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New Lectionary



The current Lectionary, where we find the scripture readings for Mass and the sacraments to be used by all Catholic churches in England, Wales, and Scotland, is about to be replaced by a new version using text from the English Standard Version

Catholic Edition of the Bible and the Abbey Psalter. These will replace the current versions taken from the Jerusalem Bible and the Grail Psalms.



The use of the new Lectionary will become mandatory from the first Sunday in Advent of this year. As well as being designed to make the biblical translations more faithful to the original languages, it is the result of better and more up-to-date biblical scholarship which it is hoped will make the text “more proclaimable.” Pretty much the same rationale that was proclaimed when the current Lectionary came into use forty years ago.

The changes to the Lectionary are part of the continuing process of revision, and the Lectionary will have an updated Proper of Saints, including new universal and national feasts that have been instituted since the production of the last version Lectionary in 1981.

The new Lectionary will consist of four volumes:

Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord

Weekdays: Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time (weeks 1 – 9), Lent Easter, Proper of Saints December to May, Commons

Weekdays: Ordinary Time (6 – 34), Proper of Saints June to November, Commons

Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead.

There will, in due course, be updated people’s missals including Sunday and Daily missals, though there doesn’t at this time seem to be any indication of when these will be available or how much they are likely to cost. The Lectionary’s four volumes are certain to cost several hundred pounds.

The use of new Lectionary, which has the approval of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, has been confirmed by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

Don Bosco Summer Camp

The Summer Camp for boys of secondary school age (leaving Yr6 to leaving Yr11) will be held this year at St. Cassian’s, Kintbury. There will be plenty of sport, outings, competitions and games to ensure that boys will have a fantastic week. This will continue to take place within the context of the celebration of the Catholic Faith, including daily Mass and morning prayer. The cost of the camp is £230 (part bursaries may be available on application).

The camp will run from **Sunday 28th July to Saturday 3rd August 2024**. It is hoped that Bishop Philip will be visiting the camp on Thursday 1st August when there is a Reconciliation service and a BBQ and campfire.

The centre, situated in Berkshire, started out as the family home of one of Prime Minister William Gladstone’s relatives. It was bought by Oxford University and later sold to the De La Salle Brothers. That Order used it as a school for training young men seeking to become Brothers.

When the school was no longer needed, the Brothers decided to turn the place into a retreat centre. Forty-five years later the retreat centre is open to young people from all over the district.

For more information please email: dbcamps@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



Crisp Advert in Bad Taste

A television advert for crisps has caused an angry reaction from Catholics in Italy. In the advert, a group of young nuns are seen filing through a cloister into a chapel while another nun prepares for Mass but fills a ciborium with crisps instead of communion wafers.

A priest is then seen distributing a crisp instead of the Host to a nun during Communion and the shocked nuns look to the nun in the sacristy who is shovelling crisps into her mouth from a bag.

Complaints were made to the Institute of Advertising Self-Discipline, Italy's advertising standards authority, by the Italian Association of Radio and Television Listeners and by *Avvenire*, a newspaper owned by the Italian Bishops' Conference.

Complaining that the advert offends the sensibility of millions of practising Catholics, Giovanni Baggio, the president of the Italian Association of Radio and Television Listeners, demanded the immediate suspension of the advert which he condemned as blasphemous and lacking in respect.

The newspaper also called for the advert to be banned as it reduced Christ "to a crisp, debased and vilified as he was 2,000 years ago". Its editorial accused Amica Crisps of "spitting" on Christ "just as the Roman soldiers did to him before his crucifixion".

Reporting on the controversy, the *Daily Telegraph* quoted the agency behind the commercial, Lorenzo Marini Group, saying it had intended to strike "a strong British-style note of irony" with an advert that was "aimed at a young target audience".

The head of the group, Lorenzo Marini, said the commercial was "irreverent" but said it was not intended to be offensive.

The regulator, however, informed the Italian Association of Radio and Television Listeners that it had upheld its appeal for the immediate suspension of the commercial in which nuns are offered crisps instead of consecrated hosts during a Mass, and reminded the advertiser that commercials "must not offend moral, civil, and religious convictions".

Mr Baggio said his association wanted advertisers "to be more respectful of cultural and religious identities and to work for commercials that are inclusive and that appeal to all users in a way that is careful not to create discomfort and disapproval.

"Let us work together for a civilization that needs to grow in respect for cultural and religious identities."



BASINGSTOKE CHORAL SOCIETY
Choral Suite from The Armed Man
by Karl Jenkins
Traditional Songs and Spirituals
Saturday July 6th 2024
All Saints Church Odiham
Conducted by David Gibson
Wine and Strawberries served
from 6pm. to 6.45pm
Tickets: £20 including refreshments
See website for details: basingstoke-choral.org.uk



BCS is a registered CIO; no: 1202484

Basingstoke Choral Society Concert

The choir will return to All Saints Church in Odiham for their summer concert on Saturday 6th July with choruses from the popular *Armed Man* by Karl Jenkins, subtitled *A Mass for Peace*. The Mass was commissioned by the Royal Armouries Museum for the Millennium celebrations, to mark the museum's move from London to Leeds.

