christian unto God in the Church and because of the Church. The nomenclature of *consecration* is preferred because it echoes the words of Christ: "For them I consecrate (or sanctify, or hallow) myself, so that they may be consecrated through Me" (John 17:19). Thus the *character* - and the Latin Fathers so often refer to the analogy of the Roman soldier, tattooed with



the Emperor's 'mark' and consecrated to his service - is a permanent relationship to God. It is a status. One would agree with Leeming that the first effect of such sacraments is not to confer sanctifying grace, because a person can be baptised or ordained in grave sin. The direct effect is a status. Yet this status is more than an entitlement to grace (as Leeming would hold) because the grace flows directly and intelligibly *through* the status. It may be blocked in its flow, and the technical term here is indeed an *obex* or obstacle. This blocking is man-made and incidental, the moment the detritus is removed from the stream the grace 'flows.' Theologians argue whether the character of Holy Order is a habit or a power, is it only a moral entity or a physical one, etc. To my liking it is a *habitus* a 'clothing' literally, a permanent state or endowment of person. I would call it physical, because it stays real in your personality forever, even in the damned. As an endowment, a potentiality, it can be activated or conferred in differing degrees, according to the relationship given to Christ the Minister in his 'character' as Priest, Prophet, and King. Hence the threefold actuality of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon.

## Power over the Body and Blood of Christ

The character of Order does not admit of any difference of degree in the essence of *Priesthood*. The essence of our priesthood lies, as St. Thomas declares (Supp. 40 art. 5) in *the power over the Body and Blood of Christ*, a permanent power which not even the Pope can invalidate in the schismatic or heretic. Our Eucharist will always be valid, and in this the heart of priesthood is manifested. As an official power 'prophecy', the authority to speak in the name of the Church, may be removed by the Church. A theologian may lose his licence. A priest can lose all power of jurisdiction as well, for this belongs to the focus of 'kingship' and we have bishops and pope above us. Power over the Body and Blood of Christ takes us by a *habitus*, a power of person, into a relationship with Christ the

Minister to Man which is ontological, i.e., it is definitive, a sharing in His relationship to the Father; as High Priest of mankind according to the Order of Melchisedech Jesus has power to sanctify and feed. We are not delegates in this work, we are channels of His Ministry.

We bear in mind that at the altar Christ is actively, not only passively, the Minister of the Eucharist, just as at the Last Supper. Here is the heart, the defining principle in the order of being of your priesthood, your 'sealing unto Christ' in his Kingly Priesthood. Through this relationship given for ever in the *now* of eternity, you are apostles and commissioned ministers of Christ even though your apostleship as priests of the second rank is intrinsically subject to the episcopal rank, whose presbyterium it participates and applies. Subject always to the judgement of the Church, I would agree with St. Thomas — in this now rather the minority view — that the Episcopate is not a distinct sacrament from the priesthood, but rather the highest modality of Holy Order. The common defining factor by which both bishop and priest enter into the Ministry of Christ as *Sacramentum Mundi* (Sacrament of the World) is this ineffaceable power to actively present again the Sacrifice of Christ, and from it to feed the Faithful with the Bread of Life and Reconciliation which flows from the Sacrifice. I do not think this awe-ful power within the character of Order admits of higher excellence.

## Vatican Council

Some of you [seminarians] are being worried by teachers who seem to place the defining essence of the priestly function in the Church within prophecy. You have their rebuttal in all the documents of the Church, including the recent Second Vatican Council and consequential statements since. These confirm that the summit and centre of the Church's life is the Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament, and that this is the supreme work and ministry of the priestly character. Indeed, John-Paul II in his letter to Priests of 1979, makes a remark which has always, before

his statement seemed important to me: the powers of priest, prophet, and king, must not be thought of as individual charisms, separate either in the character of Baptism or in the character of Order. He is talking about Order, and he reminds us that these three powers all flow from the *one single focus* of Christ's Kingly Priesthood, and that all inhere as a unity in His Person as Son of God and Son of Man. However, the central unity which is Christ the Person consummates a work through sacrifice and sacrament which is *sanctification*, i.e., giving the life of grace and bringing to perfection the image of God given and revealed in Christ. The defining essence of priesthood, then, is Eucharistic even as Christ is Our Eucharist, our Mediation of Thanksgiving, of Life, and of Peace with the Father in the love of the Holy Spirit.

