George Weigel

On the sixtieth anniversary of the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council
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After months of lock-down, now that things have been eased somewhat, my wife and I thought a holiday in order. We went to our old stamping ground of North Norfolk. The weather was hot, although there was a wind, a hot wind, but wind nevertheless.

We drove along the coast road from Wells-next-the-Sea to Hunstanton, with the traffic nose to tail all the way. The journey seemed to take for ever. Everywhere cars were either following each other or parked like sardines. All the coastal towns and villages were full. Eventually we found space at Snettisham. A car park right by the beach. Space to walk along the foreshore and even paddle in the sea. There was a café for a cold drink. All was lovely.

A trip to the ruins of the Holy Rood of Bromham, admiring the industry of the gas plant where north-sea gas comes ashore on the way. We visited the beautiful village of Anmer to see where the ancestors of that lovely reformation composer John Anmer originated.

There was the statutory trip on the steam hauled North Norfolk Railway from Sheringham to Holt and back, ice creams to be eaten and more cold drinks to be drunk. One cannot go to North Norfolk without going to Cromer, and a visit to the pier. It was crowded, but we managed to find a space to park the car.

We returned home on a Sunday, but called in at Walsingham on the way for mass. Only fifty people allowed in the Chapel of Reconciliation, extra car-parking, a one-way system, all to comply with Covid-19 regulations. Yet a large congregation for mass assembled. One family had arrived from Plymouth for the day!

It provided the opportunity to catch up with old friends, Julian Foord, Sister Jane Louise and Mgr John Armitage. The organisation was both careful and helpful. The Shrine authorities need to be congratulated for this. We took our place for mass outside the chapel. The glass doors were opened and the liturgy began. Mgr John Armitage celebrated the mass and preached a cracking homily. Although there was a large congregation present, all observed social distancing, and the stewards made sure we all knew what to do, and when to do it.

As an ex-Anglican however, there were a number of things that I found odd. Very few people made the sign of the cross at the start of mass, even fewer observed the triple cross at the announcement of the gospel. Only a handful of people made any acknowledgement (bow or genuflection) at the Incarnatus in the creed, and a good third of those present sat throughout the Eucharistic Prayer. Part of being Anglo-Catholic was to observe all the outward signs at mass.

The relationship of outward signs to inward belief is a strong and important one. No military person would get away with not saluting a senior officer. Who would not bow or curtsy to Her Majesty The Queen? Are Schoolchildren are still taught to stand at the entrance of their teacher? One hopes so. Yet when it comes to God, we eschew all these outward signs. Why?

I find it all mystifying and rather uncomfortable. Perhaps I am wrong, but I cannot escape the thought that not observing these simple outward signs at mass displays a certain contempt for the Blessed Sacrament. If I am wrong here; if I am missing something please write in and tell me. Such displays of simple devotion are, for us in the Ordinariate, part and parcel of what it means to be Catholic. If we are wrong, please tell us.
Where may you find Anglican Patrimony?

Joanna Bogle

If THERE was one essential core element of the Ordinariate idea as presented by Pope (now Emeritus) Benedict XVI it was this: that it should be a way for Anglicans to feel at home in the Catholic Church with styles of worship, traditions and customs with which they were familiar, or which they particularly cherished as their own. 

And one of the saddest things is that, except for a few instances, this hasn't happened. Anglican friends who had shown an interest in the Ordinariate told me that they went to what they were told would be an Ordinariate Mass, “But it wasn't Anglican: it was a very elaborate style, of the sort some Catholics have in the Latin Mass Society or whatever. We didn't feel at home at all, and we assumed we'd made a mistake”.

They are not alone. The idea that “Anglican patrimony” means a priest saying an Extraordinary Form-style Mass in a low voice, with lace and birettas, is simply wrong. It is not a form of liturgy recognisably familiar to most Anglicans.

The plan for the Ordinariate was not to appeal to a specific group of “high” Anglicans, but to the wider Anglican tradition, with a strong recognition on the part of Pope Benedict that this had formed generations of Christians in Britain and become part of a cultural patrimony. Many phrases from the Anglican prayer book had seeped into general use over the centuries.