Though it was dedicated to victims of the Kosovo crisis, it commemorates all victims of war, so is appropriate in this the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Combined with a selection of spirituals compiled and arranged by Bob Chilcott, and traditional English folk songs set by John Rutter, the programme brings something for everyone during the summer months. Details of how to purchase tickets will be advertised next month or can be found by visiting www.basingstoke-choral.org.uk.

Archbishop of Bamenda

Interviewed by a journalist from the independently owned online newspaper *Crux* which focusses on news related to the Catholic Church, President of the National Episcopal Conference and Archbishop of Bamenda, Andrew Nkea Fuanya, spoke about several issues including the social and political problems in Cameroon, the upcoming election, the influence of European ideas, and the good health of the Church in Cameroon.

He spoke of the increase in the number of people attending Mass and the number of seminarians. Asked about the attack on the Marian Shrine at Nisimalen on 2nd April when unidentified vandals destroyed four icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary as well as the 14 Stations of the Cross, the Archbishop said that he saw it as a very good sign for the Church; it tells us that “the Church is doing well and the devil is angry. If nothing was happening, we would know that we are complacent, but when the Church is being attacked, it’s a very good sign that the Church is on the right track”.

He spoke of his concerns over the cost of living. Wages were not keeping pace with the cost of living, a situation which cannot be sustained, and this was a considerable worry to all the people.

Another matter of concern was the security situation, something that is affecting the country at large, not just rural areas but even the major cities like Yaoundé and Douala. The bishops are looking ahead to the government election planned for next year, and the Archbishop, who is the President of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishop’s Conference, said it was important to encourage all Cameroonians do three things: to register and to vote; to observe the election to ensure it was transparent, free and fair; and to evaluate the result.

The archbishop commended the administration in the North West of Cameroon which has succeeded in getting people back to their jobs, and in reopening schools and businesses. While there was still much to be done things have improved a great deal. He expressed hope for stability and peace, and countered the idea that one cannot have peace without justice. Peace, he said, is based on mutual respect, and once that exists the instruments of the law can be used to secure justice.

The conflict in the North West and South West has resulted in thousands of lives being lost, and the Church has paid a heavy price. Priests and bishops. Who have simply sought peace, have been kidnapped, and some killed in the political upheaval. This, said the archbishop, is mainly because they have refused to take sides and have stood for reconciliation.

Cameroon has great natural resources, but said the archbishop, but the people see little or no benefit from those resources being directed towards helping the local inhabitants. He called on those in charge to ensure that the natural resources of the country are put at the disposal of every Cameroonian. If those resources are not properly managed it heightens corruption and heightens the anger of the people who see no benefit.

He was critical of European influence, and of the lax moral standards so readily accepted in many parts of Europe. The problem, he said, is “They have too much money and they think they don’t need God anymore. Secondly, they have too much freedom. Freedom has to go with limits, and the freedom of one man begins where the rights of another man ends and now, they are not talking about any rights in Europe, they are only talking about freedoms. That is where Europe has made a mistake.”



Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Pope Francis has dedicated 2024 as a Year of Prayer, and what better way of celebrating such an event than joining the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. This year’s pilgrimage will take place from Monday 22nd to Friday 26th July.

The pilgrimage will depart from London Gatwick Airport on **Monday 22nd July**, and the pilgrims will be staying close to the Sanctuary at the four-star Hotel La Solitude which enjoys panoramic views of the upper town and the Pyrenees. The hotel boasts en-suite rooms with tea and coffee-making facilities and a comfortable restaurant with a varied and plentiful menu.

The itinerary will take full advantage of all that Lourdes has to offer, which includes participation in all the usual Pilgrimage activities. Pilgrims visit many places that were important to St Bernadette during her lifetime as well as having the opportunity to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.

The bishop has also called on the young people of the diocese, inviting them to join the pilgrimage and to perhaps help by assisting some of the pilgrims by pushing wheelchairs, offering a steadying arm and a warm smile!

There is a promotional video, made in 2020, which you can access via the diocesan website using the Discover Faith button and scrolling down to Pilgrimages.

If you would like to know more about joining the pilgrimage to Lourdes this year you can email lourdes@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk for a booking form.

St. Dunstan

Dunstan was born near Glastonbury in AD 910. His was a noble family, closely related to the ruling family of the time. He received an education from educated men who had settled in Glastonbury, including some Irish monks, and while still quite young he was sent to the court of King Athelstan. His uncle, St Alphege was Bishop of Winchester, and he urged Dunstan to embrace the religious life. Dunstan was not too keen until he recovered from a skin disease which he believed was probably leprosy. Following his recovery, he hesitated no longer; he received the habit and subsequently took holy orders, being ordained by his saintly uncle.

He returned to Glastonbury and built himself a small cell next to the church, where he divided his time between prayer, study, metalwork and copying and illuminating books. He cast bells and sacred vessels for use in the church.

When King Edmund succeeded Athelstan, he recalled Dunstan to the court and four years later he appointed Dunstan Abbott of Glastonbury. The new abbot set about reconstructing the dilapidated monastery buildings and the church of St Peter. He brought in new monks to help him restore discipline, and he soon had the abbey recognised as a great school of learning. Working with his fellow abbots of Abingdon and Westbury, he revived other monasteries.

