

"We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta



UCM News

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The UCM National Committee and members send best wishes and assurances of prayers to King Charles and the Princess of Wales for their recovery

Year of Prayer: Pope Francis to set up 'School of Prayer'

By Deborah Castellano Lubov

As the Year of Prayer gets underway, the Prefect and Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Evangelisation explain its purpose as helping Catholics prepare for the 2025 Jubilee, announcing that Pope Francis will set up a 'School of Prayer' to explore various aspects of every Christian's 'breath of faith.'

On Sunday, Pope Francis inaugurated a Year of Prayer ahead of the 2025 Jubilee, calling on the faithful "to pray more fervently to prepare ourselves to live properly this grace-filled event and to experience the power of hope in God."

The Year of Prayer, the Holy Father explained, is dedicated "to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer, prayer in personal life, in the life of the Church, prayer in the world."

The Holy See Press Office presented the Year of Prayer on Tuesday at a press conference held by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, and Monsignor Graham Bell, Undersecretary of the Dicastery, whose Section is in charge of coordinating the Year of Prayer.

Availability to Episcopal Conferences, Diocesan Jubilee representatives

The Dicastery for Evangelization will release materials to help the faithful celebrate the Year and underscored its availability to Bishops' Conferences and Diocesan Jubilee representatives to provide further clarifications.

Archbishop Fisichella presented the Dicastery's readiness to support this Year of Prayer, saying the work to prepare for Holy Year 2025 continues.

With the Holy Year approaching, pilgrims can learn more about the upcoming Jubilee Year at the Jubilee website www.iubilaeum2025.va, and through the App, said the Archbishop.

Rediscovering our need for daily prayer

The Year of Prayer, Archbishop Fisichella noted, "is not a Year marked with particular initiatives; rather, it is a privileged time in which to rediscover the value of prayer and the need for daily prayer in our Christian life."

The Year, he said, is "a time to discover how to pray and, above all, how to educate the people of today in prayer, in this age of digital culture, so that prayer can be effective and fruitful."

"We cannot deny," said the Archbishop, "the fact that our time manifests a profound need for spirituality."

"From those who quickly make the Sign of the Cross to those who participate in the daily Eucharist, there is such a vast range of ways of

praying that no one can fully describe them all; they can range from quick to distracted prayer to contemplative prayer to prayer filled with tears of pain," he said.

Prayer cannot be captured in a pre-established pattern, Archbishop Fisichella recognized, "because it is a manifestation of the believer's personal relationship with God Himself within that intimate and exclusive relationship that distinguishes our faith."

Prayer that nourishes our faith

The Year of Prayer, he said, "fits into this context as a way of fostering our relationship with the Lord, offering moments of genuine spiritual rest. It is like an oasis sheltered from daily stress where prayer becomes nourishment for the Christian life of faith, hope, and charity."

For this reason, the Dicastery for Evangelisation has prepared a series of materials and prayer aids for the coming months that can constitute a "symphony" of prayer forms that the Christian community and individual believers can use.

As Pope Francis writes in the introduction to the first volume of the "Notes on Prayer" series: "Prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God."

"It will not be a year which hinders initiatives of the local Churches," the Archbishop highlighted. "Rather, it should be seen as a period in which every planned initiative is supported effectively, precisely because it has prayer as its foundation."

"Therefore, we should not expect a series of specific events," he clarified, "but rather ideas and suggestions, so that the prayer of the Church can once again reinvigorate and leave its mark on the life of every baptized person."

Ways to accompany meditation

Archbishop Fisichella went on to suggest two ways to accompany our meditation and reading in order to better understand the value of prayer.

He held up the example of the 38 catechetical talks that Pope Francis gave from 6 May 2020 to 16 June 2021, which consider the various forms of prayer, saying they can be re-read, as they contain many useful suggestions. Second, he said his Dicastery is preparing a series of volumes entitled "Notes on Prayer".

Series of eight volumes

Monsignor Graham Bell went on to further describe the Dicastery's current projects to prepare for and support this Year of Prayer.

"The Vatican Publishing House (LEV), is publishing, starting today," he announced, "a series



Pope Francis: 'Prayer is breath of faith in war-torn world'

of small texts that delve into the various dimensions of the Christian act of praying," signed by authors of international renown, edited by the Dicastery for Evangelization - Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World.

This series, consisting of eight volumes, he noted, is made available to the various Bishops' Conferences to offer a useful aid to help the faithful enter further into the intelligence of prayer.

The first book, explained Msgr. Bell, is *Praying Today. A Challenge to Be Overcome* (LEV, pp. 110, euro 8.50), with a preface by Pope Francis, is authored by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, one of the best-known authors of spirituality, who previously served as Vicar General of Vatican City and Archbishop of St. Peter's.

The text, available in bookstores starting January 23, he explained, offers reminders of the need for prayer and teachings for having "a different gaze and a different heart" by highlighting figures who have testified to the fruitfulness of prayer, such as St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Francis of Assisi, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

'With God, everything is possible'

In the preface, Msgr. Bell noted, Pope Francis recalls that "prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a silent cry that comes forth from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God."

Cardinal Comastri, Monsignor Bell acknowledged, says that "only prayer gives space to God in our lives and in the history of the world: and with God everything is possible."

Seven more volumes will be published in the near

future, including: Gianfranco Ravasi, *Praying with the Psalms* (February 2024); Juan López Vergara, *The Prayer of Jesus* (February 2024); Paul Murray, OP, *Praying with Saints and Sinners* (March 2024); Antonio Pitta, *Parables on Prayer* (March 2024); Carthusian Monks, *The Church in Prayer* (March 2024); Catherine Aubin, *The Prayer of Mary and the Saints* (April 2024); Ugo Vanni, *The Prayer Jesus Taught Us: The 'Our Father'* (April 2024).

Pope Francis and the 'School of Prayer'

Together with these resources, the Dicastery for Evangelisation will prepare pastoral aids that present anew the various expressions of prayer in the community, in the family, for priests, cloistered nuns, sanctuaries, and young people.

Archbishop Fisichella said these are "not new prayers but help us live with greater awareness of the need for daily prayer."

The Pope himself, during this year, he announced, will set up a "School of Prayer."

"This School," Archbishop Fisichella explained, "will be a series of moments of encounter with specific groups of people to pray together and better understand the various forms of prayer: from thanksgiving to intercession; from contemplative prayer to the prayer of consolation; from adoration to supplication."

The Vatican officials concluded by recalling Pope Francis' words: "I am certain that bishops, priests, deacons, and catechists will find in this year appropriate ways to place prayer at the heart of the proclamation of hope that the 2025 Jubilee will make resound in this troubled time."

Source – Vatican News

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Congratulations

80th BIRTHDAYS

- Sylvia Miskell** St Peter-in-Chains Foundation, Doncaster, Hallam
- Monica McCulloch** St Mary and St. Philip Neri parish, Salford

90th BIRTHDAYS

- Eve Fitzpatrick** St Mary's Foundation, Woolton, Liverpool

Editorial

It is already nearing the end of February 2024, however; I wish you all a Happy New Year. As we look forward to this our renewal year may I point you towards an article in the Catholic Herald about us 'The UCM'

On Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 8:02 pm, The Catholic Herald <editorial@catholicherald.co.uk>

In this issue we have another member on a pilgrimage this time the Camino de Santiago which is just the first part as it is being done in stages. Enjoy the journey with Mariann.

National Media Officer



Booking opens for Flame 2025

Flame is the largest Catholic youth gathering in the UK, and we can't wait for its return in March 2025! Most recently, in March of last year, Flame 2023 welcomed over 8,000 young people to the OVO Arena, Wembley for a day of inspirational speakers, world-class Christian musicians and moments of prayer and Adoration.

Reflections from young people and group leaders have highlighted the transformative experience that Flame has provided young people. In his welcome address, Fr Dominic Howarth, chair of the Flame organising group, reminded young people that this is "Church as you've never seen it before, Church as you've never seen it before. But have no doubt, this is Church."

'The atmosphere within the crowd was fantastic, everyone joined in and it felt like a big community coming together to celebrate what they love most in the world. It was the best experience I have had and I would love to go again. I will never forget it.'

Year 9-11 student after Flame 2023

We certainly hope so too! Group booking opens on 31st January 2024 – the Feast of St John Bosco, patron for youth. We hope this gives extra time for groups to book and spread the cost, with just a £10pp deposit required to secure your seats (which are allocated by group, first come served!). We also have super early bird and early bird discounts available to try and make the day as accessible as possible. For more information check out cymfed.org.uk/flame.

We are also pleased to announce the theme for Flame 2025: "Unstoppable – Fan the Flame of Hope!"

Throughout the Bible, God's love and mission for humanity has proven unstoppable. Whether it's the Israelites escaping Egypt, David triumphing over Goliath, or Jesus conquering death itself, the theme is clear: when driven by God's will, nothing is insurmountable.

Acts 2 narrates the descent of the Holy Spirit, which enflames the apostles with a fervour that becomes unstoppable, leading them to spread the Gospel fearlessly across nations. CYMFed's Flame

Youth Congress reminds us that this same power is within each of us, waiting to be harnessed.

The next Flame Congress is 15th March 2025, a Jubilee year declared by Pope Francis. Pope Francis has declared the 2025 Jubilee theme: 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Pilgrimages are journeys with a sacred purpose, often full of challenges. To embark on a pilgrimage is to be unstoppable in one's faith, believing in God's guiding hand throughout the journey. Just as many saints and martyrs have shown, faith and hope make one unstoppable against adversities.

"Overall this pilgrimage has probably changed my life" Sixth former after Flame 2023

Young people often feel passionate about their goals, be it in education, relationships, or social justice. Today's youth also face unique challenges, from mental health struggles to societal pressures. The world often tells young people what they can't do. 'Unstoppable' flips the narrative. It tells them that with faith and determination, they can achieve greatness. 'Unstoppable' serves as a reminder that with God's love and the community's support, they can rise above obstacles and overcome all barriers.

The best thing about Flame 2023 was the incredible sense of community, worshipping with 8000 other Catholics – especially those my age. Year 9-11 pupil

We look forward with great hope for Flame 2025. Since 2012, Flame has allowed parish, school and diocesan groups to gather and journey together, and share a day of prayer, worship and learning led by world-class speakers and musicians. For the youth of England and Wales, we hope Flame 2025 inspires and reminds them that with God on their side, they can light up the world with their passion and faith.

Adoration was AMAZING. Quote from a young person in my group: 'what was that? And why haven't you shown us this before?' Group leader

At this stage, we are delighted to confirm that One Hope Project, the Catholic worship collective based in the UK, and the incredible Adenike Adewale will be joining us for Flame 2025. Adenike is a judicial lawyer, but also currently on tour as



Whitney Houston in "The Queen of the Night" as well as continuing to volunteer with her parish youth group in the Diocese of Southwark. At Flame 2023, she premiered her debut single, "Best version" which is now available on Spotify and YouTube, and encourages us all to be "God's best version" of ourselves.

My highlight was the talk by Adenike! It's amazing how she was a member of the youth in 2019, just

like me and now she's doing something big. It helped me realise that we are all on our OWN journey. University Student

There are some exciting conversations and planning in the works, and we can't wait to reveal the full line-up of special guests, speakers and musicians throughout the year. We will also be releasing free resources to all group leaders as we prepare and journey to Flame 2025!

Source - CBCEW

One Woman's Journey of Faith and Fulfilment

Pauline Doyle, parishioner of St Swithun's, Yateley for almost 50 years and longstanding member of Yateley UCM Foundation, successfully launched her book 'A Spiritual Odyssey' earlier this year.