As a lifelong RC I was aware of them: I remember a friend speaking amusingly of her fidgety small daughter “trusting in her own righteousness” and another crossly saying to her computer “there is no health in us” …and the opening words of the CofE wedding service have become part of so many films and TV dramas as a couple stand before the altar and the clergyman's voice intones “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today…”

As everyone knows, and so many jokes emphasise, the Anglican tradition is a wide one (too much so, it has long been argued, like the street in Oxford which runs “from the Broad to the High, by-passing Jesus on the way”). This width includes the “high” tradition begun in the late 19th century and popularised in the early and mid-20th. But Anglicans have never regarded it as the norm, and many devout Evangelicals simply find it alien.

The paradox is that over recent decades it is Evangelicals who have been notable in seeking firm doctrine and supporting clearer moral positions on issues of the day – and showing support for the office of Peter in upholding such things. If the Ordinariate is to appeal to these people – and there is a need to do so if we are to take Christ's prayer for unity seriously – we need to appeal to the liturgical heritage that Pope Benedict made available specifically for this.

What is to be done? Anglicans who attend a (Roman) Catholic Mass in a local parish in the Ordinary form generally find it recognisable, while often sighing about the banal music or lack of enthusiasm for singing.

Where they encounter (pre-Coronavirus, when such things were allowed!) some good singing of familiar hymns, and a specific use of Anglican Psalm chant, they can feel very much at home. But they often do not know about the possibilities of the Ordinariate and when it is mentioned to them, express interest. Where can they find it?

Most readers of THE PORTAL will have their own opinions about this and several will voice them. But we need a wider approach: there are real possibilities offered by the Ordinariate that have not yet been realised.

Anglican patrimony means, well, Anglican patrimony, and a generous Catholic Church urges us to explore it as a means of evangelising our country.
Snapdragon bangs the drum again

OBVIOUSLY, IT will not surprise my esteemed readers to the remotest degree to hear that ‘Snapdragon’ considers himself eminently reasonable and common-sensical, and that he instinctively seeks to respond unemotionally.

Having said that, I suspect most people who know me best would laugh out loud at the notion that Snapdragon was unfailingly logical.

Nevertheless, I imagine, when Cecil Rhodes famously declared that to be born an Englishman was to “win first-prize in the lottery of life”, an assumed characteristic of my fellow-subjects was not to be overly-tempremental or emotional.

Naturally, the recent months of ‘lockdown’ occasioned by the Coronavirus crisis has put huge pressures on us all, even those who have mercifully not been affected by family and friends who have suffered the virus or who have directly endured the economic consequences of combatting the pandemic.

Sadly, as regular readers will attest, the loyal subjects of this realm are all too infrequently blessed with wise and good government in modern times. We reside in a Constitutional Monarchy (regrettably without the ‘Divine Right of Kings’) and are governed through a parliamentary democracy.

Snapdragon has always favoured a superior Benevolent Autocracy, with himself (naturally) endowed with all sovereign powers as the ultimate dictator. (A friend of Snapdragon’s, who several times stood as an unsuccessful Local Government candidate, is wont to paraphrase the great American ex-President Abraham Lincoln when talking about democracy: “Democracy is government by the stupid, for the stupid, of the stupid!”).

Especially in these troubled and uncertain times, things have appeared to become even more bizarre than usual. When Britons have been forbidden to stage mass assemblies for clear public health reasons, demonstrations and protests have rocked the kingdom over the summer and the forces of law and order have seemed reluctant to involve themselves while the very foundations of hundreds of years of British history have been called into question.

Starting in mid-June 2020, a movement which has subsequently become emblazoned with the campaign title ‘Black Lives Matter’ seems to have driven all things before it.

Let Snapdragon be crystal-clear here:

It is a fundamental part of living our Catholic Christian faith to embrace all our fellow humans as divinely-created and insist on racial justice. Nevertheless, ALL human lives matter - be they black, white, brown, yellow or polka-dot - and to suggest some form of racial favouritism is needed is utterly bonkers!

We have now seen the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol and the dumping of his statue in the murky water of the city docks. In Oxford, the Oriel College authorities have been targeted to agree to the removal of the famous statue of the imperialist Cecil Rhodes, who bequeathed millions of pounds of his money to the University of Oxford. Amongst the other targets of this campaign has been the statue of Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the worldwide scout and guiding movement, in Poole.