Following Edmund's murder, his brother Edred claimed the throne. Edred relied heavily on Dunstan, making him his chief adviser. Under Dunstan's guidance there followed a period of moral reform to counteract the laxity of the secular clergy and to reconcile factions with the Danish element. Dunstan had great support in East Anglia and parts of the north but he made bitter enemies among those whose vices he opposed and among the reactionary West Saxon nobles.

Edred died in 955 and was succeeded by his sixteen-year-old nephew, Edwy. On the day of his coronation, Edwy left the royal banquet to seek the company of a girl called Elgiva. Dunstan rebuked the king for his unseemly behaviour and encouraged by those opposed to Dunstan Edwy confiscated Dunstan's lands and property and sent him in to exile.

It was in Flanders that Dunstan first encountered vigorous continental monasticism. He was inspired by the vision of Benedictine perfection, and when Edwy was ousted by his brother Edgar, Dunstan brought that vision back with him. Edgar appointed Dunstan Bishop of Worcester and then of London. In 959 Dunstan was made Archbishop of Canterbury, and on receiving the pallium from Pope John XII he was appointed a legate to the Holy See.

Armed with this authority the saint, protected by King Edgar, and with the help of St Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, and Oswald, Archbishop of York, he set about restoring the monasteries destroyed by the Danes and founding new ones. At the same time the three prelates continued their work reforming the clergy. Secular clergy who proved recalcitrant were ejected from their livings and their places taken by obedient monks.

Dunstan remained the "first minister" during the sixteen years of Edgar's reign, and the brief reign of his successor Edward. Following the coronation of Ethelred, Dunstan's political influence waned. He withdrew from affairs of state and retired to Canterbury. In 988, two days after celebrating Mass and preaching on the Feast of the Ascension, Dunstan died peacefully. His feast day is on 19th May, and he is the patron saint of armorers, goldsmiths, and jewellers.



Healing Prayers Group



The Healing Prayers Group meets in the parish church each Tuesday evening between 6.30pm and 7.00pm.

If you would like to choose a theme, **scripture reading and music**, or would like a copy of the **El Shaddai Healing Prayer** or if you would like any further information, please contact the parish office.



Crisis in Sudan

The military coup of 2021 led to political confrontation between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) loyal to the country's de facto ruler General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), an amalgam of former militia groups supporting the former "warlord" General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. In April of last year, this political stand-off escalated into violent confrontation.



The country was already experiencing humanitarian crisis resulting from political and economic instability, combined with a poor harvest. Caritas International, a Catholic confederation of over 160 groups working at grassroots level in almost every country in the world to offer relief, development and social justice, has stated that nearly one-third of Sudan's population, approximately 18 million people, is now grappling with acute food shortages. Caritas said, five million face extreme food scarcity, including life-threatening conditions, especially in the regions of West and Central Darfur. The areas most impacted by the fighting, such as Gezira, Darfur, Khartoum, and Kordofan, continue to suffer the greatest hardships.

Sudan now has some 9 million internally displaced persons, the largest number in the world. Neighbouring countries, many facing their own challenges, are having to cope with over 2 million Sudanese refugees.

Last month, the EU with France and Germany co-hosted an International Humanitarian Conference with the aim of boosting support for what has become the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. The European Commission has pledged €355 million in humanitarian and development aid for Sudan and its neighbouring states, and pledges from individual states has raised that amount to €896 million. The aid will be funnelled through humanitarian organisations, and will help to provide assistance with health, food, water, sanitation, shelter and educational opportunities in Sudan itself and in the countries hosting refugees.

The UK has also announced more support for Sudan, including funding to UNICEF which provides life-saving food, water and hygiene services for 500,000 children. Additionally, the UK will be working with the World Food Programme to assist over 285,000 beneficiaries for 6 months by providing 13,405 tons of assorted foodstuffs including cereals, pulses, oils and salt. This is part of an £89 million package of aid which the UK will be delivering to Sudan in the next year – an increase from the £50 million contributed in the last financial year.

UK Ambassador Barbara Woodward has told the United Nations that it is vital the conflict is resolved. She called on the SAF and RSF to de-escalate the tension, return to negotiations, agree a durable ceasefire and protect the civilian population. She accused "external actors" of providing material support to the warring factions and prolonging the bloodshed and demanded that instead they should use their influence constructively to bring the two sides to the negotiating table.

CAFOD, the aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, has been working in Sudan and neighbouring countries since the 1970s working together with local partners to address urgent humanitarian needs and to support opportunities, particularly for smallholder farmers and women. It has welcomed the EU pledges of support, but it has expressed concern that the amounts "fall far short of the 2.7 billion dollars (over 2.2 billion pounds) urgently needed to address the scale of this crisis." Furthermore, it has urged the donors to honour their commitments and to ensure the funds are disbursed as quickly as possible so that further suffering and loss of life might be prevented.

The agency stressed "the need to increase life-saving food aid and offer cash and vouchers in areas where markets are working." It also pointed out that while food is available in some markets, many Sudanese cannot afford to buy it, and the trucks carrying humanitarian aid frequently face difficulties preventing them from reaching areas most in need. There are already reports of people starving, and aid agencies report the risk of famine is imminent.