It is a book that was meant to be written! It is an amazing and inspiring account of how an ordinary wife and mother followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit which eventually took her across the world on the most extraordinary of spiritual journeys.

At the book launch, publisher, Penny Legg of Sabrestorm Stories said in her speech that the central compelling story of one woman's faith and trust in God, together with the authenticity of the story and the depth of the storytelling was what appealed to the publishers.

The publishers went on to say "The love story that unfolds within the pages of A Spiritual Odyssey is what lifts the book above similar titles. This is not, though, just a story of faith, or a romance. It is a personal and evocative journey, where the reader is gently gathered up and taken along to travel with Pauline. We share the highs and lows of her life; laugh with her during the good times; cry at the sad and hold our breath during her daring escapades! "

Further details of the book are available on the author's website (www.paulinedoyleauthor.co.uk) or you can follow Pauline on Facebook (Pauline Doyle Author). The book is available on Amazon and from other bookshops. The retail price is £12.99.



Submitting copy for next issue

The deadline for articles and photos for the next edition of the UCM News is 16th May 2024

Please send copy to ucmnews@yahoo.com

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Friends in UCM,

Thank you all for your Christmas cards, prayers and wishes for the New Year.

On the first Friday in March each year the Union of Catholic Mothers join with women of other faiths in an ecumenical service for the World Day of Prayer where each year the service prepared by Christian women from all over the world. This year the liturgy was prepared in 2022 by the Christian women of Palestine.

They tell us of some of the difficulties they have and how they can help each other with prayers and actions. In view of the current situation in Palestine it is now more important to pray for them and their families who have been uprooted, those who have lost loved ones and especially for the

children who have lost parents. How much more difficult must it be now for all. We, therefore, place them in God's love and care.

We also have those in our own communities "hidden in plain sight", they might also be in our own Foundations, who may need our help as they struggle because of age or illness to undertake quite simple tasks, shopping, lifts to church, etc. but they don't like to either admit they need help or won't ask for it! Let us not forget that the UCM is "Love in Action".

I hope to see many of you in Walsingham.
Love and prayers

Joan Hodge
National President

Raising the profile of the UCM

Dear Members

As you all know we are hoping to raise the profile of UCM during 2024.

The idea is to reach as many parishes as possible within our dioceses during the year.

Our focus would be to:

- try and encourage more membership within a Parish that already has a Foundation
- to target parishes that do not have either a

UCM or CWL group and might like to set up a group.

Many of you may already be involved in encouraging new membership and have used a variety of ways to do this. For instance, some parishes have organised a big event with a focused activity whilst others like to approach parishioners on a more individual basis. You know your parish and what best suits.

However, if you are targeting a parish with no established group or want to encourage more

members within your own Foundation then you should talk to the parish priest and ask if you can speak to the congregation at the end of Mass. If you would like a little more support a script is available to use.

A letter has been sent to all the bishops asking them for their support and to encourage the parish priests within their dioceses to also give their support. We have had very encouraging replies supporting us.

Throughout the year we will be producing new

support materials and as we develop our new website you will find useful resources to support us as we work to grow our membership

It is also important to let potential new members know that they can become a Diocesan Independent Member, which might suit anyone who would struggle to belong to a Foundation.

So, please talk to each other and your Diocesan Committee about ways we can all go forward.

Prayers and blessings the National Committee.

Vacancies

Applications are invited for the following:

National President, 2 National Vice Presidents

Start date National Council 10th May 2025

These are elected Positions, elections will take place at National Council May 2024 and successful candidates will start posts at close of National Council 2025

National Minuting Secretary

Start Date National Council 2024

This is an appointed post and commences at close of National Council 2024

Please send CV's with completed Nomination Forms to ucmnatsec@yahoo.co.uk

Please seriously consider putting your name forward for these positions

Job Descriptions and Nomination Forms are available from your Diocesan President or Secretary or National Secretary Mrs Cath Lydon ucmnatsec@yahoo.co.uk

Opportunities to work shadow and for training are available.

If you require further information please contact National Secretary as above or any member of the National Committee

Events

2024 dates		
Study 2024	Wistaston Crewe	27-28 February
National Council & AGM	The Hayes Swanick	3pm Wed-Fri 8th-10th May
National Pilgrimage	Walsingham	1st-3rd July
Autumn Officers Meeting	Grimshaw Room, St Chads Birmingham	Sat 12th October

2025 dates		
National Council & AGM	The Hayes Swanick	3pm Mon-Wed 19th-21st May

Vacancy Notices

Diocesan Duties	Host needed for National Council & AGM	May 2025
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An unholy alliance: UK and France stand with North Korea and Russia over Nuclear Testing Justice

Source: Christian CND

ICN reported in December that the Vatican had called for countries, including the UK, to make amends for the testing of nuclear weapons.

Although Britain has not undertaken a test since 1991, the legacy of its 45 nuclear test explosions in Australia, Kiribati and Nevada continues to be felt by the communities affected. Food and water supplies remain contaminated, leading to health problems which pass down the generations. The psychological impact on affected communities is no less tangible, with the inescapable sense that damage to these "remote places" and their inhabitants was - and is - considered to be a price worth paying by the nuclear superpowers.

The Bible speaks of the corrosive effects of unatoned sin:

When I refused to confess my sin, my whole body wasted away... Psalm 32:3

If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8

These nuclear tests were now decades ago, but the UK has never issued an apology or offered adequate reparations for the damage caused. Britain's stance in a recent vote at the United Nations seems to illustrate that, in a very different way from the innocent Pacific islanders, the UK's establishment is also still suffering from the legacy of nuclear testing. On October 27th 2023 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Addressing the Legacy of Nuclear Weapons: Providing Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation to Member States Affected by the Use

or Testing of Nuclear Weapons." 171 countries voted in favour. Six abstained. Only four voted against: Russia, North Korea, France and the UK.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists described this "unlikely alliance" as "shameful". Martin Tiler, Co-Chair of Christian CND, said, "I believe that you can legitimately judge a person by the company they choose to keep. We normally welcome rapprochement between traditional rivals, but in this UN vote, by standing together with Russia and North Korea, the UK has shown how desperate it is to avoid facing up to its history of nuclear imperialism."

The government spokesman lined up to respond to these criticisms appears to be Leo Docherty MP, Minister for Europe. His response to Christian CND's comments was forthright, but unenlightening: "Language contained within the [UN] resolution is incompatible with the UK Government's position... on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)." In response, Christian CND pointed out that although the TPNW enjoys majority support at the UN, dozens of other countries which have not yet supported it were nevertheless happy to vote in favour of making good the legacy of nuclear testing, so the UK's position is perplexing.

The Minister's reply went on, "The UK has reviewed residual contamination relating to British nuclear tests on Kiribati and concluded that any required remediation had been undertaken." It is perhaps easy to write this from a desk in King Charles Street, but it sounds callous when considered alongside the well-documented experiences of the islanders themselves.

Mr Docherty goes on to mention recent moves in

the UK to recognise the military veterans who were obliged to witness these tests when they took place, many of whom have also suffered from long-term health effects. (Much of the BBC reporting around nuclear testing has also focused on this angle.) This is a welcome move, but one which seems designed to play to a different audience than the issues faced by the local people, whose ancestral lands were used for some of the most destructive experiments ever carried out.

Christian CND's main focus is always on the future, not the past. The greatest priority must be to avoid the use of any further nuclear weapons, in test or in anger - which remains a frightening possibility. But if we ignore the sins of past, we are more likely to sin again.

Christian CND exists to bring a Christian angle to



the wider work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and to get more Christians actively campaigning and praying for a more peaceful world. They feel that there is a lot of latent support in the churches for their work, and great potential to do much more, so they invite ICN readers to visit their website and join the organisation if they can.

Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - Working and praying for a world free of nuclear weapons. www.christiancnd.org.uk

Source - Theresa Alessandro

Gospel in Art: They were crowding forward to touch him

Source: Christian Art Gospel of 18 January 2024 Mark 3:7-12

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee followed him. From Judaea, Jerusalem, Idumaea, Transjordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him. And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' But he warned them strongly not to make him known.

Reflection on the painting

In the beginning of today's gospel reading Jesus withdraws with his disciples to the Sea of Galilee. He had just experienced hostility from the religious leaders. In fact, Mark had just told us that, because Jesus had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath in the synagogue (yesterday's reading), the Pharisees conspired with the Herodians against him, with a view to destroying him. So in our reading today we hear that Jesus withdrew from that hostility, along with his disciples, to the Sea of Galilee.

When he gets there, Jesus encounters a response from the crowds which is the complete opposite of the hostility he experienced in the previous readings this week. People around the Sea of Galilee approached him, trying to touch him so as to be healed of their brokenness and diseases. The contrast between the two



responses to Jesus is very striking. Some wanted to destroy him; others turned to him to be healed of their brokenness.

It is said of this large crowd that they were 'crowding forward to touch Jesus'. We can touch Jesus too. One of the ways we touch Jesus today is through prayer. In prayer, we enter into communion with the Lord, touching his presence to us. Also, in the Eucharist, by physically consuming the Body of Christ, we touch him (literally!) in the most special of ways.

Our painting is by Korean contemporary artist Yongsung Kim. He is one of the main Christian artists at work there. In a world with an increasing culture of violence and darkness, Yongsung Kim says that he wants to shed the light of Jesus Christ to a new generation by focussing on bright, joyful paintings. In our canvas we see the hand of a follower merely just wanting to touch Jesus. The painting has such beautiful fluidity of movement to it.



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WUCWO monthly message

Let us entrust the new year to Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

Our times, bereft of peace, need a Mother who can reunite the human family. (Pope Francis)

Dear Friends of WUCWO,

There is no doubt that this new year begins in the midst of conflicts and situations that threaten peace in the world, in communities and in families; but it also starts with a great number of challenges, opportunities to do good things and, for us, women of faith, with many reasons for hope. Therefore, I want to write this message as a welcome to the new year full of light and hope, confident that Mary, our Mother, will be walking beside us day after day, watching over us, encouraging us and interceding so that the Lord grants each one of us the graces we need.

We began the year beautifully with the feast of the Solemnity of St. Mary, Mother of God and the LVII World Day of Peace, which reminds us of the longing and hope of many, including ourselves, who have decided to be "artisans of human fraternity for world peace".

Here I would like to delve into some of the Pope's phrases in his homily on 1st January that can help us to reflect more deeply on our relationship with Mary

and our work for peace. "God becomes man and he does so through a woman, Mary. She is the means chosen by God, the culmination of that long line of individuals and generations that "drop by drop" prepared for the Lord's coming into the world....

Thus, at the beginning of the time of salvation, there is the Holy Mother of God, our Holy Mother". Yes, Mary is indeed the way to the Lord, our salvation. That is why we must be more and more united to our Heavenly Mother, place our lives in her hands, imitate her and take her to so many people who need her love, wisdom and consolation.

"Those words, Mother of God, express the joyful certainty that the Lord, a tiny Child in his Mamma's arms, has united himself forever to our humanity, to the point that it is no longer only ours, but His as well.... Mother of God: a dogma of faith, but also a "dogma of hope"; God in man, and man in God, forever. The Holy Mother of God". This certainty consoles us, dignifies us and encourages us to go forward in our mission with firm faith.