### Consequences of the Priestly Character

In everything you do, then, the preaching of the word of The Word culminates in bringing men and women into union and communion of life with God in Christ. Sanctification is no abstract idea, nor the mere function as minister of the Mass as a rite. It is the filling out of the lives and loves and works of young and old through the Life of Jesus which is within them by grace, that is to say by the dynamic Indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God gives the increase but you do the watering (I Cor. 3:6); you *minister* for Jesus through every power of flesh and spirit. Sanctification, making to grow like God, with its unique reference to the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Holy Eucharist which contains them both, *subsumes the office of prophecy* within this central definition of consecration of men in Christ. It is here the joy and the maturity of the priesthood lies for you. All the work, the teaching and forming, the weary striving, the day-by-day minutiae, focuses through your personal communion with Christ as friend and apostle in his work and yours. It is yours because in your Ordination you were consecrated in Him, that others

might be consecrated through you. There will be the drinking of His chalice, as He ironically promised to the two bright boys who asked for seats at his right hand, seats at his left, but there will be the unique joys of Jesus too. You bask in the love of those who love God, perhaps especially the young. You love God and them in a surge which passes from God to them, from them to you, and back again from you to God. Finally you understand what Jesus meant when he prayed that *"the love with which I have loved Thee may be in them, and I in them"* (Jn 17:26). This is the fullness, the working out in practice of your grace of Order to Christ's relationship of self-hallowing, first to His Father, and then as Son and Minister of Man, for us.

### The Prayer of the Church

All the documents of the Church this century relate our life of prayer as priests to the Liturgy, and to the Eucharist as the heart of the Liturgy. This again places your priestly identity within the central theme of prayer, praise and self-consecration which is the Eucharist who is God made Man. The Divine Office is the continuation, the follow through of our Eucharistic ministry within the Church. Some of the most beautiful theology concerning this relationship of the Office to the Mass is in the introductory notes of the breviary ... which we never read! The defining note of the character of your Order is again placed through sanctification, increasing within yourself and your people the work of Christ to make *all things new* on earth. Prophecy is an essential function in bringing to sanctification, but sanctification, like the Incarnation itself is *sacramental*, the communion of Life between God and "the men Thou gavest Me" (Jn. 17:24). Here then is the formal definition of the character of priestly order.

**Fr Edward Holloway was the founder of the Faith Movement and for many years the Editor of this magazine. This is the first part of an article in the November 1992 issue; the second part will be published in our next issue.**

# Meditation on the 12th Station of the Cross

John Henry Newman

**Jesus hung for three hours. During this time He prayed for his murderers, promised Paradise to the penitent robber, and committed his Blessed Mother to the guardianship of St. John. Then all was finished, and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit.**



The worst is over. The Holiest is dead and departed. The most tender, the most affectionate, the holiest of the sons of men is gone. Jesus is dead, and with His death my sin shall die. I protest once for all, before men and Angels, that sin shall no more

have dominion over me. This Lent I make myself God's own for ever. The salvation of my soul shall be my first concern. With the aid of His grace I will create in me a deep hatred and sorrow for my past sins. I will try hard to detest sin, as much as I have ever loved it. Into God's hands I put myself, not by halves, but unreservedly. I promise Thee, O Lord, with the help of Thy grace, to keep out of the way of temptation, to avoid all occasions of sin, to turn at once from the voice of the Evil One, to be regular in my prayers, so to die to sin that Thou mayest not have died for me on the Cross in vain.

## 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.



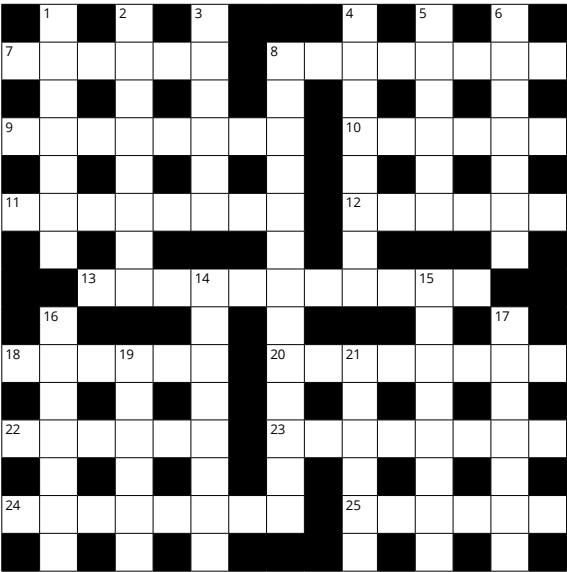
Crossword 33

by Aurora Borealis

We invite you to complete this crossword.