Finnish MP on Trial for Bible Tweet

Finland's former Minister of the Interior, Päivi Räsänen, has been informed that she will stand trial for the third time on charges relating to her faith-based views on marriage and sexual ethics which she expressed in a 2019 "tweet" and in an earlier pamphlet which she wrote for her local Lutheran church. The pamphlet centred on the words from Genesis "male and female he created them."



The tweet had been aimed at the leadership of the Lutheran Church which had sponsored an LGBT "Pride" event. As an active member of the Finnish Lutheran church, she had addressed the leadership of her church on Twitter/X and questioned its official sponsorship of the LGBT event *Pride 2019*. Finland has a population of about 5.5m people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is one of the country's two national churches and says it has about 4 million members.

Following several months of police interrogations about her Christian beliefs and her understanding of the Bible, Finland's Prosecutor General in 2021 brought charges of "agitation against a minority group" against Räsänen under the "war crimes and crimes against humanity" provisions in the Finnish criminal code.

The former chairwoman of Finland's Christian Democrats, Räsänen was unanimously acquitted of "hate speech" charges before both the Helsinki District Court and the Court of Appeal. Bishop Pohjola was acquitted of charges relating to his having published the pamphlet expressing Räsänen's views on morality.

The prosecutor has sent the case to the Supreme Court. The state prosecutor is appealing their acquittal on the charges and sending the appeal to Finland's Supreme Court. The prosecution is demanding tens of thousands of Euros in fines and insisting that Räsänen's and Pohjola's publications be censored.

Paul Coleman, Executive Director of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, a global organisation that supports and advocates for the right to live and speak the truth and which has been supporting Räsänen's legal defence has declared the case is a watershed case in the story of Europe's "creeping censorship."

"In a democratic Western nation in 2024, nobody should be on trial for their faith – yet throughout the prosecution of Päivi Räsänen and Bishop Pohjola, we have seen something akin to a 'heresy' trial, where Christians are dragged through court for holding beliefs that differ from the approved orthodoxy of the day.

He believes that the state's insistence on continuing the prosecution after almost five years, despite the clear and unanimous rulings from the two lower courts is alarming. He said that ADF International will continue to stand alongside Räsänen and Pohjola every step of the way and to oppose this attack on free speech.

Päivi Räsänen has said: "In my case the investigation has lasted almost five years, has involved untrue accusations, several long police interrogations totalling more than 13 hours, preparations for court hearings, the District Court hearing, and a hearing in the Court of Appeal.

"This was not just about my opinions, but about everyone's freedom of expression. I hope that with the ruling of the Supreme Court, others would not have to undergo the same ordeal.

"I have considered it a privilege and an honour to defend freedom of expression, which is a fundamental right in a democratic state."

On the Edges of Faith

Father Peter Bowe, a monk of Douai Abbey, will be hosting a Day of Exploration for Seekers at the Abbey on Saturday 1st June. The day will offer an opportunity to seek deeper meaning in your life, to help and encourage you in your spiritual quest.

Father Bowe

This Day will explore living on the edge of faith in a time of appalling instability all about and within. If you are yearning for a greater vision of God's all-embracing presence, and his love for you, then this day could answer your needs.

- This will be an opportunity for wide-ranging reflection and sharing of spiritual & religious experiences, positive & negative.
- Making choices for a way ahead.

Offering some practical steps for a deeper, more satisfying, personal way to God...perhaps to Christ - Christ beyond all limits.

Whatever questions or doubts you have, Father Bowe invites you to bring them along! The day will begin at 10.30am following arrivals and coffee from 10am. It will finish at 4pm and the cost, including lunch, will be £25. Alternatively, you can bring your own lunch and the cost will be £15. Fees are payable on the day -there are concessions available.



The Pope's Intentions



The Pope's Intention for March

Every year, the Holy Father asks for our prayers for a specific intention each month. You are invited to answer the Holy Father's request and to join with many people worldwide in praying for this intention each month. From time to time, the Holy Father may add a second prayer intention related to current events or urgent needs, like disaster relief. The second prayer request will help mobilize prayer and action related to the urgent situation. The Pope's monthly prayer intentions alternate between prayers for Evangelization and prayers for a Universal theme. This month of May he asks us to pray for the Formation of Religious and Seminarians: We pray that religious women and men, and seminarians, grow in their own vocations through their human, pastoral, spiritual and community formation, leading them to be credible witnesses to the Gospel.

Reflection on the May Prayer Intention

Addressing seminarians on the eve of Good Shepherd Sunday last month, Pope Francis asked them to bear in mind the parable of the Good Shepherd. Fr. Edmund Power, OSB offers his thoughts on the day's liturgical readings under the theme: "I am the Good Shepherd".

The fourth Sunday of Eastertide is traditionally known as "Good Shepherd Sunday" because in each of the three years of the cycle the gospel is taken from John 10 in which Jesus develops an extended metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep.

In the opening words of today's Gospel, he proclaims: "I am the good shepherd."

The adjective "good" in the Greek text is curious: its original meaning was "beautiful," and from there it expanded in a personal/moral direction.