"The motherhood of Mary is the path leading us to the paternal tenderness of God, the closest, most direct and easiest of paths. This is God's "style": closeness, compassion and tenderness". And that style of Mary and of God, the one of closeness, compassion and tenderness, is what you and I are called to live in our lives as women of faith, willing to

bring the love of the Lord to the people around us. It is the "style" that we should adopt in our family, in our community and in our apostolic work.

"The Church needs Mary in order to recover her own feminine face, to resemble more fully the woman, Virgin and Mother, who is her model and perfect image (cf. Lumen gentium, 63); to make space for women and to be "generative", through a pastoral ministry marked by concern and care, of patience and maternal courage". WUCWO is a fundamental part of the Church and therefore we must work with that care, solicitude, patience and courage that we women know so well.

"The world, too, needs to look at mothers and at women in order to find peace, to escape from the spiral of violence and hatred and, once more, to see things with genuinely human eyes and hearts." What a great responsibility we have! That is why we must first have peace within ourselves and make sure that we do not lose the ability to look at our neighbour with the heart; to be authentic weavers of human fraternity and artisans of peace wherever we are.

"Every society needs to accept the gift of women, of every woman: to respect, defend and value women, in the knowledge that whoever harms a single woman profanes God, who was "born of a woman". What beautiful words from the Pope that encourage us to continue to work so that the dignity of women is respected and valued throughout the world, so that they can develop fully and share their great gifts with others.

"Just as Mary, the woman, played a decisive role in the fullness of time, she is also decisive in the lives of each of us, for no one knows better than a Mother the stages of growth and the urgent needs of her children... The needs of her children move her, the Mother, to beg Jesus to intervene... Mary knows our needs; she intercedes to make grace overflow in our lives and to guide them to authentic fulfilment". For this reason, we must increase our trusting and intimate prayer to Mary, placing ourselves in her hands, for she, better than anyone else, will know how to ask her Son for the graces that each one of us needs.

"Let us look at Mary, in order to become artisans of unity. Let us do so with her maternal creativity and concern for her children. For she unites them



and consoles them; she listens to their troubles and she dries their tears". I am certain that we, as physical or spiritual mothers, have the creativity and the capacity to care for and comfort others. Let us never stop doing it.

When I was preparing this message, I came across a beautiful prayer of the Pope at the Conclusion of the Pacem in Terris Holy Hour in St. Peter's Basilica, on October 27 last year. I invite you to reach out to Mary, Queen of Peace, our Patroness, and pray it, on your own, with your groups, in your family, etc. Here is the link: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayer-s/documents/20231027-preghiera-pace.html>

Well, I would like to say goodbye to all of you with a big warm hug from Mexico. I hope that the coming year will be full of blessings for you and your families. May we, like Mary, be artisans of unity and peace, and may the new year be fulfilled, through us, with the maternal tenderness of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and with the consolation of the Lord!

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Green Funerals

Virginia Bell from Laudato Si' Animators writes:

Green funerals are acceptable to the Catholic Church, and probably to most Christian denominations. The individual plot is blessed by the bishop, or by the priest at the time of interment, so the ground is consecrated. The funeral company that you choose should be fully aware of the green options available locally and should be able to inform you as to what is and what is not permissible for a green funeral.

Impact

Green or natural burials should aim to have as little impact on the environment as possible. The main considerations being preservation of natural land and carbon footprint reduction.

Traditional coffins may have been treated with varnishes, sealers etc, and church cemeteries may be sprayed with pesticides and herbicides. Green funerals waste less, pollute less and use more sustainable materials than traditional burials, and they use less energy and cause less pollution than cremations.

Coffin or Shroud

The body can either be buried in a biodegradable casket made of natural materials such as cardboard, wicker, bamboo, banana leaf, willow. Or it can be wrapped in a simple shroud instead. Shrouds will be made from a natural material such as cotton, linen, muslin, hemp, silk, wool. There is obviously room for improvement in this list, as cotton uses a lot of water in its production, and wool and silk are not sustainable and involve cruelty. These materials should be narrowed down to the most sustainable, possibly organic hemp. A good question to ask would be "is the material organic?"

- Embalming isn't permitted, due to the chemicals that are used in the process.
- And items can't be left at the grave, except for natural flowers. Anything else will be removed.
- It is not necessary to have both a coffin and a shroud, one or the other is fine.

Environment

Only native wild species are planted. Even the grass should be from native seeds.

Woodland burials are set amongst trees and wildflowers. They ensure the preservation of woodland areas. Meadow burials are set in wildflower meadows. Chemical sprays will be controlled but may not be banned. Check that the company you use has a policy of no chemical spraying.

- Graves are marked by a simple plaque or a tree as a natural memorial.
- Green funerals should be cheaper than traditional ones, as they use minimal products.
- Always ask questions to make sure that the best practices are in place.

Other Considerations

There are other things you can do to make the funeral more eco-friendly.

For instance, you may be able to reduce transportation by walking or cycling to the burial ground. And/or share cars to minimise the number of cars in the funeral procession.

You can use recycled paper for Order of Service sheets, and you can ask people to share so that you can print less. Or you could email the Order of Service to the attendees and ask them to read from their mobile phones instead.

At the get-together, avoid plastic cutlery and plates etc. Offer organic and plant-based food and drinks. If you use a caterer, ask for locally sourced organic food if available.

It is traditional to have flowers at a funeral, but bought flowers have a high carbon footprint. Donations to charity are an acceptable alternative. Memorial events such as balloon releases which cause litter are thankfully not popular these days.

By choosing a green funeral for yourself and others in your family, you are showing care for the planet and respect for God's creation.



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Pray for England: A modest proposal

A recent survey showed that about half of the population in England had no religious faith at all. Even many of those who claimed to be Christian did not pray, did not practise, nor keep Christian moral principles.

Even of those who claimed to be Catholic, very many did not practise, did not go to Mass and the sacraments, did not adhere to basic Christian morality.

None of this is really new to us. Such religious decline has been going on for a long time. It seems to be that it is about time we did seek to remedy the lack of faith in England; about time we reassess our efforts to spread the gospel, to spread the faith left to us by Jesus Himself.

What should we do about this? What can we do about this? There are at least two things we can do straight away. Firstly, we should pray for all our fellow citizens, at home, in towns and villages; all in our Diocese, indeed all in England. Secondly, we need to renew and restore the gift of faith, to our own children, our families and friends, Catholics who have lapsed, Catholics who want to strengthen their faith, and indeed for all those searching for the faith.

On prayer, I think we often underestimate the power of prayer. Indeed, I fear many regard being told to pray is just a soft option, or even not really an option at all, rather a passing the buck back to God. If every one of us prayed every day that all may receive the gift of the Faith and to practise that Faith; if indeed we prayed not only for our family but for everyone in the Diocese; if we prayed for all of England, then, yes, we might well see the return of

Christianity in England.

Prayer, of course, is simply having a word with God. It can take the form of the familiar prayers, Our Father, Hail Mary, the Rosary, but it can also include your own personal prayers, your own chatter to Our Lord. And prayer is best said daily, not just now and then, or only on Sundays. It could be just a few words of intercession for the faith just before going to sleep every night.

Now, turning to education, to teaching the Faith. The very first teacher of the Faith to a child is that child's parents. It is they who teach the child to pray; teach then the familiar prayers, Our Father and Hail Mary; prayers for Mummy and Daddy, for brothers and sisters, Uncles and Aunties. All that can be with a child from an early date and may well last not just as a child, but for the rest of their lives.

This teaching at home is supported and expanded throughout schooling; or should be, but is it always? Wherever possible we should choose a Catholic nursery school, a Catholic primary, and a Catholic secondary school. But even in our Catholic schools I suggest that there are many where the Faith, the "Catechism" as we used to say, could be much improved. If possible, it is best taught by a teacher specialising in teaching the Faith, the sacraments, the Mass, and it is highly desirable for there to be a Catholic priest as chaplain, if not daily then frequently, and always available to the pupils. At Catholic boarding schools such a chaplain is essential.

But for many Catholics it is not possible to find a suitable, available and acceptable Catholic school. In turning to a non-Catholic school the parent must

endeavour to provide the Catholic teaching out of school hours; at home, in the parish, and not just occasionally but as a planned course of teaching. And, of course, provision may be found with our monks and nuns, although regrettably there are fewer today than there used to be.

There is another further field of teaching the Faith which is often neglected. There are very many Catholics who lost out at school or have lost their Faith, or perhaps never had the opportunity for a proper understanding of the Faith. For these we must increase our provision, not only for them, but for all those who seek the Faith: from total non-believers to lapsed Catholics. We need to do more in our parishes to cater for such men and women. Even more so in the future, if our prayers succeed—as they will—for all those throughout England turning again to the Faith. Here, of course, much of that help will fall upon Diocesan priests, but also, I hope, will come from an increase in the role of nuns and monks, and many more of the laity.

Pray every day, even if only a few words at the end of the day, and thereby seek the gift of the Faith



for all of us. Years ago we did pray for England. Let us do so again.

An English layman lives in Sanderstead, Surrey. Photo: Early evening springtime light falling on Corton Denham, Somerset, England. (Photo credit: David_Crosbie; iStock by Getty Images.)

Source - Catholic Herald

Children of Gaza: A lost generation

Source: The Jesuit Institute South Africa
"Gaza, is the most dangerous place in the world for children," said Tess Ingram of UNICEF in an interview with eNCA on 22 December 2023.

According to UNICEF statistics, 40% of the deaths recorded in Gaza are children. As of 11 January, more than 10,000 children were confirmed dead. Many more are missing under the rubble.

"About 160 children are killed every day; that's one every 10 minutes," said UN World Health Organization (WHO) spokesperson Christian Lindmeier.

"If youngsters continue to have restricted access to water and sanitation in Gaza, we will see a tragic yet entirely avoidable surge in the number of children dying," UNICEF spokesperson James Elder told journalists. "In all wars, it is children who suffer first and suffer most."

UNICEF is calling for "an immediate and long-lasting ceasefire" to get aid into Gaza. Aid in the simple form of food, water, soap, and first-aid supplies to more complex items like generators, medical equipment and construction equipment.

This, along with the complications and implications of disease due to no or poor sanitation, and access to food, water and adequate health care, make the situation dire. There are over 100,000 cases of diarrhoea (with over half of these among children under age five), 160,000 cases of acute respiratory infections and other diseases like chickenpox, lice, scabies, skin rashes and jaundice. "There is a desperate need for health attention for the children of Gaza at the moment", according to Tess Ingram. There is also a real risk of famine as no nutritious food is available in Gaza. Tess Ingram continued, saying, "There are 180 babies being born into this war every day." I can only imagine the struggle of those and other mothers to nourish themselves and their newborns.

The war and conflict are significantly traumatising and affecting the mental health of these children, too. They are experiencing fear and trauma repeatedly, day after day. There is displacement, injury, death, and all the other challenges we have already mentioned.

Inclement weather for those whose homes have been destroyed and are now living on the streets is not helping. They

are cold and hungry. The lightning strikes and thunder sounds are terrifying, raising fear of airstrikes. The long-term impact of this war on mental health will only be established if and when this war ends.

The children in Gaza are also facing the loss of education and learning. Students, teachers, (at least 183) and other school staff have been killed. At least 300 schools have been damaged. No child or student in Gaza has had any access to education since the start of this conflict on 7 October 2023. So, there is a tremendous impact on schooling and education as well. UNICEF is trying to assess the current situation and how best to rebuild schools and provide educational facilities. They are providing mental health support and recreational activities for these children to help them find a bit of fun and distract them from the atrocities that they are facing, even if only temporarily.