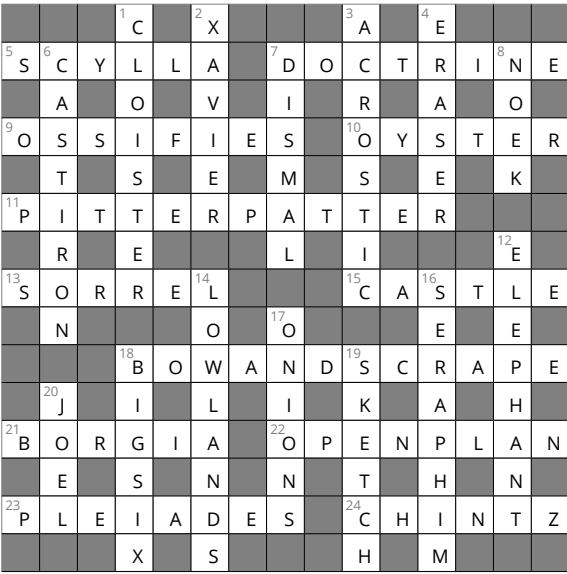
The clues in bold involve general religious knowledge.

The others are cryptic clues with secular answers.



A prize will go to the sender of the first correct solution opened by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. 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 32 was D. Banister.



Solution Crossword 32

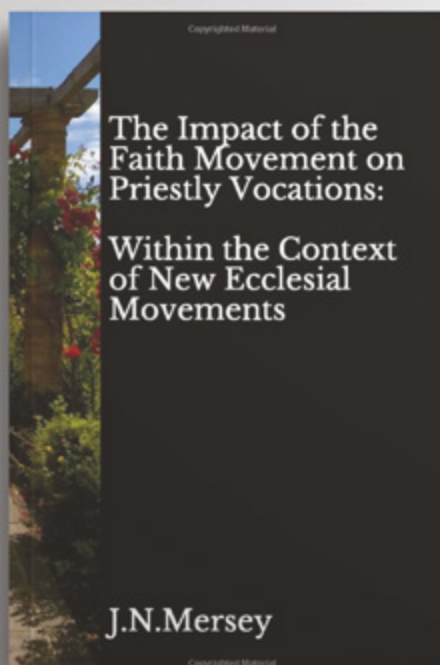
Across

- 7. Administrators are principally quite unique and now going overseas (6)
- 8. **Those who believe that salvation comes through secret knowledge (8)**
- 9. A family to follow daughter, intelligence enough to cause tirade (8)
- 10. **Military leader, judge and prophet from the Book of Judges (6)**
- 11. **An agreement between two parties (8)**
- 12. **Hebrew word for My Lord (6)**
- 13. Bits which are not even with objectives (4,3,4)
- 18. Sugar, licked off a spoon, contains vegetable (6)
- 20. Told tale of stuff used by weavers (4,4)
- 22. Tip out hollow ravioli , with pot to follow, makes a pleasant scent (6)
- 23. Most of queen's following Facebook, say, left with one kind of decoration (8)
- 24. Not drinking alcohol? Tea shaken up in lidless bottle would do (8)
- 25. **Twentieth century German theologian (6)**

Down

- 1. Point of no return reached when obstacle placed in front of picture (7)
- 2. Every bit comes from east to west (3,2,3)
- 3. **Mother of St Augustine of Hippo (6)**
- 4. Endless goodbye signal on the radio (4,4)
- 5. Workroom boss is there before ten (6)
- 6. Drum played in reverse behind current tumbler(7)
- 8. Two monosyllables describe all creatures (5,3,5)
- 14. **Room where priest vests (8)**
- 15. One out of seven left one good, hot tea on the radio for sunshine (8)
- 16. With horse one side and trap on the other, duck becomes weapon of war (7)
- 17. Pocket part of garment (7)
- 19. **Location of the Holy House of Nazareth (6)**
- 21. Evening meals have no starters if you are on these (6)

*The Impact of the Faith Movement on Priestly Vocations: Within the context of New Ecclesial Movements*  
by Dr Julie Mersey



Independently  
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351pp  
£9.99