It is little surprise to witness professional protestors or our politicians demonstrating a lack of historical perspective, even a cultural illiteracy, over such matters but one ought to expect higher standards from a Prince of the Church, albeit the leader of the ‘Proddie’ Established Church in these islands.

Instead, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has rushed in where ‘fools fear to tread’ and suggested the Church should “very carefully” reconsider the European-looking statues and other art-work in our world-famous cathedrals and parish churches.

Everyone knows that Our Lord Jesus Christ and the founders of the Christian Church were not exactly classic middle-class Englishmen but does it invalidate the inspired art-work, the astonishing faith of those who built our churches and the Judeo-Christian heritage of the British Isles? 😃
The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Following the light

Fr Matthew Pittam

I AM SURE that if most of us are honest we will say that there are times in our lives when we have questioned aspects of our faith or even our belief in God. Difficulties in life and situations that we witness in the world can all lead us to ask those searching and difficult questions. Perhaps the last few months have been such a time for some of us.

Famously, St Theresa of Calcutta experienced times of great questioning and uncertainty. Once in a letter to her confessor she wrote,

“Do not think that my spiritual life is strewn with roses—that is the flower which I hardly ever find on my way. Quite the contrary, I have more often as my companion darkness.”

In many ways we can find comfort in the fact that she and many other saints and heroes of the Church experienced these ‘dark times’.

Pope Benedict XVI, when he was Cardinal Ratzinger, understood the natural consequence of doubt arising from a place of authentic Catholic belief,

“Both the believer and the unbeliever share, each in his own way, doubt and belief if they do not hide from themselves and from the truth of their being. Neither can quite escape either doubt or belief; for the one, faith is present against doubt; for the other, through doubt and in the form of doubt.” Introduction to Christianity

We should be clear that doubt in its most absolute form is a bad thing since God has fully revealed himself in Jesus. The Catechism is clear on this matter, when it speaks of Atheism,

“Since it rejects or denies the existence of God, atheism is a sin against the virtue of religion. The imputability of this offence can be significantly diminished in virtue of the intentions and the circumstances. Believers can have more than a little to do with the rise of atheism. To the extent that they are careless about their instruction in the faith, or present its teaching falsely, or even fail in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than to reveal the true nature of God and of religion” CCC 2125

Whilst the doubt or denial found in atheism and agnosticism is clearly not a good thing, doubt which is part of the experience of the life of a believer need not be something we feel ashamed about. Such doubt can in the longer term be something that strengthens our faith as part of a journey towards our maturity in Christ.

If we think back to a testing time that we have endured and reflect upon it, we may be able to see how we have come out of that time stronger, with a greater clarity and a willingness to proclaim the gospel with renewed fervour. Times of doubt force us to take stock and think what is important to us, however painful this experience may be.

On a lighter note, G.K.Chesterton wrote that,

“Man must have just enough faith in himself to have adventures, and just enough doubt of himself to enjoy them.”

The common theme of the lives of the saints who experienced doubt is that they all overcame them through steadfastness. During dark times they stood firm and remained focused; trusting God even when many of them could not perceive his presence. We are called to walk in the same path, Following the light when we can see it or feel its power and trusting in the light when it seems a distant reality.

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The case for dynamic orthodoxy

George Weigel

In two years, the Catholic Church will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council. Yet the debate over the meaning of Vatican II continues throughout the world Church. Some now openly charge that the very idea of a “pastoral” council was a grave mistake and propose that Vatican II should be quietly forgotten. Others continue to insist that the Church underwent a “paradigm shift” at Vatican II, as if something similar to the Copernican revolution that displaced Earth from the centre of the cosmos happened to Catholicism’s self-understanding between October 11, 1962 (when the Council opened), and December 8, 1965 (when the Council closed).

Neither of these proposals does justice to Pope St John XXIII’s intention for the Council. Neither does justice to the Council’s texts read properly. And neither seems aware that the living parts of the world Church today are those that embrace Vatican II in full, having read it in continuity with the Church’s settled tradition.