Children in Israel have lost their lives, too. But, when you compare the reported 33 children killed in the October 7 attack on Israel with the thousands of children that have been killed in Gaza since then, it seems fair that our focus remains on the children of Palestine. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on November 6 said that "Gaza is becoming a graveyard for children."

The fact that the children of Gaza are being cut off from essential services, held hostage and being harmed and killed is an atrocity. UNICEF says, "The cost to children and their communities of this violence will be borne out for generations to come."

At the end of their bi-annual plenary this past week, the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa called for a total cessation of hostilities and a just settlement in the Holy Land.

We, too, call for an immediate and long-term ceasefire, an end to this horrendous war.



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ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON DIOCESE

A&B Diocese Meeting at Hollington



At our Diocesan meeting on 4th November 2023 at Holy Redeemer church hall, Hollington, we had over 20 members present. This was despite a very wet and windy day with terrible road conditions and huge puddles in places. This was just after Storm Ciaran, making things that bit more challenging for our volunteer drivers.

We had a guest speaker, sister Frances Theresa from Poor Clare, who gave us a talk with great insight into the lives of St. Frances of Assisi and St. Clare. Although they are both well-known saints, it

was still very good to gain a deeper insight into their lives.

At this meeting we were able to discuss Laudato Si, Laudato Deum, and UCM The Way Forward, as well as other future meetings and programmes. Overall, it was good to have braved the weather and our grateful thanks go to our volunteer drivers, to Hollington Foundation and to their parish priest, Fr. Miceal, who celebrated Holy Mass for us.

Cecilia Thuy Cameron (A&B Media Officer)

Fond Farewell to Fr Lucie-Smith

On Tuesday 12th December 2023, UCM members of St. Peter's Hove UCM, bid a fond and heartfelt goodbye to their parish priest of 5 years, Fr Alexander Lucie-Smith. We send him on his way with luck for his forthcoming adventures, when he takes a well-earned sabbatical, travelling to Italy, Israel and the Balkans. During his ministry here, we have greatly valued his insightful, thoughtful and knowledgeable homilies, whilst also respecting his organisation skills, the unwavering support he has given our foundation and for his good nature and humour.

We will miss him and send him our very best wishes for the future.

**Text by Trish Colley
Photo by Eileen Harris MBE**



Celebrating Jean's Birthday

On 15th January 2024 Merstham UCM, alongside the Parish, celebrated Jean Longley's 99th birthday with Mass, and surprised her with a card and a bouquet of roses, carnations and gypsophila from the Foundation. Jean, during her long lifetime, has been involved at National, Diocesan and Foundation levels and still enjoys hearing our news. She was a founder member not only of Merstham Foundation

but also she and her late husband, Ken, helped raise money for the original building of our Church of St Teresa of the Child Jesus. Joan Hodge, UCM National President, regularly takes Holy Communion to Jean now that she is restricted to her house. Photo is of Jean and Janet taken by the carer.

**Janet Franklin
(Merstham Foundation President)**



Hove Foundation – January 2024

There was much cause for celebration at St. Peter's Hove UCM Foundation in the new year, with six new members being enrolled on 24th January 2024 at the 10am mass.

Our newest members are: Clara Van Veen, Maureen Armson, Rosaleen Gripper, Brenda Westgate, Brui Side and Gloria Parks.

We are thrilled to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of them as they join our vibrant community and as we come together, we are looking forward to creating a space for shared interests, discussions, and the building of lasting connections.

**Reporter: Trish Colley, St Peter's Hove
Photo by: Eileen Harris MBE**



Congratulations to Hollington Foundation



On Saturday 9th December 2023 four new members of Hollington UCM were enrolled at Holy Redeemer Church, during the 10am Mass by Rev Fr Micael Beatty. After the ceremony there were refreshments in the hall.

Photo left to right: Noreen Sargent, Maureen Noakes, Sue Mulligan (President), Patsy Fitzpatrick and Jo Brown.

May Leitch (Hollington Secretary)

JERICHO

Combines the Contemplative
life with an active apostolate to
the destitute.

Vocation information from:
Bro. Patrick,
The Jericho Society
'Mater Salvatoris'
Harelaw Farm, Kilbarchan,
Renfrewshire PA10 2PY
Tel: 01505 614669
thejerichosociety@gmail.com

SOUTHWARK DIOCESE

A Racial Justice Service

A Racial Justice Service was held at St Georges Cathedral Southwark on Saturday 27th January. The mass was wonderful led by Archbishop John Wilson, it was very well attended with beautiful uplifting music and singing. The Anerly Foundation was represented by Penny Curran and Kate Boyle.'

Kate Boyle is pictured with the Anerly Banner and the other photograph is Archbishop Joh Wilson.

Joanne Pavitt
Southwark Diocesan Media Officer



Tolworth welcomes new member

Tolworth Foundation welcomes our latest member, Mrs Trudie Callan. Trudie was enrolled last November after our annual Mass for deceased members. Afterwards we enjoyed celebration cake and refreshments. Trudie has worked for Tolworth parish over many years in various roles. We are delighted to have her as a member of the UCM.

Joanne Parvitt Southwark Diocese



Sparkling Christmas social

We ended 2023 with a sparkling Christmas social at the local carvery with everyone enjoying a surprise gift from the secret Santa sack.

Marie O’Gorman



Day out at the British Library

In January Sutton Foundation and friends enjoyed an interesting day out at the British Library. We went to see the current exhibition "Fantasy: Realms of Imagination". Exhibits ranged from ancient folk tales to modern contemporary media. We admired the beautiful original book illustrations by many famous artists like Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Rackham, stories from the Lord of the Rings and Alice in Wonderland - and wonderful costumes from films like the Dark Crystal. The British Library is a lovely fairly modern building dating from the 1970s. Definitely worth a return visit!

Maggie Carr Sutton Foundation UCM



Relaxation and Well-being in Mind

We started 2024 with relaxation and well-being in mind with a wonderful talk on aromatherapy by our very own foundation Secretary Paula Mullins. Paula talked about the benefits of all the different essential oils and demonstrated with heavenly hand massages on the very willing volunteers.

Marie O’Gorman



HALLAM DIOCESE

Christmas lunch at the Holiday Inn

The Union of Catholic Mothers Christmas lunch took place at the Holiday Inn, Rotherham on Saturday 25th November 2023.

It was attended by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Ralph of the Hallam Diocese, Deacon Peter Marshall Chaplain to the UCM and forty-five members and friends.

The occasion is always marked by a raffle and the sale of Christmas stockings in support of 'Bluebell Wood', the Children's Hospice, which realised £300. These were knitted mainly by the members and supporters of the St. Vincent's Foundation in Sheffield.

The Donations to 'Mary's Meals' from all the Foundations in Hallam came to £623.

We were pleased to welcome to the lunch three members of the St. Catherine's Foundation, Burngreave; the present President Mrs. Julia Nekooi and the past President Mrs. Ann Murphy. (in the centre of the picture.)

Our thanks go to Mrs. Hilary Myers, Diocesan Treasurer for organising the dinner again and the hospitality we received from the hotel staff.

Dorothy Anderson (Media Officer for the Hallam Diocese)



NORTHAMPTON DIOCESE

Diamond Anniversary - Christine (Tina) Pearce

It was with great pleasure that the St Columba's foundation celebrated Tina's 60year Anniversary as a member of the UCM. During her 60 years Tina has been a National Officer, Diocesan President and Study Officer, and an active Foundation member. We have been blessed with Tina's hard work & service, support and advice over the years.

Tina was presented with her certificate and flowers by Parish Priest Fr David Nixon MSC with National Vice President Mariann French and Foundation President Maria O'Keeffe.

Congratulations Tina!

Sam Canning'



BIRMINGHAM DIOCESE

Rugby Heritage Weekend

On Friday 8th September and Saturday 9th September St Marie's UCM were asked to provide refreshments for the church here in Rugby for the heritage weekend. We were happy to do it, it was suggested that we supplied savoury finger food and drinks, we were happy to be part of it and produced very tasty food. There was also a pin board covered with photos etc of the UCMs years starting in 1934 and will this Jan 2024 be it's 90 years celebration. I'm 1934 we had 48 members now alas we have 13 but 13 active ladies with a good spirit. The visitors were taken on a guided tour of our beautiful church then came into Hibberts Hall where they were welcomed by our president Mary Hales and enjoyed much chat and old shared memories of our local town St Maries.

We were honoured by a visit of the Mayor Cllr Mrs Maggie O'Rourke and also by Martin Logan of the Irish in the UK TV show who filmed in our church and a few of the UCM. This can be found on YouTube to watch at anytime.

Iris Edwards

LEEDS DIOCESE

After Christmas Party

St Ignatius UCM Leeds Diocese together with friends from the Parish enjoyed a Christmas party which always takes place during January. Lunch at a local hotel was a very enjoyable way to spend a dreary and wet afternoon. Photo shows ladies at the party

Eileen Goodwin media officer



Sad death of Mrs Margaret Elizabeth Anderson

It was with profound shock that we learnt of the sad death of Mrs. Margaret Elizabeth Anderson, one of the most ardent members of your Catholic Mothers Union.

For the many past years when I have been at St. Edwards Parish presbytery, Margret has always endeavoured to bring me close to the Catholic Woman's Union.

Mostly for prayer and support for my apostolate among the overwhelming numbers of refugees in Uganda...

Indeed the Catholic Mothers Union through Margaret's intervention, has always been on the fore front in helping these suffering innocents -the refugees in Uganda.

We wish at this moment of trial to convey to you all, the members of the Catholic Mothers Union, and the entire catholic community of St. Edwards Parish, our heartfelt condolences.

And we pray that the Almighty God grant Margaret's soul eternal peace,

The date and time when Margaret will be laid to rest is very well noted.

We humbly promise that as it has been, I and the entire refugee community in the camp, who through me, have always tasted Margaret's love and charity, will convene for the high Mass at that same time.



Please would you accept the above mentioned in thoughts and prayers, as our only humble contribution for the deceased?

In the meantime, a big congregation of our refugees and I, are here at St. Patrick's Center for prayer and mourning for the past three days until the day of burial on Friday, 3rd November 2023.

May God rest Margaret's soul in eternal peace and bestow extra support to our friend Peter her husband and family.

Prayerfully Yours,

**Fr. Jo,
In Uganda.**

NOTTINGHAM DIOCESE

St Mary's Foundation Loughborough

On the 12th of the 12th 2023 St Mary's Foundation Loughborough enjoyed a delicious Christmas meal together with our two priests Fr Paul Gillham PP and Fr David Jones our UCM Chaplin. We went for the second year running to

the White Hart in town, the food delicious and the service spot on! We certainly would like a repeat next year.

Jane Faulks Foundation Secretary.



MIDDLESBROUGH DIOCESE

Mary Ward – Petition for Sainthood

On the last Sunday in January the annual Mary Ward ecumenical service was held at St Thomas Church, Osbaldwick. This year the event was particularly special as it marked the beginning of a campaign by the Congregation of Jesus, originating at the Bar Convent in York, to get their foundress, Mary Ward, declared a Saint. Mary Ward is buried in the churchyard at Osbaldwick as she died in the parish of St Thomas in 1645, at the height of the Civil War, and in those days there were no Catholic burial grounds. Her tombstone has a place of honour inside the Church.

Mary Ward was a pioneer for girls' education and for women to be teachers and missionaries. She said "There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things- and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time will come to do much".