## The Faith Movement and vocations

**Review by Matthew O’Gorman**

**One in five seminarians in formation for the dioceses of England, Wales and Scotland in 2014 — 20% — attended a Faith Summer or Winter Conference while in formation. This is an impressive statistic and a result of Dr Julie Mersey’s research.**

It also might be the reason why — though not a member of the movement herself — she describes herself as an ‘interested observer.’ An interest which leads her to ask ‘Is the theology of the Faith Movement responsible for a large number of vocations to the priesthood, and if so, why?’ After reviewing source material (Section One), her book gives a summary of Faith Movement theology (Section Two), a summary of the results of her research — both quantitative and qualitative — (Section Three) and an assessment of whether it is accurate to refer to The Faith Movement as a ‘new movement’ (Section Four).

The summary of Faith theology in Section Two is digestible for the uninitiated, but its brevity raises more questions than it answers for the theologically well-versed. Having obtained permission and access to primary sources — including corre-



spondence between Agnes and Edward Holloway — Dr Mersey summarizes the former's experience of theological insight and the latter's promotion of it. Her tone is balanced yet deferential in acknowledging their common motive as helping the Church flourish within modern, secular culture.

## The new movements

Before examining what Faith *does*, readers need to know what it *is*, which explains the consideration of the post-conciliar 'new movements' in the Church at the end of Section One. Since a whole section is dedicated to this later on its inclusion at this point is unexpected. However, the content is helpful, citing authors — such as Whitehead and Faggioli — so that the reader is exposed to the theological debate regarding the 'new movements' within the Church after the Second Vatican Council and helped to appreciate how controversial they were. Out of the substantial commentary on the topic it is the words of Saint Pope John Paul II which resonate as balanced and insightful: 'friendship in Christ is the origin of [the new] movements.' This is the unifying and definitive principle of the new movements which Dr Mersey's research reveals as definitive of Faith's theology and apostolate: she does this with reference to the Christocentric theology of Agnes and Edward [Christ as the 'master-key' to the meaning of the Universe] and also the palpable sense of fraternity 'in Christ' among clergy and laity who attended its Symposia and Conferences respectively.

## Why did they go to the Faith Movement?

This latter phenomenon — the lived experience of Faith Movement confer-

ences (*qualitative* research) is the most enlightening — and lengthy — part of the book. It follows quickly upon an analysis of the results of quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire distributed at the 2012 Summer and Winter Conferences and data acquired from the National Office for Vocations (CBCEW) as well as from individual Vocations Directors from dioceses in Scotland. The combined data reveals the aforementioned remarkable statistic about seminarians attending Faith conferences which begs the question: *why* did they choose to attend?

After summarizing her methodology we are given anonymized accounts of the interviews conducted with seminarians, priests and laity. Their answers are grouped together under the heading of the questions each of them were asked and — although challenging to remember who's who at times — it is possible to observe interesting trends. There is concern to advance Agnes and Edward Holloway's theological ideas among many of the clergy; however, 'none of the seminarians mentioned [Agnes or Edward]'. Nor did they have 'an in-depth understanding of the Faith Movement's Law of Control and Direction.' So why did they choose to attend? Many of them answered that Faith's theological approach 'helped to make sense of the modern secular world.' This same answer is more implicit than explicit within the interviews with lay attendees with one saying the Conference experience made them 'feel less weird' about their faith and realise that 'Catholics are normal and can have fun.' Interestingly, this answer is also given by seminarians and priests in describing their attraction to the priesthood: they encountered other priests who 'as human beings [were] convincing.'

## Science apologetics which inspire confidence

What is apparent is that familiarity with — and confidence in articulating — the ideas of Agnes and Edward Holloway was found more within an older generation of clerics and less in the young (seminarians and laity alike). However, although the ideas could not be explained by the latter, they felt the ‘answers’ they received on Faith conferences were attractive. Attraction is a recurring theme and seminarians reported how the ‘constant example of good Faith Movement priests ... encouraged vocations.’ What is drawn out by the research, however, is that the clergy — more than any other group — expressed appreciation of the ideas of Agnes and Edward Holloway and some believed — unlike any of the seminarians or lay people interviewed — to be the defining characteristic of the movement. It is they who - inspired by these ideas - communicated a ‘science apologetics which inspired confidence in Catholicism in a secular world.’ This is something which was acknowledged and appreciated by all respondents: seminarians, clergy and laity.