Beauty, at whatever level we consider it, attracts us. "You hold out a green twig to a sheep, and you draw it," says St Augustine. It is the beauty of the Lord that draws the sheep to follow Him.

The application of the gospel image is clear: we, his followers, are the sheep. It may not be very attractive to be thought of as sheep, but the central proclamation today is that the Lord is entirely dedicated to us and will do anything for our good—an embracing and encouraging message in an age of bewilderment.

Looking more closely at the text, we notice two pairs of contrasts: the first is between the shepherd and the hireling; the second is between the sheep and the wolf.

The hireling may well be efficient, but at the first sign of danger, he leaves the sheep and flees, driven by the selfish dominance of the ego.

The shepherd, on the other hand, knows his sheep and plainly loves them: the phrase lays down his life is repeated in various ways four times in the text. The motive in this case is self-sacrificing love that almost recklessly fails to count the cost.

The sheep are passive and "gregarious"; we may think of them as unintelligent, but they have two inspired qualities: they respond to the "beauty" of the shepherd with recognition and trust, and they heed his voice.

The wolf is the bestial counterpart of the hireling and symbolizes greed (snatches them) and division (scatters them). We may remember that the Greek verb that generated our "diabolic" originally meant to set at variance or divide.

Let's not be ingenuous: none of us is fully on the part of the shepherd/sheep, and in everyone there are traces of the hireling/wolf.

The gospel, while proclaiming the paschal compassion of Jesus, sets us, indirectly, a moral challenge. The dying to self so as to live with Christ, which is the core of our baptism, implies a constant commitment to extirpate the mercenary and the wolfish within us. This task will not end until the end.

Fr. Edmund Power, OSB

Please remember our Seminarians in your prayers: Rev: Tom Hiney (Diaconate, Beda College Rome); Rev. Ambrose Chou, and Owen Dugan (St Mary's College, Oscott); Jack Ryan, Ryan Browne, and Ryan Hawkes (The Venerable English College, Rome); Farvin Gonsalves, Francis Ezeani, Nathan King, Adam Trzebinski (Allen Hall, London); John Aburn, (Propaedeutic Year, Valladolid, Spain); Rev Diego Hoyos, (Pastoral Year, Reading).

Irish Diocese Changes

A radical restructuring of the governance of the Church in Ireland has resulted in the reduction of the number of bishops. The Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Luis Montemayorm, has confirmed that the number of bishops is to be reduced from six to three, and that there is a strong possibility that there will be an amalgamation of diocese. Changes in the size of diocese are not necessarily recent events, nor necessarily limited to Ireland. Ireland's diocesan system sprung up in the 12th century with a transition from monastic to diocesan governance, followed by the establishment of the four metropolitan provinces of Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Tuam. Over the years several smaller diocese were merged with larger ones.

The announcement by the Papal Nuncio follows the 2021 decision that the bishop of Clonfert would also serve as bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh, and as apostolic administrator of Kilfenora. Dr Michael Duignan was confirmed in that role in 2022. As a result of all this, the metropolitan province of Tuam, which includes most of the West of Ireland, will now have just three bishops when it used to have six.

Following the retirement of Bishop John Fleming, Dr Francis Duffy, Archbishop of Tuam, will act as administrator of the diocese of Killala. The bishop of Elphin, Gr Kevin Doran, will take on the role of apostolic administrator of the diocese of Achonry whose present bishop, Dr Paul Dempsey, will move to Dublin as an auxiliary bishop with special responsibility for enhancing outreach to young people to try to stem the drift of young people away from the Church. Dr Dempsey is seen by many as a likely future Archbishop.

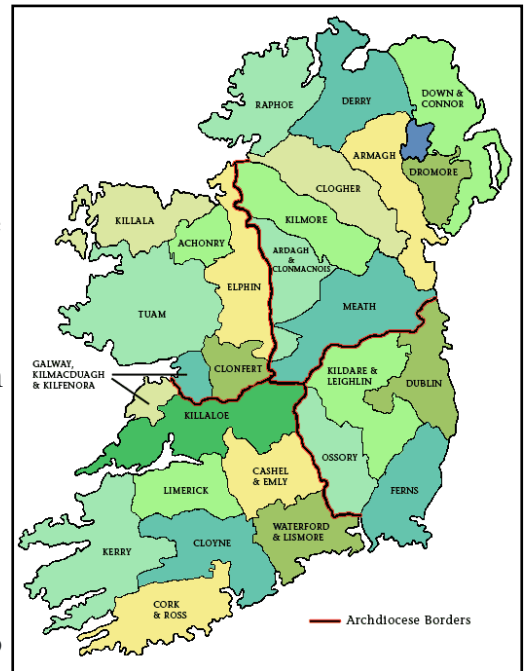
The Papal Nuncio stated: "In due time, and following careful assessment and consultation, the present Dioceses of Tuam and Killala on the one hand, and Elphin and Achonry on the other, may be governed by one bishop in each case, just as the Dioceses of Galway and Clonfert are today governed by one bishop. If this process evolves still further, the associated Dioceses may then merge fully under their bishop, and, in this way, the six Dioceses in the Province of Tuam will eventually become three."

The reorganisation of the diocese reflects a noticeable decline in Catholic observance and the severe decline in the number of priests and students for the priesthood.