She made two journeys on foot to Rome to appeal to the Pope to permit her to set up a congregation for nuns that did not have to live in an enclosed convent, but who could go out and teach. Although the Pope would not see her, such a congregation was founded in York in 1686, forty years after her death. When Pope John Paul 11 visited York in 1982 and celebrated a Mass attended by almost a quarter of a million people, he singled her out as "an extraordinary Yorkshire woman and a pioneer".

In 2009 Pope Benedict declared her Venerable, a first step on the way to Sainthood.

For her to be recognised by the Catholic Church as a Saint she needs to be shown to be relevant today. In a world where girls' and women's education is under threat in many parts of the world, what could be a more potent sign of her relevance than the schools and colleges set up by her order?

The Archbishop of York, the Very Reverend Stephen Cottrell, preached at the service, giving his support to the campaign. Among the congregation were many members of the Union of Catholic Mothers, some of them former pupils or staff at the Bar Convent. Sister Ann Stafford, current head of the York Sisters, said that "Mary Ward campaigned for the dignity of women all her life". We members of the UCM in York will be promoting the campaign throughout 2024.

Photo of The Archbishop of York with Sister Ann Stafford of the Bar Convent York and Jan Nobel, vicar of St Thomas Church, Osbaldwick. Readers can find out more about the Mary Ward campaign on the Bar Convent website and sign the petition to get her recognised as a Saint.

Sarah Sheils, Secretary, St Aelred's UCM Foundation, York, Diocese of Middlesbrough



Shoe Boxes for UCM

St. Aelred's York have been sending shoe boxes to Eastern Europe for the last few years. Originally it was started by Kath Duckworth a UCM member. Each year one of the meetings of the UCM is filling of the Shoe Boxes. The contents vary between Baby, Children and family. After the meeting they are placed on the Altar steps and all the other boxes are in the church for Parishioners to take home if they should want to fill one. Parishioners now look out for the boxes and are always pleased to help. The Rotary Club came to collect them before Remembrance Day. This year due to the war it was unclear as to where they were going to. They were travelling by sea to Eastern Europe along with all the other ones collected by the Rotary clubs throughout the country. Once there, decisions were going to be made as to whether they could get them directly into Ukraine or via Romania. Alternatively, they will be distributed around Romania and to the Ukrainian refugees along the border and hopefully they were there for Christmas.

Photograph of members sorting the Boxes. From the Left- Kath Duckworth, Front - Jean Goodridge, Anne Rochester.

**Petra Micklethwaite
Media Officer Middlesbrough**



SALFORD DIOCESE

Christmas cards to Christmas hats



A photo of our UCM ladies, after we had enjoyed making Christmas hats out of our used Christmas cards which we had saved from last year. We were shown how to make them by the daughter of one of our members, and happily spent an hour or so cutting and stapling the pieces together. We all took one home and wore them again at our Christmas party in December.

Mildred D'Amore, St. Mary and St. Philip Neri parish, Salford diocese

St Hilda's Rosary Rally

On 15th October 2023, St. Hilda's UCM Tottington held a Rosary Rally on behalf of Salford Diocese. We began the rosary rally with our first Hymn Immaculate Mary. We were lucky to have Pam Larkin playing the church organ and many UCM members from our diocese singing loudly. We then had our UCM prayers. Our congregation was also supported by our own church parishioners along with Guardian Angels, Bury and St. Joseph Church in Ramsbottom. Before we commenced the rosary, each foundation brought vases of flowers to adorn Our Lady's statue while we sang Bring Flowers of the Rarest. A very traditional hymn. Six of St. Hilda's members Kim, Susie, Pauline, Virginia, Frances and Maura each read "The Glorious Mysteries" after each reading we sang a verse of As I kneel before you and Holy Virgin by God's decree. Our final hymn to Our Lady was I'll sing a hymn to Mary. Together as a group we enjoyed putting this service together, extracts from the service came from our own mothers' memories when they were children, Rosary prayer cards, watching the rosary from the Knock Shrine and Pope Francis book The Rosary. A special prayer we read out together was given to Maura when she was taking her exams in Donegal as a young girl, we would like to share it with you. After the service we walked to our church hall for homemade cakes and tea and coffee. £112 was

collected for the Salford Diocese funds. Below is a picture of Our Lady's flowers and the Golden Hail Mary

**Kim Fletcher St. Hilda's Tottington UCM
President**



Pope: Christians still face martyrdom at hands of 'insane ideologies'

A new book about martyred men and women in Argentina during the 1970s features a preface by Pope Francis. Key speakers at the presentation of the volume by Professor Marco Gallo, include the Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

By Linda Bordoni Vatican News

In his preface to Professor Marco Gallo's latest book dedicated to the Christian martyrs of Argentina during the years of the so-called Dirty War, when tens of thousands of people were murdered or disappeared by a ruthless military regime, Pope Francis reflects on how insane ideologies continue to fuel hatred and death.

The book in Italian, entitled *Nell'occhio del ciclone – Martiri dell'Argentina degli anni Settanta* ("In the eye of the storm - Martyrs of Argentina during the Seventies"), tells the story of the men and women, including priests and bishops who laid down their lives as they opposed the regime to protect their people during those years in Argentina, and opens a window on the witnesses of the Faith who continue to suffer persecution in many parts of the world today.

Christian martyrdom has never ended.

Presenting the volume in the Vatican on Friday, 2 February, are the author and a prestigious line-up of speakers including the theologian Emilce Cuda, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, in a discussion moderated by Matteo Bruni, Director of the Holy See Press Office.

Highlighting how the ancient history of Christian martyrdom has never come to an end, the Pope

reflects on how so many people continue to be persecuted and killed "just because they have not stopped being disciples of Jesus."

He recalls his visits to the Roman Basilica of St. Bartholomew, which is dedicated to contemporary Christian martyrs and was entrusted to the Community of Sant'Egidio by St. John Paul II.

There, he says, one can breathe "the ecumenism of the martyrs" and find great strength before the relics and testimonies of holy witnesses such as Maximilian Kolbe, St. Oscar Romero, Shahbaz Bhatti, and so many young African and Latin American men and women who were faithful to the Gospel "and not to the laws of gangs and corruption."

The grace of God makes martyrs

The Holy Father explains that a martyr can be thought of as a hero, "but the fundamental thing about the martyr is that he or she has been 'pardoned': because it is the grace of God, not courage, that makes us martyrs."

The Church of today, he continues, is "in great need of witnesses, of everyday saints, those of ordinary life, and of those who have the courage to accept the grace of being witnesses to the end, even unto death."

And focusing more closely on Professor Gallo's book about the Argentinean martyrs of our time, the Pope points out that it is the result of careful historical research and of the living memory of their witness, and that it carries an important lesson.

"There are times and places when the prince of this world uses slander, takes souls and blinds minds, so Christians become a target and end up 'in

the eye of the storm' because they bear witness to Jesus and his love."

The book, he writes, helps us know and understand holiness through history. "It does not give us 'holy pictures' but makes these witnesses our contemporaries. It is a book that does good because it shows both the power of evil and the fruits of martyrdom. And this is the real defeat of the torturers and murderers who thought they had won."

The Pope mentions the list of men, women, priests, and bishops killed or disappeared in Argentina during those terrible years, and that provides the backbone of the book, a list which was expanded by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons. When he was a cardinal, he reveals, Monsignor Carmelo Giaquinta gave him that list, and he says he asked him to continue efforts to gather all available information on the Christian martyrs during those years.

A personal commitment

"I myself encouraged the work that Professor Gallo has collected in this book," Pope Francis writes. "It was a long list of victims, and we still do not know everything."

In those years, he notes, Tertullian's phrase, 'the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church', was particularly true for Argentina and "remains true in other parts of the world, even today."

The Pope goes on to name some of those who were attacked as the regime, based on "a rebellion of hatred" and that "could not stand the Church" pursued its goal "to eliminate the influence of the Church, made of freedom, truth and love."

Blessed Enrique Angel Angelelli

"In Gallo's book, along with others, is the story of Monsignor Angelelli," the Pope writes, a bishop who was recognised as blessed on 17 April 2019."

He recounts how he got to know Enrique Angel Angelelli Carletti (who was assassinated in 1976 for his involvement with social issues and his closeness to the poor) shortly before becoming Jesuit provincial of Argentina when he visited La Rioja for spiritual exercises, together with his superior and the other consulting fathers: "We had first arrived in La Rioja on a sadly historic day, 13 June 1973, when the agrarians of the area had organised a stone-throwing attack, a real stoning to try to get the bishop and his collaborators to leave."

In the following days and months, Pope Francis tells of how he got to know this priest who had "one ear to the word of God and one ear to the people" and witnessed a people truly united to the Church by its pastor, and also of how the Church in Argentina was following the indications of the Second Vatican Council.

Monsignor Angelelli, he continues, was closely tied to his people, "who accompanied him along the road, to the peripheries, both geographical and existential."

And recalling many Argentinean religious who became contemporary martyrs, the Pope concludes his preface by upholding the book that, he says, "helps us to remember and opens a window not only on Argentina but on a world of witnesses to the faith who continue to shed their blood in many parts of the world."

"It is a book that does good and from which so much good can come."

Bishop Sherrington's reflection on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

By Bishop John Sherrington, Lead Bishop for Life Issues

Since Christmas, there has been an almost daily focus in the media on those who wish to see the introduction of legislation for assisted suicide, euphemistically called 'assisted dying'. Esther Rantzen is probably the best-known celebrity whose campaign has been widely received.

In contrast, Pope Francis' prayer intention for February focuses on the care of those who are terminally ill and the importance of presence, care and prayer for those who are dying. He writes that we must distinguish between 'incurable' and 'uncurable' – there comes a point when illness is incurable but care is always needed and families must be supported in this: 'families should not be left alone in these difficult moments... Their role is decisive... They need access to adequate means so as to provide appropriate physical, spiritual, and social support.'

Jesus was always close to the sick and healed them. The life of Jesus has led the hearts of countless Catholic healthcare professionals to be close to the sick, to treat, and care for them. Women and men religious have followed this vocation and founded Catholic hospitals around the world, nursing homes, and motivated many Christians to dedicate themselves to the care of the sick. A change in legislation about the end of life would threaten their work. Those doctors not wishing to participate in prescribing death would need to be able to object in conscience. The threat to the poor, the weak, those who may feel a burden, and those living with disability has been argued but seems unheard by many. Recently Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson was interviewed on Sky News (21/1/24) and argued that such legislation would increase the vulnerability of those living with disability and fundamentally alter the relationship between the individual and society.

Some of the news stories have described the fear of the terrible pain of a terminal illness. Palliative care is always developing to deal with new forms of pain and new variations of an illness. No one should die in pain and this form of medicine is constantly

seeking new scientific advances to improve its art.

The suffering associated with being ill and the fear of dying are tangible realities. Relationships of pastoral and spiritual care can provide consolation and the support of Christ. Talking through one's soul pain is an important step. The sacrament of the sick brings consolation, peace and healing to many people. It should not be delayed until death is imminent. It is a sacrament for the living. The preparation for death is a precious time when relationships can be healed and peace is found. Writing a will helps those who are left behind.

The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes brings us close to St Bernadette. This year's papal message focuses on the importance of healing relationships. Pope Francis writes, 'Brothers and sisters, the first

form of care needed in any illness is compassionate and loving closeness. To care for the sick thus means above all to care for their relationships, all of them: with God, with others – family members, friends, healthcare workers – with creation and with themselves. Can this be done? Yes, it can be done and all of us are called to ensure that it happens. Let us look to the icon of the Good Samaritan (cf Lk 10:25-37), to his ability to slow down and draw near to another person, to the tender love with which he cares for the wounds of a suffering brother.'