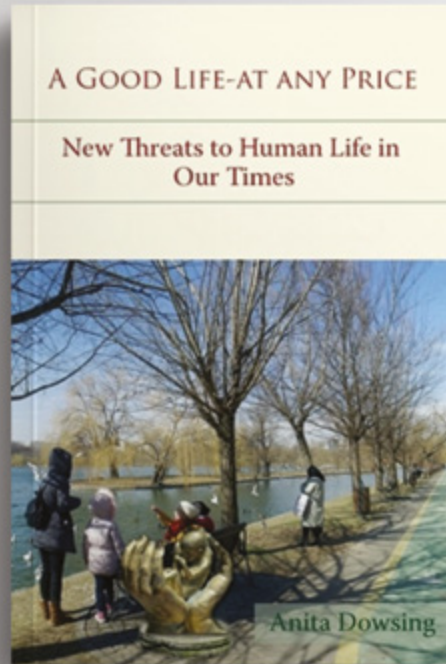
## Friendship in Christ

The thread which runs throughout Dr Mersey’s work is that which Saint Pope John Paul II referred to as definitive of the new movements: ‘friendship in Christ’. This is a recurring theme in the experience of Faith Movement events within every group of respondents. Dr Mersey refers to this as ‘Christocentricity and witness’ and its place within the ecosystem of a Faith Conference is the life of prayer and the sacraments. To live within an environment of Catholic culture in which one encounters ‘young’ clergy who are unafraid to live ‘orthodox Catholicism’ is what inspired and attracted so many young men to imitate their example.

In summary, Dr Mersey’s research is a helpful snapshot for those within the movement to understand people’s experience of what Faith provides. It is also enlightening for those unacquainted with its charism and work. Her research reveals that those who were inspired to become priests were inspired by other priests, specifically those who attended Faith conferences. It falls short of answering ‘yes’ to the question of whether the thought of Agnes and Edward Holloway are responsible for this. However, since the priests who inspired others to respond to God’s call were enthusiastic advocates of Faith Movement theology, it could be argued that it is indeed Agnes and Edward Holloway’s apostolate which has helped these men to listen to the voice of the Lord.

**Fr Matthew O’Gorman is a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark. He is currently Parish Priest of Corpus Christi, Brixton Hill.**

*A Good Life-At Any Price — New Threats to Human Life in Our Times*  
by Anita Dowsing



Gracewing  
£14.98

## How to combat threats to human life

### Review by Pravin Thevathasan

**Anita Dowsing has worked in adult religious education in the Diocese of East Anglia and has been a member of the Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family**

In this vitally important book, she examines the various threats to human life in our times. In the first part of the book she covers embryo destruction, abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, terrorism and quality control of human life. There is a very helpful summary at the end of each chapter. The second part is about protecting human life and consists of three chapters: 'Legislation and Catholic Teaching', 'Suffering and a Good Life', and 'Towards a Truly Inclusive Society'

### Euthanasia in Holland

For the purposes of this review, I will examine the chapters on euthanasia and abortion. The chapter on euthanasia and assisted suicide begins with a discussion of Debbie Purdy's campaign to legalise assisted suicide. She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and she argued that serious suffering and a good life are incompatible and there should therefore be a legal right to assisted suicide. The author notes that where euthanasia and assisted suicide are legal, surveys show that the elderly and disabled are far less likely

to trust the medical profession. In Holland, for example, an association of such people have begun issuing their members with a card which states that they do not wish to be killed when under the care of doctors.

In the UK, we are seeing a steady drift towards the acceptance of assisted suicide. In 2010, following the case brought by Debbie Purdy, the Director of Public Prosecutions issued a set of guidelines for prosecutors that makes it difficult to prosecute those assisting in an assisted suicide.

## Euthanasia for the healthy

The author places a great deal of confidence in the medical profession - perhaps too much. She notes that in 2006, the British Medical Association voted against assisted death. Unfortunately, since the publication of this book, the same organisation has moved to a position of neutrality on this issue. The author also notes that it could be argued that euthanasia is already occurring in the UK. She cites the case of Tony Bland, who was in a so-called persistent vegetative state following brain injury. His life was ended by the withdrawal of nutrition. The author rightly believes that this is euthanasia.

Matters are much worse in The Netherlands. The author notes that recently a young woman diagnosed with a degenerative disorder ended her life by euthanasia, even though she was perfectly healthy at the time. A Dutch commission has even recommended that non-voluntary euthanasia should be legalised. Reasons for euthanasia in Holland include loneliness and low income in combination with non-terminal diseases.