John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council to give Catholicism a new experience of Pentecost, so that the Church might enter its third millennium full of evangelical zeal. That zeal, he understood, must embrace the Gospel in full. Yet ways had to be found to preach the Gospel in dramatically changing cultural circumstances, for John XXIII knew that the repetition of old formulas was insufficient for the work of evangelising modernity. At the same time, he knew that the old formulas contained important truths, so the task before the Church was to revitalise its understanding and presentation of those truths so that the men and women of late modernity could hear them. Thus John XXIII imagined his Council as one that would unleash a Christ-centered, dynamic orthodoxy in the Church, just as one of his heroes, St Charles Borromeo, had unleashed Christocentric dynamic orthodoxy in his archdiocese of Milan following the Council of Trent.

Christocentric dynamic orthodoxy of the sort that John XXIII described in his opening address to the Council would take full advantage of the important developments in Catholic theology and biblical study since the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903). Those developments, however, would be understood, as just that, developments, in John Henry Newman’s sense of the term. And the fruitfulness of those developing understandings of the Gospel would be measured by their evangelical power: a true development of Catholic doctrine would draw men and women to Christ; a false development would paralyse the Church’s evangelical instincts.

The Council was thus a necessary, indeed essential, response to the challenge of living the Great Commission (Mt 28.19-20) under modern conditions. In John XXIII’s mind, however, the Church’s response to modernity had to be based on a firm conviction that divine revelation is real and binding over time. God, he believed, had not left humanity to its own devices. By entering history, first in his covenant with the people of Israel and later in the person of the Son, God had disclosed truths about himself and about us. That conviction was underscored by the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum) and then encapsulated in the stirring affirmation of the Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes): “Christ the Lord…in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.”

Convictions about the reality and binding authority of revelation began to weaken in some Catholic circles during the Council itself, and the results are very much among us today. They were evident, for example, at the Synod of 2015, when some churchmen argued that, as we know more about the psychological dynamics of human relationships than was known in the Lord’s time, we can adjust Christ’s teaching on the indissolubility of marriage (and thus on worthiness to receive holy communion). That argument was a striking example of the phenomenon I have been calling “Catholic Lite” for over a decade and a half.

Some of the more intellectually assertive proponents of Catholic Lite promote a Catholicism of indeterminate doctrinal and moral convictions and boundaries because they think that history judges revelation, rather than revelation judging history. Others, perhaps more numerous, propose Catholic Lite out of pastoral concern: doctrinal and moral clarity, they imagine, are off-putting and offensive in
times like our own. Whatever the motivations behind it, however, Catholic Lite seems a comprehensive failure throughout the world Church. The living parts of the Catholic Church are those that have embraced the Gospel in full and see in the Catechism of the Catholic Church a guidebook to human flourishing, happiness, and, ultimately, beatitude. The moribund or dying parts of the world Church are those that keep trying, despite the experience of the past fifty years, to make Catholic Lite “work.” It never does, though.

The most dramatic cautionary tale in this respect today is the Catholic Church in Germany. Wounded by Bismarck’s Kulturkampf, two world wars, and the Nazi experience, German Catholicism nevertheless made important contributions to the world Church in biblical studies, theology, liturgical development, and Church history. Yet after the Council the German Church took a deliberately Catholic Lite approach to theology, biblical exegesis, catechetics, and pastoral practice, and the sad results are now evident for all to see: a vast Church bureaucracy supported by tax monies maintains a façade of Catholic presence in society, behind which is the sad reality of disastrously low sacramental practice and a catastrophic decline in priestly and religious vocations. Now, German Catholicism is embarked on a national “Synodal Path” whose working documents are redolent of an even lighter Catholic Lite approach that has, among other failures, fostered the moral confusions from which the Church retreats into bastions of defensiveness, and a Catholic Lite project that has been falsified by reality.