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who carries the broken and wounded sheep on his shoulders. He offers consolation, compassion and hope. He is alternative to the choice to end one's life with



assisted suicide. He is present to the dying as they are accompanied by others on this journey. Just as Our Lady stood at the foot of the cross, we are called to stand close to the dying in prayer and closeness and ask Our Lady's help.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.
St Bernadette, pray for us.

Source: rcdow.org.uk

Cross of Wales an expression of unity

Speaking after the official presentation of the Cross of Wales to the Anglican Church in Wales, Archbishop George Stack described the processional cross as "a symbol, a sign, a sacramental expression of the unity of all people who believe in Jesus Christ" – for Wales and beyond.

The Cross of Wales, a centenary gift to the Church in Wales from His Majesty King Charles III, contains shards of the True Cross, gifted to The King by Pope Francis.

Archbishop Stack, retired Archbishop of Cardiff and Chair of the Patronage Committee of the Bishops' Conference, attended the ceremony at Goldsmiths' Hall on Thursday, 25 January.

"Pope Francis was very anxious to make this ecumenical gesture," he said. "It's around the Cross that all Christians gather with their different histories, devotions, and approaches to the mystery of faith."

Describing how the Cross of Jesus Christ lies at the crossroads of human existence, Archbishop Stack quoted his favourite saying from the

Carthusian monks who used to live at Charterhouse in London, "the Cross stands still while the world turns."

"As we look at the Cross, venerate the Cross, embrace the Cross, we give thanks to God in Jesus Christ for reconciling the world to himself, in love, in forgiveness, and in reconciliation."

On its return to Wales, the Cross of Wales will initially be displayed at St Deiniol's Cathedral, Bangor, the seat of the current Archbishop of Wales, Archbishop Andrew John, before beginning a tour around all the Welsh cathedrals with the aim of giving everyone an opportunity to see it. Its use going forward will be shared between the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Wales.

Archbishop Andrew John said:

"The Cross of Wales is a hugely significant ecumenical symbol. Taking its inspiration from the earliest roots of our Christian history, and inscribed in Welsh with the words of St David, the Cross will remind us all of the heart of our faith. It not only provides a focus of unity across our

different traditions but will also be a lasting sign of The King's respect and affection for Wales."

Designed and made by master silversmith Michael Lloyd, in consultation with the Royal Collection, the Cross of Wales is crafted from recycled silver bullion, provided by the Royal Mint at Llantrisant, a shaft of Welsh windfall timber and a stand of Welsh slate. Words from the last sermon of St David are chased on the back of the Cross in Welsh: "Byddwch lawen. Cadwch y ffydd. Gwnewch y Pethau Bychain", which translates as: "Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things."

In compliance with the Hallmarking Act, the silver elements of the Cross bear a full hallmark (of the London Assay Office), including the Royal Mark (leopard's head) which was applied by The King himself in November 2022 when visiting The Goldsmiths' Centre in London.

The cross was blessed by the Archbishop of Wales, ahead of the Coronation, at Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno, on 19 April.

The Camino way... from Santiago and beyond

It all started with a conversation with a friend back in 2016 about walking the Camino. She spoke about her son's journey who travelled to Spain to walk the Camino. I felt in-spired by the story and loved the sound of the challenge. What a wonderful experience, I thought. I must've mentioned this at work to our volunteer Lee Henty. He did not forget and mentioned this earlier this year when a friend of his bought a house in the Galica area of Northern Spain. His house was situated right on the Camino route near Sobrado.

This was the excuse we needed, an opportunity to cycle the Camino. The Camino way is the story of where St. James came into Spain in a coffin that was covered in shells.

We planned our route and booked hotels. Our trip began from my home in Rushden, a long drive to Dover and a ferry crossing to Calais. We had a long drive through France to Spain and a stop on the way. We finally arrived at Lee's friends' home. It was late and dark, but we had arrived safely at our starting destination. Santiago Compostela, here we come!

Our first day. We set off, heavily laden, bike panniers packed to the brim even custom-ized T-shirts, we were ready. We turned right from the driveway, up the hill and there in front covering the width of the road was a herd of cows plodding to the next field. I panicked, I didn't know whether to stop or carry on. This was scary, these cows were bigger than me. I had to pedal faster, overtaking

cows, weaving in and out of them. This was only the first five minutes of cycling the Camino, I was shaking. Finally, we passed them and got to the top of the hill. It was such a relief. My next challenge was being able to keep to the right side of the road. Lee had to remind me many times. I seemed to slightly wander off and when we came to a junction I'd look the wrong way, I clearly hadn't adjusted to European roads. We cycled all day, stopping halfway for delicious coffee and a croissant which was most welcome. We carried on our journey cycling up the mountains. The views were magnificent. As we got to the top we looked over at the skyline and could see the towers of the cathedral Santiago, Compostela it was the most incredible feeling.

We met friendly people on the way. All different nationalities and ages. Local people guiding us on the right road. Greeting passers by with the familiar phrase "BUEN CAMINO", which means Good Camino. My Spanish conversation was challenged but it didn't matter, everyone was so friendly and helpful.

After a full day of cycling we stayed at a hotel in Santiago right on the Camino route. We stayed for two days as I wanted to explore this beautiful place. I visited the square of San-tiago Compostela and surrounding beautiful ornate churches. I attended Mass. I watched pilgrims arrive and could feel the sense of achievement exploding in an atmosphere of joy. We lit candles for family and friends in the beautiful, ornate Cathedral. I had to go back a few



times to the church just to sit and be in the peaceful atmosphere. It was just lovely being in this special place, walking around the squares, the shops, taking it all in.

In the square, at Santiago Compostela there is a large brass shell. There are also brass shells along the pavements directing you to the center point of the basilica. This is the place everybody is heading to. It was quite an incredible experience when we got to the top of the building/Basilica. We could see all the pilgrims coming in, sensing the excitement and hearing the cheering and sounds of joy.

After our two days in Santiago we were ready for our next leg of the journey, 54 miles to a place called Finisterre. This was my next challenge... steeper mountains and a trail that was going to be much harder. Our bikes were ready, and the panniers were full.

We left Santiago at daybreak. There was a lot of traffic, it was rush-hour and we had to get out of the city. Soon we were out of the city and back on the open roads, but it wasn't long before we hit the difficult pathway on the Camino. At one point I had to get off the bike and push it up the hill. This was the toughest part of the journey. There seemed to be a bit of light coming through the trees. This was encouraging as we knew we were getting nearly to the top. We'd climbed 6000 feet!

The smell of the countryside, the sight of the cornfields and sunflowers in the sunshine as we cycled on open roads. At times I would look back and wonder where Lee was. And then I would remember, he was carrying the extra heavy panniers with all the tools, he was prepared for any eventuality. But he continued to be my look out, shouting "stay on the right!"

The good thing about cycling up the hill meant we had to come down! This was the fun bit. As we got nearer to Finisterre, we saw all a little inlet of white sand, a little beach with turquoise sea. It was so picturesque, and the sea looked so inviting, until I learnt that it was a habitat for jellyfish.

We finally arrived at our hotel in Finisterre. A little boutique hotel on the Camino route. It was a perfect retreat from all the cycling, a place to relax and freshen up.

After a great night's sleep, I was ready to start again. Our plan was to head straight to point zero, the zero miles point of the Camino trek. This was

more uphill cycling. By 8.30 we had arrived. The sun had risen and shone on the magnificent cross at point zero. It was a spectacular and beautiful sight. The atmosphere was still and contemplative. People were around, walking or cycling. There was a sense of calm and gentleness. We visited another a little Church called Santa Maria and lit more candles for our loved ones. I even managed to make it back to the church in the evening for mass and was impressed with the Priest who spoke four different languages.

After two days in Finisterre, it was time to head back. But we now knew what to expect on the journey back. The steep mountain ranges, the difficult Camino paths, the wind against us and the high-altitude experience. But it was all worth it. This journey has been fun, enjoyable, a once in a lifetime experience, breathtaking, tiring and challenging. It was not only a physical journey it was also an internal, spiritual journey. I learnt how to live in the moment, be patient, enjoying God's creations and learning to let go. Probably my biggest challenge will be to continue this outlook and embrace living in the now. And not forgetting I couldn't have done all this without my support guy Lee Henty, keeping me safe on the roads and making it all possible.

Our journey didn't end there. We headed back through France... but until the next time....

Mariann French National VP



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Pope at Audience: Reconcile, let go of anger before the sun sets

At the weekly General Audience 31 January 2024, Pope Francis reflects on the sin of wrath and invites us to guard against channelling our anger unjustly, insisting that we follow the Lord's example of forgiveness. By Deborah Castellano Lubov

Wrath and anger have a tendency to grow out of control, and thus we are called to actively seek peace and reconciliation.

Pope Francis gave this reminder during his Wednesday General Audience held in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall.

Continuing his catechesis series on virtues and vices, the Pope focused this week on the sin of wrath, calling it a particularly "dark vice."

Wrath, the Pope said, is perhaps the easiest to detect from a physical point of view. "The person dominated by wrath can hardly conceal this impetus; you recognise it by the movements of their body, their aggressiveness, their laboured breathing, their grim and frowning gaze."

Often targets first offender rather than the guilty. In its most acute manifestation, the Pope noted, anger is a vice "that leaves no respite."

"If it arises from an injustice suffered or deemed to be so," the Pope observed, "it is often not unleashed against the guilty party, but against the first offender."

"There are people," he acknowledged, "who hold back their anger at work, proving to be calm and compassionate, but once at home they become unbearable for their spouses and children."

Wrath, he acknowledged, can pervade our being, robbing us of sleep and causing us to rerun it in our

minds.

Moreover, he said, it destroys relationships. Lingering resentment and detestation slowly but surely degenerate relationships, he said.

Reconcile before the sun sets

The Apostle Paul, aware of how anger can grow out of control, the Pope said, urged Christians "to address the problem at once and seek to reconcile."

"It is important that everything be dissolved immediately, before the sun sets," the Holy Father insisted.

"If some misunderstanding may arise during the day and two people may no longer understand each other, suddenly perceiving themselves to be far apart," the Pope said, address it and reconcile, so "the night will not be handed over to the devil."

Otherwise, he observed, wrath will "keep us awake in the dark, brooding over our reasons and unaccountable mistakes that are never ours and always the other's."

Forgive us our trespasses...

The Pope recalled the 'Our Father' prayer's call to forgiveness.

If forgiveness isn't practiced, he said, people break away from one another.

The Pope said that while wrath is a terrible vice and often at the origin of wars and violence, "not everything that is born of wrath is wrong." The ancients, he recalled, were well aware that there is an irascible part in us that cannot and must not be denied.

"We are not," the Holy Father pointed out, "responsible for anger, in its arising, but always in its



development."

Vent anger properly

Sometimes, Pope Francis said, it is good to vent anger in the right way.

"If a person never gets angry, if they are not indignant at an injustice, if they do not feel something quivering in their gut at the oppression of a weak person," the Pope said, "it would mean that this person is not human, and much less a Christian."

Pope Francis acknowledged the existence of

"holy indignation."

"Jesus knew it several times in His life," he recalled, marvelling that the Lord "never responded to evil with evil."

"In His soul, He felt this feeling and, in the case of the merchants in the Temple, performed a strong and prophetic action, dictated not by anger but by zeal for the house of the Lord."