The author notes that public opinion in the UK is largely in favour of assisted suicide. It would have been helpful if the author had told us why this should be treated with some suspicion: you do not have to be

a fan of *Yes Minister* to know that opinion polls can be easily manipulated. The author concludes the chapter by affirming that good palliative care is the life-affirming alternative to assisted suicide. Unfortunately, in our results-oriented culture, looking after the dying gets less funding than treating cancer.

## Abortion is an act of violence

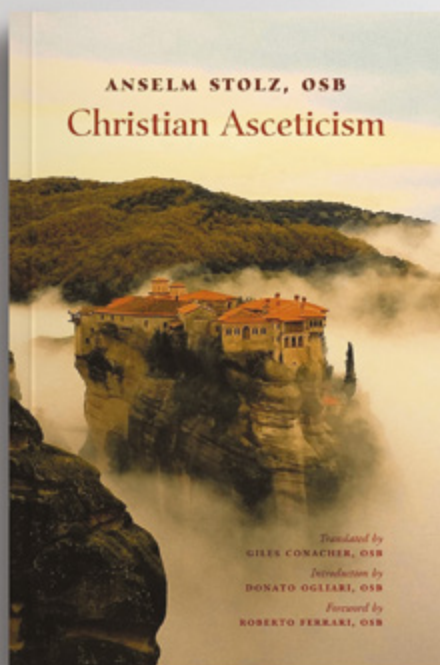
In the chapter on abortion, the author begins by noting that abortion was legalised to stop so-called back street abortion. The common argument put forward in favour of abortion is the 'right to choose'. The chapter has a good summary of abortion in the UK before the 1967 abortion act. In practice, this act does not grant legal protection to the unborn child. Abortion rates have quadrupled between 1969 and 2010.

The author examines abortion in hard cases. What if the mother's life is in danger? The author notes that in 2010, less than 1% of UK abortions was for this reason. Besides, modern medical methods enables the mother to continue with pregnancy until the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth week when the baby can be safely delivered. What about abortion on grounds of disability? This is surely a callous disregard of disabled persons. Many people with disability have spoken against abortion for this reason. What about abortion after rape? These women have suffered greatly, and we need to assist them. But, as the author puts it, "an abortion would be a further act of violence against an innocent human being."

This book proved to be a very useful and helpful summary of the new threats to human life in our times and how to combat them.

**Dr Pravin Thevathasan is a consultant psychiatrist and editor of the *Catholic Medical Quarterly*.**

***Christian Asceticism***  
by Anselm Stolz OSB,  
tr. Giles Conacher OSB



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## A stirring call to spiritual arms

**Review by Sr Mary Thomas**

**This English translation of Dom Anselm Stolz's posthumously published *Ascèse Chretienne* at last makes available to anglophone readers the companion volume to his *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (1938, reprinted 2001). The original German title translates simply as 'Theology of Mysticism', and it was a brilliant essay on the nature of Christian prayer: a synthesis of Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas which made a vibrant and theologically rigorous contribution to the tradition which sees mysticism as the 'normal' (if uncommon) culmination of Christian life.**

*Christian Asceticism* is not a handbook of ascetic practices such as fasting, nor is it a discussion of the significance of such practices. 'Asceticism' here is being used to mean 'the ascetic life', a life explicitly dedicated to the pursuit of Christian perfection, ultimately to contemplation, in the practice of the evangelical counsels, by grace of a call from God. That sounds very much like what we would now call the consecrated life. He was indeed a monk speaking to monks about their own life. However, even if the religious life requires a special call and grace from God, an account of the essence of ascetic life sheds light on Christianity as such; for if mysticism is the full flowering of 'ordinary' Christian life, the ascetic life likewise, Stolz maintained (in company with a strong



tradition), is simply the logical fulfilment of the trajectory of Christianity.

## 'Outside the world'

Stolz finds the historical and theological essence of ascetic life in the desert-dwelling hermits, and so he identifies the most fundamental notion of Christian ascetism as *extra mundum fieri*: literally, 'becoming outside-the-world', becoming wholly alien to the world. This does not sound very promising as a concept to help Christians living in the world (or even non-enclosed religious), but in fact it turns out to be remarkably timely. Although hermits and enclosed religious are very visibly 'outside' the life of the world, none of the baptised belongs to the world. The world is not our final home, and it is destined for destruction; moreover, since the Fall, it is a realm where the forces of evil have a certain freedom of action. To be part of the kingdom of God is *not* to be part of the kingdom of the world.