In sharp contrast to this pathetic picture of a well-funded, intellectually assertive, and self-destructing Catholicism is the vibrant Catholicism of sub-Saharan Africa. There, the Gospel has been proclaimed and received as the liberating force that it is. There, clarity of conviction is the essential foundation of missionary fervour and success. There, a New Testament experience of faith is being lived. Of course, clear conviction must be expressed with a compassionate understanding of the complexities of the human heart; but the living parts of the world Church, in Africa and elsewhere, understand that the most compassionate offer we can make to others is the offer of friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the answer to the question that is every human life. Of course, the life of dynamic orthodoxy is one into which we grow over time, on a sometimes rocky road along which everyone fails on occasion; but the living parts of the world Church keep their gaze fixed on Christ and, like Peter before he started looking elsewhere and sinking on the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 14, are thereby empowered to do previously unimaginable things. Of course, dynamically orthodox evangelism keeps an open mind about the questions raised by non-believers; but the living parts of the world Church base their pastoral practice on the truth that G.K. Chesterton once put in his inimitable fashion: an open mind, like an open mouth, should close on something.

“Progressive” Catholicism has perpetrated various fairy tales for fifty years now: that Vatican II began the Church anew; that all challenges to progressive Catholic theology are mounted by cold-hearted, premodern reactionaries; that doctrinal ambiguity is attractive; that “thinking for yourself” is a mark of Christian maturity. Every one of these claims, which are part and parcel of the Catholic Lite project, has been falsified by reality.

Three popes canonised by Pope Francis – John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II – have insisted that Vatican II’s texts emerged from, and must be read in light of, the Church’s settled tradition, or what John XXIII called in his conciliar opening address the “deposit of faith.” To think of critics of progressive Catholic theology like Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, Avery Dulles, and John Paul II as anti-conciliar reactionaries is simply silly. There is no evidence, anywhere, of doctrinal fuzziness being evangelically attractive. And it is a bedrock of Christian faith that we are called, not to “think for ourselves,” but to put on the mind of Christ, as St Paul instructed the Corinthians.

In my 2019 book, The Irony of Modern Catholic History, I proposed a fresh reading of Catholicism’s often-turbulent encounter with modernity, in which the Church, navigating that turbulence by attending to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the signs of the times, eventually discovered the New Evangelisation. In my newest book, The Next Pope: The Office of Peter and a Church in Mission, I suggest how the Petrine ministry can and must empower all the people of the Church to be the missionary disciples described by Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium [The Joy of the Gospel]. In doing so, I hope to have pointed a path beyond both a nostalgia-driven ultra-Traditionalism in which the Church retreats into bastions of defensiveness, and a Catholic Lite approach that has, among other failures, fostered the moral confusions from which various corruptions have emerged, doing grave damage to the Church’s people and mission.

The path toward a vital Catholic future is the path of Christocentric dynamic orthodoxy, lived joyfully and with pastoral compassion and creativity. Recognising that path is a fitting way to mark the diamond anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

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Thoughts on Newman

Newman on Touchiness

The Revd Dr Stephen Morgan has been irritated by our editor

I understand, from friends and family in Britain, that you suffered a prolonged period of high-temperatures for five or six days in August. The BBC tells me that this is further evidence of the anthropogenic climate change that the Cassandra of our times, St Greta of Sweden, has been decrying for these last few years, but I suspect that what you experienced was a thing called “summer”: a few days of very hot days and sleepless, airless nights before a thunderstorm or two returns you to cool damp days where, all too often, it’s “rain stopped play”.

During your “heatwave”, I noticed that otherwise calm and phlegmatic people in Britain on social media and even those I spoke with on the telephone were uncharacteristically touchy. The heat had clearly got to them. Living in the tropics I had thought that I had so acclimatised that I was immune to such seasonal fluctuations of temperament but clearly the prolonged exposure to the heat and humidity of the South China Coast this summer–daytime temperatures haven’t fallen below 85°F since the beginning of June and it is rarely below 80°F even at night, with relative humidity of 80% plus the entire time, it is certainly “a bit warm”–has got to me too.

Let me explain. Every month our esteemed editor of The Portal writes to us contributors to remind us of the deadline for submission (20th of the month preceding publication, should you be interested) and, every month, I ignore it on the grounds that only once in ninety-five columns have I sent mine in late – and then by less than 24 hours and due to illness. This month, however, to the normal reminder was added a chiding remark concerning the need to observe the strict word length (600 words). I cannot tell you how irritated I was.