Pope Francis concluded by urging the faithful to seek the help of the Holy Spirit in properly managing their passions, in order to turn them into a tool for good.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intentions for Each Month of 2024

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network has released the list of prayer intentions set by Pope Francis for the year 2024.

Each month, Pope Francis asks Catholics around the world to pray for a specific intention.

Accompanying this initiative is a video in which the Pope explains his reasons for selecting each particular intention. Below is the complete list of Pope Francis' prayer intentions for 2024:

January: For the Gift of Diversity in the Church

Pope Francis calls for prayers to the Holy Spirit "to help us recognize the gift of different charisms within Christian communities and to discover the richness of various ritual traditions within the Catholic Church."

February: For the Terminally Ill

The Holy Father encourages prayers "so that terminally ill patients and their families always receive necessary medical and human care and support."

March: For the New Martyrs

Pope Francis invites prayer "for those around the world who risk their lives for the Gospel, to inspire the Church with their courage and missionary zeal."

April: For the Role of Women

This month's prayer intention is "that the dignity and richness of women be recognized in all cultures, and for an end to the discrimination they suffer in various parts of the world."

May: For the Formation of Religious, Monks, Nuns, and Seminarians

The Pontiff urges prayers "so that religious, monks, nuns, and seminarians may grow in their vocational journey through human, pastoral, spiritual, and communal formation, leading them to be credible witnesses of the Gospel."

June: For Those Fleeing Their Country

Pope Francis dedicates June to praying "for migrants fleeing wars or hunger, forced into journeys full of danger and violence, to find acceptance and new life opportunities in their host countries."

July: For Pastoral Care of the Sick

The Holy Father asks "for the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to give strength from the Lord to those who receive it and their loved ones, becoming a visible sign of compassion and hope for everyone."

August: For Political Leaders

Pope Francis invites prayers "so that political leaders may serve their people, work for

comprehensive human development and the common good, attending to those who have lost their jobs and prioritizing the poorest."

September: For the Cry of the Earth

"Let us pray that each of us hears with the heart the cry of the Earth and victims of natural disasters and climate change, personally committing to care for the world we inhabit."

October: For a Shared Mission

Pope Francis asks for prayers so that the Church "continues to support a synodal way of life, under the sign of co-responsibility, promoting participation, communion, and shared mission among priests,

religious, and laypeople."

November: For Parents Who Have Lost a Child

"Let us pray that all parents mourning the death of a child find support in the community and receive heart's peace from the consoling Spirit."

December: For Pilgrims of Hope

Pope Francis requests this month's prayers "so that this Jubilee strengthens us in faith, helps us recognize Christ risen in our lives, and transforms us into pilgrims of Christian hope."

Pauline Jaricot – A Saint for our times

Sunday 22 May is a day of prayer and celebration for our overseas mission organisation 'Missio', and indeed the whole Church. One of its founders, Pauline Marie Jaricot, will be beatified in Lyon. It's a leap forward on the path to Sainthood that will see Pauline Jaricot declared a 'Blessed'.

Beatification requires a miracle through the candidate's intercession to be recognised by the Church. In Pauline's case this happened in May 2012. A three-and-a-half-year-old girl named Mayline, also from Lyon, choked on food and suffocated. Unable to resuscitate her, doctors explained that she was brain dead and that she would die in the next few weeks.

Upon hearing the news, pupils and parents of Mayline's school decided to ask for Pauline Jaricot's intercession by praying a novena for Mayline's recovery. At the same time, as Mayline lay in a coma hooked up to a feeding tube and respiratory machines, her parents began looking for a child-sized coffin.

Soon afterwards the doctors were surprised to confirm that Mayline's condition had changed. Remarkably, she was released from the hospital that December – fully healed.

Doctors have been unable to explain the change in her health. Mayline's parents are convinced of the intervention of Pauline Jaricot. A diocesan enquiry occurred in 2019, where a medical board validated the miracle of healing, and the theological commission certified the intervention of Pauline

Jaricot in the full recovery of little Mayline.

Mayline's miracle has led to Pauline Jaricot's Beatification. For the final step, Canonisation, a second miracle will need to be recognised.

Source: 'Pauline Jaricot' - CBCEW



A Christian look at the Chinese New Year - ICN

This year again, the beginning of Lent coincides with the start of the Chinese New Year. (Year of the Dragon). This coincidence is linked to the fact that the two events are fixed in time according to the lunar calendar.

At first glance, the two events seem contradictory: Lent is a time of fasting, abstinence and penance, while New Year is a time of joyful celebration. But in his Pastoral Letter for Lent 2024, Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu, head of the Archdiocese of Guangzhou, shows how the Christian vision can dissolve this apparent contradiction. "In reality," writes the Chinese Bishop, "all actions motivated by the intention to love are ultimately directed toward God. Thus, "as we leave the solitude of urban life behind us, we put an end to the distance which separates us from our loved ones and we return home, where the joy of being with family reigns. At the same time, we can live the Liturgy of Ashes recognizing that it is also a call from the Eternal Father to us, a call to return home."

In his Pastoral Letter for Lent 2024 entitled "O God, create in me a pure heart" (Ps 51, 10), Bishop Joseph shows "how we, Christians, can immerse ourselves in the love and forgiveness of God in this family

holiday period. The New Year, underlines the Bishop of Guangzhou, is a "farewell to the past to welcome the future". In the Christian journey, in the same way, the experience of forgiveness and repentance for one's sins is also a "farewell to the past" and a confident march towards the time to come. In such an experience, "we become full of joy and hope for life, we are made new by the love of Christ, in the grace of God."

Lent is "the time of preparation for the joy of Easter." And precisely, the time of the Chinese New Year, underlines Mgr Gan, is a golden opportunity to bear witness to the Catholic faith to and with one's family. One can attend "the New Year's Eve Thanksgiving Mass with our families, where the whole family can come together to thank God for His protection and blessings during the past year, and to ask God's blessing for peace and the health of our family members and our work.

By praying and receiving the sacraments with our loved ones, we can also embrace, in gratitude to Jesus, the festive and grateful mood of the Chinese New Year." Thus, "we not only cherish the uniqueness of the Catholic faith while remaining fully immersed in our traditional culture, but we can show that the Christian faith is a gift that always



remains in our hearts, no matter what."

During the New Year celebration - Bishop Gan writes - Christians can pray, read and meditate on the Word of God, and take care of their neighbour.

"The Chinese New Year is a auspicious time to care for others, starting with the elderly, the sick, the lonely and those in difficulty. "We can experience God's blessing and peace during the Spring Festival by spending time with our families, praying in communion and caring for others," concludes Bishop Gan.

Source: Fides

Recusants revisited

An aristocratic Catholic friend once told me that his father would refer to a co-religionist landowner as "cousin X", despite the family connection occurring back in the 18th century. Deep-rooted connections to the past are not uncommon among British landowners but are particularly powerful in old recusant Catholic houses where the sense of history is shaped by stories of persecution, privation and endurance – as well as duty and survival.

The father of the poet Alexander Pope was forced to sell his property in Windsor Forest under a law that forbade the residence of Catholics close to the person of the monarch. As Professor Peter Davidson has pointed out, this gives Pope's Horatian eulogies about the settled man on inherited land a particular recusant meaning. Pope was also close to the daughters of the Blount family whose romantic family home Mapledurham, in Oxfordshire, is still an important Catholic house today. Dendrochronology has recently proved that it was built shortly after the Gunpowder Plot, and it contains artfully arranged "hides" where itinerant priests could be hidden in a chimney stack.

Horace Walpole was Anglican but he also had a fascination for the Catholic world, which influenced the oratory-like interior of his Gothic home, Strawberry Hill. His epically unreadable novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, claims in its introduction that the original Italian manuscript was "found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England" which is suggestive of the reputation of such libraries in the 1760s.

The penal legislation against Catholics begins in the 1534 Act of Supremacy, and the 1593 Act Against Recusants was intended to discover and avoid "all such traitorous and most dangerous conspiracies and attempts as are daily devised and practised" by "sundry wicked and seditious persons" who "call themselves Catholics". Exclusion from politics, certain professions, public office and even education at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge played a key role in defining Catholic lives, and children were very often educated abroad, in France and Belgium.

Burdened by taxation, Catholic families earned a reputation for the careful management of their estates, as well as for refinement and culture. Between the 16th and 19th century, marriages were guided by religious affiliation and financial advantage, rather than political allegiance. The tapestry of familial alliances between well-known Catholic families – the Howards, Welds, Stourtons, Stonors, Petres and Cliffords, for example – underlines the landed Catholic "cousinage" and this web of connections, along with a continental education, adds a distinct culture to the houses, even if the difference, except in the chapels, is often barely perceptible.

Studying in Rome in the mid-1980s, I met Father Philip Caraman, the Jesuit priest who had, with Margaret Fitzherbert, assembled the evidence for the canonisation of the Forty English Martyrs. Back then, my understanding of the Catholicism of a household was confined to a vague awareness of

attendance at "Mass", the odd mention of "monsignors" and the curious distinction of some friends being descendants – lineal or collateral – of St Thomas More and St Philip Howard. But when I became an architectural historian, working for *Country Life* in particular, I found a deeper source of interest in the social history represented in part by buildings such as the heavily symbolic triangular lodge at Rushton, built in 1593-97 for Sir Thomas Tresham, in praise of the Trinity and the Mass. Tresham was fiercely loyal to the crown and paid endless and excessive fines for his Catholicism; his eldest son Francis died awaiting trial for his part in the Gunpowder Plot.

Stonor Park in Oxfordshire made perhaps the deepest impression, when I visited in 2000 to write about its modern rescue and preservation. The 7th Lord Camoys bravely bought back house and park when his parents, burdened by more modern forms of taxation, put it on the market in 1975. The house was refurbished with the support of other family members who supplied sculpture and paintings, and it houses a library rich with recusant literature. Spread across a sloping hillside, Stonor Park's classical, mellow red brick front conceals a much older house of the 13th and 14th centuries. The ancient chapel, refitted in Gothic Revival style in 1796, is today moody with a blue-and-pink colour scheme devised by Osbert Lancaster and John Piper, and remains an important centre of Catholic worship.

Associations with Catholic persecution under Elizabeth I are strong. St Edmund Campion, Oxford academic and priest, found refuge at Stonor Park in 1581 and used the attic to print his famous "Ten Reasons" why Catholicism should be preferred to the reformed church. In August of that year, he was captured and tortured; then hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. The printing press was confiscated along with other "massing stuff" and several members of the Stonor family prosecuted and exiled. The house is now run by Lord Camoys's son, William, and his family, and its survival has a special place in English history, Edmund Campion being one of those Forty English Martyrs who were canonised in 1970.

Another house long in the hands of a leading Catholic family is Lulworth Castle in Dorset, which I visited in 1999, in preparation for an article. The romantic, castle-like house with great round towers was built as a hunting lodge for Viscount Bindon, son of the Duke of Norfolk, in 1608-1610. It has been owned by the Catholic Weld family since 1641 but was gutted by a fire in 1929. When I visited, it was reopening after a long restoration; the remains were roofed over to make the interior useful.

The Weld family had also built a handsome modern neo-Georgian house alongside, but the most compelling Lulworth building was perhaps the extraordinary 1780s free-standing chapel, a domed building designed by Catholic architect John Tasker. Notable as a pre-emancipation, free-standing English Catholic place of worship, it is said George III gave it the nod as long as it was officially presented as the family mausoleum.