Being 'outside the world' thus simply describes the Christian condition, a condition which has to be ever more fully realised in our own spiritual growth. It is striking that, precisely when insisting on the distinct character of ascetic life, Stolz notes in passing that any Christian may be in a situation where truly heroic ascetic efforts are necessary simply for spiritual survival. And this can only be possible thanks to the same means (in dependence upon grace): mortification, prayer, Scripture, participation in the Sacraments.

## The ascetic as martyr

What makes this a truly timely emphasis becomes apparent when Stolz goes on to another fundamental concept of the ascetic life: the ascetic as martyr. The martyr, Stolz holds, is the ultimate witness of Christianity's claim to public existence; or, to put it the other way round, the Christian martyr's willingness to die is the ultimate rejection of any worldly authority's claim to absolute value. There is a long tradition of seeing the ascetic as the heir to the martyr: laying down one's life in voluntary mortification is analogous to laying down one's life through an inflicted death. Stolz emphasises that the martyr is given a special grace of union with Christ, and hence a special role as intercessor; the ascetic, too, is called to close friendship with Christ and an apostolate of prayer. But, if monks and other religious have a particular call, every Christian has to expect his life to be a life of battle. 'Martyrdom reveals clearly what the Christian life is, and what is its situation in this world. For whoever wants to rule his life in accord with the teachings of Jesus Christ, conflict is inevitable, for in a world like ours the Christian life cannot flourish in peace, it will be a struggle to the very end.'

## In an alien culture

Stolz was speaking in 1939, and I think he knew which way the wind was blowing. Today, too, as western Christians find themselves in an

increasingly alien culture, it is a valuable encouragement to be reminded that the martyr is the icon of Christian commitment. Stolz quotes Thomas Aquinas to show that every Christian needs to cultivate the dispositions which would make one ready for martyrdom. More generally, heroic virtue is sometimes the only Christian option. 'It would be a fatal illusion to think that the Gospel's sole object ... was to infiltrate and quietly transform the sphere of public and private life, without stirring up either crises or trouble. The reality of the Christian life is quite otherwise. The life of the Church is a continual struggle between two kingdoms: that of God and that of the Prince of this world. The same must be said of the work of sanctification in every individual.'

## Silence

The brief but powerful chapter on silence also has particularly contemporary resonance. Stolz presents language as a sublime privilege, a uniquely human reflection of the eternal Word of God — or at least, it should be. Our language has in fact fallen along with our nature. Silence is a necessary path towards the healing of speech, making possible its full redemption in prayer. There are surely implications here for the task of finding a Christian path of engagement in our hyper-communicative age. Stolz give us a stirring call to spiritual arms in the interior battle. Although this book is short, it is rich. As a sequel, *Christian Asceticism* comes eighty years late, but Stolz is a voice for our times.

**Sr Mary Thomas Brown OSB is a nun of St Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde.**

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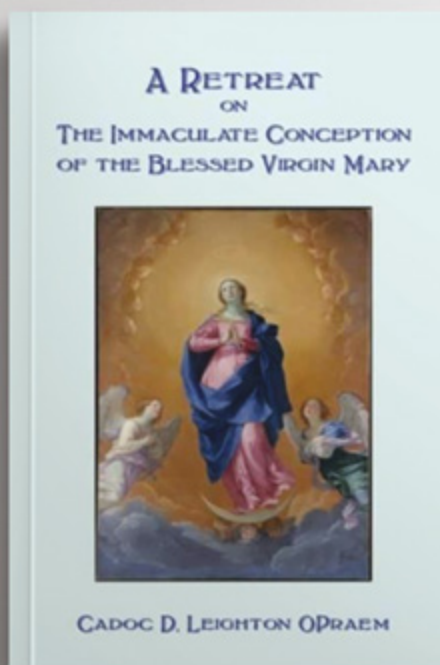
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## Grace through Mary's hands

### Review by Sr Mary Dominic Pitts

In reading this series of conferences, the reader of Father Cadoc Leighton's *A Retreat on The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary* becomes a participant in this most unusual retreat, given to the Norbertines of Saint Philip's Priory, Chelmsford, Essex. In this book, the use of the present tense and of the first person "we" and "I" in the transcription preserves for the reader what was heard by the canons who made the retreat. Indeed, this small book, a transcription of Father Cadoc's own notes, is declared in the Forward by the abbot to be "one of the best community retreats we have experienced" (ix).