The moves are seen as likely to engender greater efficiency, though some observers have been surprised by the relatively small size of some of the diocese such as the diocese of Achonry which has just 23 parishes catering for less than 40,000 Catholics. However, it is worth noting that Ireland's western area is predominantly rural and sparsely populated, with the notable exceptions of the city of Galway and its commuter belt, and some of the larger towns such as Sligo and Castlebar. By contrast, some 40 per cent of the Republic's population lives in Dublin and the adjoining counties of Wicklow, Kildare and Meath.

Despite Ireland's massive decline in weekly Mass attendance from 91 per cent in 1973 to around 30 per cent prior to the pandemic, and the decline in the number of priests, there is still a great deal of respect at the local level for parish priests and curates.

As has happened in the UK, the hope for the future seems to lie with the increasing migrant Catholic population from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. There seems to be hope in Ireland that the Church can engage young people more effectively so that even if congregations are smaller, they might be potentially more engaged, active, and effective.



From the School

Recently, St John's joined hundreds of other children in Catholic schools across the country to pray, sing and celebrate the season of Easter in the *One Life* Easter live stream. This is a simple and effective way to come together virtually to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord and to praise God in the beautiful season of Easter.

St John's also joined schools across the country to support CAFOD, raising money by taking part in the Big Lent Walk. Each class put into practice the school's values of service and generosity by walking as far as they could to raise money to battle world poverty. Collectively, the school raised over £700 by walking an amazing 1003.8 kilometres.

St John's constantly strives to reduce the risk of bullying and to improve the well-being of pupils. This year the school is delighted to have been awarded the United Against Bullying Silver School status. To put that achievement in context, 296 schools completed the demanding programme; 11% achieved a Gold award, 24% Silver, and 55% Bronze. Many congratulations to staff and pupils for an excellent result.

The theme of this year's Olympics is set to inspire this year's school Sports Day. Pupils and their families are invited to be creative and to bring alive the event in school by creating props and decorations, not just symbolic of the Games but to tie in with St John's values and celebrate the cultural diversity of the school. Examples may be flags, medals, photos and, most importantly, a creative Olympic Torch. The creations are to be brought into school by the end of April. The results are eagerly awaited.

The Reception class took a local walk to the Post Box to post letters they had written as part of their writing tasks. It was also an opportunity to practice road safety skills and to observe and discuss their surroundings. On their return they sequenced the photos of their journey and drew route maps logging their travels. It proved a productive morning.

The Reception class also welcomed a vet as part of their topic "People who help us." They looked at animal X-Rays and learned how they could help keep their pets safe and well. The most exciting part of the visit was meeting Merlin the black labrador and to learn how to safely approach a dog, and the best way to stroke one – always with the owner's permission.

Finally, football news. Both the boys' and the girls' teams reached their respective finals in the Andover Tournament which has been running since November. Sadly, both teams were narrowly defeated in the finals. Despite this, all the players can hold their heads up high. They did the school proud once more!



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Infinite Dignity

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued a declaration “Dignitas infinita” reaffirming the indispensable nature of the dignity of the human person. The declaration has three sections on the doctrinal foundations of human dignity and a fourth examining violations.

The document has apparently taken some five years to complete. It contains sections on several themes explored in the recent papal documents covering euthanasia and abortion, surrogate motherhood, poverty and human trafficking, so drawing attention to the importance not only of beginning and end of life issues but also of the other forms of attack on human dignity.

In the first three parts, the document recalls fundamental principles relating to the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed in Jesus Christ. This is a “gift” present even in the unborn child, the unconscious person, or older people in distress. It declares equal dignity for all, regardless of their living conditions or qualities.

Christ’s incarnation, it proclaims, “confirmed the dignity of the body and the soul” and his resurrection revealed that man’s dignity rests on the fact that we are called to communion with God. It declares that referring to “personal dignity” as opposed to “human dignity” is inaccurate as it presupposes a person is only one capable of reasoning and so negates the rights of the unborn and those with mental disabilities, whereas the Church insists that the dignity of every human person is intrinsic and remains in all circumstances.

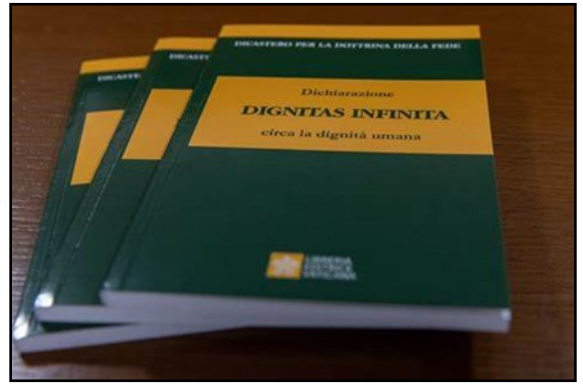
The document stresses that the concept of human dignity is misused when used to justify the arbitrary proliferation of new rights, as if the ability to express and realise individual preference or subjective desire should be guaranteed.

It lists some grave violations of human dignity such as murder, genocide, euthanasia and suicide, as well as mutilation, the death penalty, physical and mental torture and undue psychological pressures. Subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, human trafficking and degrading working conditions also come under fire, as drug-dealing and the weapons trade, terrorism, international organised crime, sexual abuse and violence towards women, all of which can offend against human rights.