The deft Mr Tasker also appears in the story of Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk, where I worked on an advisory report for the National Trust, in 2018, supported by Sir Henry and Lady Bedingfeld. Oxburgh Hall is a romantic late-15th-century red brick house, with a glorious gatehouse towering above its moated site. Its rural location adds to the atmosphere of ancient retreat, as noted by the eldest son of the Bedingfelds – now Father Benedict, a priest in the United States.

The builder of Oxburgh Hall was Sir Edmund Bedingfeld, an influential courtier who entertained Henry VII there in 1487. In the next century, Sir Henry Bedingfeld was jailer to Princess Elizabeth when Mary I was on the throne. Presenting himself at court when Elizabeth I succeeded, he received a famous brush-off from Good Queen Bess, who told him: "If we have any prisoner whom we would have sharply and straightly kept, we will send for you." Recognising he was no longer in line for court positions, Bedingfeld retired quietly to Norfolk, where he paid regular recusant fines.

The family kept a low profile and, in 1777, tore down the old hall, opened up the views and created a great classical saloon, designed by John Tasker, with Adamesque interiors. This was partly subsumed by a hearty re-Gothicising in the 1830s, the profile of the house punctuated by brick chimneys in the Tudor spirit by John Chessell Buckler, a knowledgeable antiquary. His son, Charles Alban Buckler, converted to Catholicism and is best known for the Victorian remodelling of one of the great Catholic houses, Arundel Castle, in Sussex, for the Duke of Norfolk, with a sublime Gothic Revival chapel that is unequalled in the British Isles.

When Sir Henry's father tried to sell Oxburgh Hall in 1951, his mother – Sybil, Lady Bedingfeld – bought it back, with the support of her daughter and niece, and "the help of St Therese of Lisieux". They passed it to the National Trust in 1952, with it remaining the family residence. The interiors are suggestive of the new confidence of Catholic gentry after Catholic emancipation in 1829.

The Bedingfeld family's long adherence to the Catholic faith adds an indefinable something to the fine architectural ensemble, and there is also a

freestanding 1830s chapel at Oxburgh. This has an outstanding Flemish altarpiece from the mid-16th century that evokes the continental pieces bought in during a period of Catholic confidence after emancipation. When the altarpiece arrived at King's Lynn docks, the dockworkers are said to have shouted, "More relics for Sir Henry!"

Among the treasures of the house are the outstanding large embroidery panels worked by Mary, Queen of Scots and her jailer's wife – Bess, Countess of Shrewsbury (aka Bess of Hardwick) – while Mary was in captivity at Chatsworth. These had been owned by the Brownes (Viscounts Montague) of Cowdray House. Long in ruins, this was a great centre of Catholicism in Sussex, with one of the finest private chapels before a 1793 fire gutted the 16th-century house. I used to visit these ruins as a child and found the place wonderfully mysterious.

Among the Catholic houses rebuilt, or renewed, after this period, Arundel has already been mentioned, but some of the greatest projects were for converts such as the Marquess of Bute, swept up in the great Catholic revival of the Victorian era. Their houses include Castell Coch and Mount Stuart, whose Victorian display belongs to quite another time.

Looking back, it is perhaps the sense of quiet continuity that stands out; a richness of history, despite a history of persecution, and of understanding – even wisdom. The discreet, decent and pious figure of Guy Crouchback's saintly landowner-father, in Evelyn Waugh's *Men at Arms*, comes to mind. The owner of a great estate, his house given over to a convent, he is quietly content with a few rooms in a local hotel, but profoundly conscious of the duties and responsibilities passed down to him. His amiable presence lingers at the back of the imagination as a foil for the folly of others – and perhaps, too, of the modern age. In a few years, it will be the bicentenary of Catholic emancipation. Plenty of time to prepare for a major national exhibition on the endurance, triumphs and treasures of the recusant country house.

Jeremy Musson is an architectural historian, historic building consultant, author and broadcaster

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Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord

Your memories linger, Your smile that cared, Your listening ear Your goodness shared. In God's deepest love. In God's gentlest care This is my prayer.

On distrusting princes and worshipping the Lord

God's power turns everything on its head. It confuses. It disorients. And then, with faithful eyes, it exhilarates.

Recently, in search of another penetrating perspective on the origins of the First World War, I happened upon a lecture by historian Christopher Clark on power. Having explored the nature of power in his insightful and witty manner, Clark dove deep into the Biblical book of Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar was troubled by a dream. Summoning his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and Chaldeans (Clark, incidentally, jests that whenever the pagan kings are seeking advice, the mercurial Chaldeans are, for some reason, always there to help), he asks—without divulging—the nature of his dream and what it means. Caught flatfooted, his advisors insist it is impossible for a man to interpret a dream without first knowing what happened in it.

Furious, Nebuchadnezzar condemns them to be cut into pieces and their homes to be transformed into dung heaps. That is, until Daniel comes to the rescue. A Jewish captive gifted by God with the interpretation of dreams, Daniel stuns the king as he describes the dream featuring a large statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. From head to toe, the statue represents the devolution of kingly rule once Nebuchadnezzar passes and the indestructible kingdom of God that will (as a divinely hewn stone from a mountain) obliterate the earthly kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar, upon recognizing Daniel's gift, falls to his knees in worship and empowers Daniel mightily. Meanwhile, Daniel simply points to God.

Here is what the historian Clark concludes:

[King Nebuchadnezzar], the most powerful man in the world, is powerless before his night terrors. The holders of bureaucratic power — the experts — fail to come up with a solution and, thus, forfeit their power and even potentially their lives. . . And into this fraught constellation steps someone with no power at all — a rightless alien, a prisoner of war, a captive from a destroyed city.

[In his God-given wisdom, Daniel imparted to the fearful king] something Daniel had himself learned as the son of a destroyed city — a piece of wisdom, namely, that power is always temporary.

To be sure, the image of a violent king prepared to carve up every wise man in Babylon is chilling. But it is not altogether unexpected. Sadly, we are now accustomed to historic despots and dictators from Nero to Robespierre, from Hitler to Stalin flaying, beheading, gassing, and purging countless victims. What is surprising is to witness such a king prostrate before his own prisoner and slave.

That is the paradox of Judeo-Christianity—the place where Divine power meets worldly power. In our narrative of faith, we encounter the paradoxical—the inexplicable—time and again. Moses, a Jewish slave, would deliver the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. David, the shepherd boy, would conquer a giant and lead a nation. Mary, a peasant girl, would bodily house the Christ of prophecy. Peter, the growling fisherman, would serve as the Rock upon which the Church would be built.

And Jesus, the poor carpenter from Nazareth, is the Savior of the World.

How does worldly power, which measures itself in bullying strength and vain influence, reckon with the impossible and unworldly nature of God's chosen ones? Not very well. If Pontius Pilate offers any guidance, worldly power is utterly befuddled in its encounter with God and his designs. Spending precious

moments with the King of the Universe, the Roman Governor of Judea could sputter little more than a query, "What is Truth?" when Truth Incarnate stood before him.

Worldly power doesn't do nuance. Oh, sure, there are always Machiavellis and lagos with their intrigues and connivances. But these are always thin veils for naked desires. The nuance of God's power, however, is delightfully satisfying. It is a riddle that always possesses the best punch line. "In our weakness, we are made strong." "The least shall be greatest." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Blessed are they who are persecuted."

God's power turns everything on its head. It confuses. It disorients. And then, with faithful eyes, it exhilarates. Why? Because while worldly power ends in slaking ravenous appetites, God's power forever ends with love.

Daniel's story, as Clark discovered, is yet another example of the despot's limits, the experts' impotence, and the magnificence mind of God. But Clark, as educated as he is, didn't discover this. The Psalmist sang of this thousands of years ago:

Put no trust in princes,
 in children of Adam powerless to save.

Who breathing his last, returns to the earth;
 that day all his planning comes to nothing.

Blessed the one whose help is the God of Jacob,
 whose hope is in the LORD, his God,
 The maker of heaven and earth,
 the seas and all that is in them,

Who keeps faith forever,
 secures justice for the oppressed,
 who gives bread to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free;
 the LORD gives sight to the blind.

The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
 the LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD protects the resident alien,
 comes to the aid of the orphan and the widow,
 but thwarts the way of the wicked.

The LORD shall reign forever,
 your God, Zion, through all generations!
 (Ps. 146: 3-10)

Who knew the wicked Nebuchadnezzar could be so instructive?
 Do not trust princes.
 But bow before the Lord.

Source - Tod Worner CWR



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The Union of Catholic Mothers 77th Annual Walsingham Pilgrimage

Monday 1st & Tuesday 2nd JULY 2024 Led by the Diocese of SOUTHWARK

Diocese:		No. of Pilgrims badges @ £8 each:		No. of pilgrims for the Sacrament of the Sick:		TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED:	
Foundation Name:							
No. of Cars:		No. of Coaches:		No. of Mini Buses:		Organiser's Name:	
Tel. No. of Coach Company [Inc. Area code]				Address:			
No. of Pilgrims proposing to take part in the Monday Evening Service:		Do you require a map with directions to the Shrine:		YES/NO:		Post Code:	
						Tel No: Email:	
No. of Deacons or Acolytes who wish to participate:		No. of Priests who wish to concelebrate:		Signed:		Date:	
Bookings cut-off date is Monday 20th May 2024.				All Bookings to be sent ASAP to:			
Fees for Priests/Deacons: <i>Please remember that the Foundation/Diocese is responsible for paying and booking your Priests/Deacons. It is important that you indicate their number when making your bookings as facilities for them have to be made at the Shrine.</i>				Mrs Angela Higginson 26 Holmescarr Crescent Rossington Doncaster DN11 0QD Tel: 07940528011			
				Please include a SAE of adequate size and postage.			

Booking Form: All Cheques should be made payable to: "The U.C.M. Walsingham Subcommittee"

Monday 1st July
SERVICE OF LIGHT
8pm
In Chapel of
Reconciliation
followed by the
TORCHLIGHT
PROCESSION



Tuesday 2nd July
MASS 12 Noon

Concelebrated Mass with Bishop Alan Williams, Southwark Auxiliary Philip Moger and Diocesan Priests.

For further information please contact your Diocesan President or Local Organiser



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News from our friends in Gaza

Our Christian friends report that after five months, there are still about 820 people trapped and sheltering in Gaza's churches. Their daily routine involves coping with fear, fervent prayers, and listening to battery radios. **They have limited access to canned food and one piece of daily bread each.** Many can't get the medications they need. We're directly helping both churches in Gaza by providing money for whatever these trapped people can buy – food and fuel costs 10 or 20 times what it used to, e.g. fuel £12 per litre. As international aid struggles to get through, we need to keep it up until there is a lasting ceasefire.



Nowhere to go in the West Bank

Meanwhile, in Bethlehem and the rest of the West Bank, mass unemployment has occurred. With all tourism cancelled, **80% of Palestinian Christians have lost their income.** Many Christians in the major cities of the West Bank used to cross every day into Israel to work in construction or agriculture – but now those crossings are closed.

Take action this Lent to help now

Friends of the Holy Land is registered as a charity in Palestine as well as England & Wales. This means we operate our own office in Bethlehem with two social work staff and a local volunteer committee and we have our own local bank account so can take immediate swift action to help. From your hands today to those in need tomorrow.



Please give today:

friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/hope

Bring Hope & Healing on the journey to Easter

Give today:

friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/hope

In Gaza, over 800 Christians are sheltering in churches. Every day involves fear, prayers, and one piece of bread to eat. International aid can't reach them.

In Bethlehem, 80% of Christians have lost their income as tourism has collapsed.

You can help: Give to the **Hope & Healing Fund** this Lent.



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