### Sin and its remedy

The theme of the four conferences is the triumph over the catastrophe of Original Sin by a Virgin who never, even at her conception, knew sin. The 1854 Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, promulgated the doctrine thus: "By a special grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, [she was] preserved free from all stain of original sin." The Lord has created the Blessed Virgin Mary sinless with the radiant power of divine innocence, "as terrible as an army with banners" (Song of

Songs 6:10) and sends her to a world that “has no notion of evil” nor of “the power of sin to destroy” (13-14). Her purity confounds the ancient enemy.

The second conference is particularly focused on the evil of sin — that it was not only external due to the Fall, but, as missionaries tried to convince pagan converts, “was at work *within them*, and with which they, fallen human beings, willfully cooperated,” as if helpless to prevent the contagion due to a weak immune system (14). Therefore the retreat turns in the fourth conference to the remedy for sin, the Immaculate Conception, “both the *doctrine* and the *person*.” The doctrine has been defined and clarified in its majestic declaration of 1854. “The clarification of doctrine is always an occasion for grace,” Father Cadoc tells his retreatants, and this particular clarification would establish the “triumph of Mary in the world with an act of dedication to her” (5).

## Definition and devotion

A definition is an infallible statement on faith or morals. Better known as Papal Infallibility, it declares that in a certain theological area, the Church has understood more of the Revelation in Christ than previously and declares the doctrine to the Universal Church to be believed. Because “knowledge of Christ and Mary go together with love of them” (5), the retreatant and indeed the whole Church will respond with increased devotion to Mary. The retreat is like a personal microcosm of the world so in need of the understanding of sin and the triumph over it.

The Immaculate Conception has traditionally been seen as the “fitting preparation for the Incarnation” (23). Father Cadoc acknowledges this theology of the fitness of her immaculate womb to house the baby who is the Incarnate Son of God. However, Mary is the fitting Mother not merely as the spotless womb for the Son’s conception, but because of her realization of Revelation, her “willing consent to the Incarnation” for which free response she had been prepared by God. Father Cadoc devotes page after page, from the first conference onward, to the healing of the whole world: through the merits of her Son, Mary will restore sanctifying grace. She will anticipate the triumph over evil “by virtue of the Passion and Death of the Lord” (15).

## Gateway and foundation

Metaphors abound in the third conference as Father Cadoc uses various images of Mary’s being the gateway to the entirety of Christian Revelation. The Immaculate Conception is not merely a “pretty dawn” but the full daylight of redemption” (22), “the fountain from which the other mysteries of our Faith flow” (24). The Oratorian

Father Frederick Faber, quoted several times, holds that “the Immaculate Conception is the foundation of all the other mysteries of Jesus and Mary, and of the Church, and of the Seven Sacraments” (23). “In the Immaculate Conception,” concludes Father Cadoc, “we have, as it were, come in at the entrance and seen in outline the plan of the whole structure” (24).

## The likeness of Mary to Jesus

A concept that Father Cadoc uses as connected with the Immaculate Conception is *similitude*, the likeness of Mary to Jesus. Father Faber again comes to our aid: “[the Immaculate Conception is] the primary revelation of Mary’s similitude to Jesus, because in this she received the fullness of grace that made it possible, indeed, partly accomplished” (25). There are many aspects of similitude to Christ for which we hope, but Mary, our model,

is most like her Son in His struggle against evil, against sin... [Her] struggle was far more extreme than ours... It was so much more intense for Mary, precisely by virtue of her Immaculate Conception: she was always aware of the true horror of sin. Her own closeness to God, springing from her deliverance from Original Sin, and her actual sinlessness, allow her always to perceive clearly the terrifying nature of the sin around her... and so we learn courage from her in facing evil. (25)

Thus the Immaculate Conception, newly revealed in its definition, is an invitation to man to know the Son of Mary better in her anticipatory transmission of his merit to her sinlessness. To the extent that we know this astonishing doctrine and love the Mother of God for it, we realize that the Mother of God has loved us in return. She sees even our weak attempts at external veneration as pleas for her grace, and she gives that grace to us in a flood, “a petition for an outpouring of divine grace, given through Mary’s own hands” (6).

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