The document indicates that “every sign of unjust discrimination” against homosexual persons “is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence.” It condemns Gender Theory for cancelling the differences in its claim to make everyone equal. The Church holds that human life is a gift from God to be accepted and placed at the service of good, and, it says, seeking “self-determination is akin to making oneself God.” All attempts to obscure reference to the ineliminable sexual difference between man and woman” are “to be rejected.”

While sex change is also judged negatively, since it “risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception,” the document states, this does not mean, however, excluding the possibility that “a person with genital abnormalities that are already evident at birth or that develop later may choose to receive the assistance of healthcare professionals to resolve these abnormalities”

The document ends by looking at “digital violence”. New forms of violence such as cyberbullying are spreading through social media, and “the internet is also a channel for spreading pornography and the exploitation of persons for sexual purposes or through gambling”. The Declaration ends by urging that “respect for the dignity of the human person beyond all circumstances be placed at the centre of the commitment to the common good and at the centre of every legal system”.



Council of Cardinals

Vatican News reported on the meeting of the Council of Cardinals that began on Monday 15 April and which concluded the following day in the afternoon at Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican. Discussions focused on a number of areas of concern in the global situation.

On Monday 15 April the Cardinals discussed the role of women in the Church and listened to the reflections of Sister Regina da Costa Pedro of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Immaculate, who shared real life stories and thoughts of a number of Brazilian women, and Professor Stella Morra of the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University who spoke about the way various cultures appreciate the role of women in different parts of the world.

Tuesday's session began with a report by Cardinal Mario Grech and Msgr. Piero Coda on the current Synod, according to a Holy See Press Office communique. The meeting concluded "after a reflection on the implementation of the *Apostolic Constitution Praedicate Evangelium* in diocesan curias, and with reports by each Cardinal on the social, political and ecclesial situation of the different regions of origin."

During the meetings "there were references - and prayers on several occasions - dedicated to realities of war and conflict" in different parts of the world, "particularly in the Middle East and Ukraine." The Council members and the Pope "expressed concern about what is happening and the hope that efforts to find paths of negotiation and peace will be strengthened."

The Body (2000)

As usual, St Paul got it right – hitting all of the nails on the head, “...if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain” (1 Cor 15:14). And that's the core of this film. In present-day East Jerusalem, a Palestinian Shop owner is digging out a new basement and uncovers archaeological workings. The Israelis authorities move in and excavate.



Head Israeli archaeologist Dr Sharon (Olivia Williams) uncovers the tomb of a rich person, clearly Jewish and – oh dear – empty. Worse to come. Behind a false wall, she discovers the laid-out skeleton of a male person with no bones broken and clear signs of being crucified. By this point alarm bells are ringing in the Vatican. So now enter Fr Matt (Antonio Banderas), a Jesuit with a directive to (ahem) “prove” that the bones are not the mortal remains of Jesus.

Arriving in Jerusalem, Fr Matt and Dr Sharon don't hit it off from the start. They can't. They have to start at daggers drawn and then gradually learn to get on with the other, work professionally and then become a team. It's that sort of film and had that been the whole of the plot this drama would have run out of emotional steam a third of the way in. It doesn't and that's because it's turned into a full-on action film with all of the stops pulled out.

First off, our archaeological duo are stoned by ultra-orthodox Jews for (it is wrongly believed) tampering with the body. Then there's a shoot-out between Israeli Security and an extreme Palestinian group. It all gets ramped up as the Israelis won't release the skeleton to the Church unless the Vatican states that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. By two-thirds in to the film, we're at the required cinematic impasse that marks the start of the third act and moves the film as a whole to its dramatic climax.

So; third act – and it's a lively one. Dr Sharon's children are kidnapped by the Palestinian group. She is told, “Hand over the bones or... (guess what?)”. She does but is able to get a warning to Fr Matt. He and Israeli Security arrive just in time. Big shoot-out with all the bad guys ending up dead and our archaeological (now) team wounded. The bones? The bag they were put in by Dr Sharon ended up with a live grenade added to it and the bones were all blown to bits.

So; we never get to know if it was actually the mortal remains of Jesus in that tomb. Actually, we do and the answer is no. At the end of the film, the Israeli authorities seal off the entire tomb with explosive. As the smoke clears, inside the now blocked off tomb entrance, the camera focuses in on a slab of stone with Aramaic writing on it. The English translation then comes up on screen, “Please God take my son David, as you took your own son Jesus”. It don't get any clearer than that.

John Newland

Wisdom Centre

The programme of events for Spring into Summer at Wisdom House in Romsey will include:

Kindfulness: A Day on the Importance of Self-Compassion – Saturday 18th May Facilitated by David Cole.

A Day of Wellbeing: Mindfulness, Yoga, Sacred Sound, Meditation, Creativity – Saturday 15th June Facilitated by Carolyn, Fran, Helen, Lou, and Yasmin.

Returning to Centre: Mysticism of the East and the Spirituality of the West – Saturday 6th July Facilitated by David Cole.

The weekly in-person meditation sessions are every Wednesday evening from 7.30 to 8.30. These evenings are free of charge and there is no need to pre-book. If you would like to know more about the meditation groups or wish to be added to the weekly meditation mailing list please contact the reception at Wisdom House.

Please look at the Wisdom Centre website for the full programme of events. To book or for enquiries you can email: reception@wisdomhouseromsey.co.uk or phone 01794 830206.

The Wisdom Centre team of Fiona, Jackie, Fran, Pat, Jade Sr. Marie and Sr Jackie

Please pray for those who have died recently

Joseph Burdett, James Daly, John Robinson, Jonathan Griffin and Pamela Lytle

and for those whose anniversaries occur in April

Anna McCracken, Joseph Cochran, Mary O'Neil, Elizabeth Hill, Annie Nottingham, Joseph Graham, Ethel Turner, Louise Girling, Montague Irwin, Kay Watson, Frank MacKrell, Dean McDonnell, Fr Francis O'Shea, Bridget Coffey, Mary Lonsdale, Fr C Mulholland, Fr D. McCarthy SMM, Kirsten Morgan, Hilda Bell, Nora Hurley, Ellen Kenny, Mary Richardson, Percy Milner, Josie Corbet, Myra Walker, Shirley Stringer, Joseph James, Mollie Stace, Edmund Plowden, Marguerite McGarvey, Mary McGarvey, Mrs O'Kelly, Peggy O'Neil, Annie and Bernard Madden, Patricia Bradfield, John Perrier, Martin Mannion, Margaret Murray, Bill Edwards, Sister Mary Damien, Mary Sainsbury, John Myles, Mary Lee, Danny Gallagher, Maramichela Holloway, Walter Stace, Fr Handley, Christine Simpson, Col. Macfee, Susan Ingram, Thomas Faye, Charles Cooke, Mary James, Catherine Fairmington, John Le Clezio, Frank Hynes, Antonio Da Silva, Sister Marie Columba, Agnes Magrath, Sister Marguerite Marie De La Trinitie, Jennifer Sutton, Arnold Baxter, Muriel Crompton, Joanna Gray, Arthur Stubbs, Mrs Sheridan, Moira Annaud, Kathleen Murray, Eugene Watson, MaryWicks, Mary Jordan, John Campbell, Frederick Wiltshire, Richard Johnson, Sarah Toland, Eileen Bell, Ethel Turner, Eamon O'Dwyer, John Monks, Margaret Monks, Debbie Tuite, Nancy Murphy, Conrad Bartosik, Madge Redish, James Leader, Catherine Farrington, Henry Davins, Lillian bell, Michael Clarke, John Sheehan, Josephine Corbett, Balbina Abreu de Jesus, Father Daniel Hogan SMM, Bob Grey, Ida Keeton, Laura Hougran, Rev. Paul Sutcliffe, Rev. Kenneth Freeman, Christiane Harivel, Philip Harris, Hazel Pereira, Alberto Michetti, Jane Thornton, Kathleen, Greene, John Trusler, Paul Wharton, Florrie Potter, Irene Lloyd, Mrs Atkinson, James Smith, Jim Cogan, William McFadden, Elizabeth Laversuch, Ros Quaife, Bridget Cartmel, William Moore, Harry Curley, Sister Celestina, James, Margaret Burrowes, George Brown, Maria Meager, Bob Hall, Kay Porter, Louise Gallagher Marjorie Baddeley, Fabienne Faulkner, Pat Adams, Dorothy O'Sullivan, Regina Fiedler, Steve Leek, Eileen Morrell, Fr. Bob Ellwood SMM, Harriet Martin, Jane Weldon, John Mulcock, Adrian Stokes, Almuth Giebermann-Fisher, Freddie Flood, David Bull, Graeme Ellison, Sister Eileen Ryan, Marian McFadden, Mary Bradley, Barbara Long, Frank Kilroy, John Davies, Dorothy Courtnell, Doreen Burke and Baby Emily Jane.

During the month to come please remember in your prayers the following who are sick:

Esme Coveney, Rita Lane, Tom Wilkins, Margaret Williams, Patrick Arnold, Sheila Muir, Sheila Roberts, Mary Hathaway, Christopher Brown, Lisa Ramage, Mervyn Owen, Michelle Taylor, Bernard Ivinson, Fiona Hilleard, Mary Oak, Tony Fabian, Sile Monnelly, Helen O'Connell, Robert Williams, Simon and Victoria Rowney, Douglas Manning, Guy Foa, Diane Mahoney, Sarah Viney, Diane Gan, Debbie Smythe, Wendy Rawlings and all those in need of our prayers.

If you know that anyone on this list is now happily recovered, or if you would like a name added to this list, please contact the editors.

PLEASE NOTE

Articles printed in *The JOURNAL* are printed in good faith and are not necessarily the views of the editors. Contributions must be accompanied by full name and address, which may be withheld on request. The editors reserve the right to amend all contributions. Please support our advertisers, they support us.

ENDPIECE

Many thanks to the various contributors to this month's *The JOURNAL*. The next edition will be issued on 8th & 9th June. Contributions should be with the editors by Monday 3rd June. Please leave contributions at the Presbytery or email them to: stjohnsjournal@googlemail.com