Do I routinely exceed this length? (a bit) Does it matter in an online publication? (a bit–especially since it gets printed out in many places) I considered sending in a piece reading “Having been reminded of the word limit for these articles and finding that I have regularly exceeded it, there will be no contribution from me for until December, when I shall have fallen below an average of 600 words across all my pieces.”

This idea festered in my mind for a few days until I stumbled across an extraordinary letter of Newman’s, written in October 1884, occasioned by the recent publication of the memoirs of Lord Malmesbury, who had been an undergraduate at Oriel when Newman was Tutor. Malmesbury had recorded an amusing anecdote in support of his contention that Newman was socially inept and embarrassed by his relatively modest origins: that he “used to allow his class to torment him”.

Given the alleged events had taken place sixty years previously, you might have thought Newman – by then a Prince of the Church to Malmesbury’s mere Earldom – would simply have ignored it. He did not. Instead he wrote to Blachford – as his old friend Frederic Rogers had become–to dispute the event and seek counsel concerning a reply. Blachford took up arms in Newman’s cause and a letter duly appeared in The Times denying Malmesbury’s claims. Nevertheless, it struck me as a further evidence of Newman’s well-attested touchiness, despite which, by the grace of God, he has been raised to the altars. So I betook myself to prayer and – by his intercession – my irritation with the editor evaporated, never to be mentioned again. 😊
Two Catholic Queens

Eliza Trebelcock has been on the trail of Katherine of Aragon and Mary Queen of Scots

Peterborough Cathedral is a huge building, right at the heart of the city. Strangely it is at the very edge of its diocese, with its nearest ecclesiastical neighbour in the Diocese of Ely! Yet Peterborough Cathedral has an unique place in the history of England. With ‘lockdown’ eased somewhat, my long-planned visit became possible.

Katherine of Aragon and Mary Queen of Scots, Catholic Queens both, and both were buried in the Cathedral at Peterborough – although it was but an Abbey at the time. Katherine lies there still. Mary was transferred to Westminster Abbey by her son, James VI. However, the place where once she lay is marked to this day.

On my way to see the Queens, I stopped at Fotheringhay. It is a village just a few miles from the city. The Castle there had been built around 1100. It passed through many hands, until it became the administrative centre of the House of York. Indeed Richard III; William of York; Anne, Duchess of Exeter and Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy were all born at Fotheringhay Castle. Following the accession of Edward of York as King Edward IV, Fotheringhay became property of the Crown. It would feature in the tragedy of Mary Queen of Scots.

Katharine was born on 16th December 1485, near Madrid, Spain. She was the youngest daughter of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile. Her education was very good; learning Latin, French and philosophy, along with pursuits like embroidery. As a child, she was engaged to Prince Arthur, heir to the English throne, coming to England to marry him in 1501. She was 16 years of age, he 15. After his untimely death in 1502 she was betrothed to Arthur’s brother Henry. He was but 11 years of age. The Catholic Church granted the required dispensation for a man to marry his brother’s widow, and they married in 1509.

While Henry VIII was in France, Katharine served as Regent for six months in 1513. During this time the Scots were heavily defeated on Flodden Field. The heavily pregnant Katharine played an important role in the battle; although not actually present, she gave a stirring speech to the troops.

At first the marriage was a happy one, but by 1525, Henry VIII was infatuated with Anne Boleyn. He needed a male heir, but Katharine produced no surviving sons, with their daughter, the future Mary I of England, as heir presumptive.

The troubles over Henry’s attempt to secure an annulment of his marriage to Katharine allowing him to marry Anne are well known. They were instrumental in the break of the English Church from Rome.

Katharine never accepted Henry as Supreme Head of the Church in England, continuing to consider herself the King’s rightful wife and queen, attracting much popular sympathy. Nevertheless, she was styled as Dowager Princess of Wales by Henry. Banished from court, she lived out the remainder of her life at various castles, ending up at Kimbolton Castle, which she hated. She died of cancer there on 7th January 1536. Her death brought out great mourning by the people of England. Kimbolton being but a few miles from Peterborough, she was buried in Peterborough Abbey, today the cathedral. She lies there still, her tomb displaying a pomegranate. It was the fruit depicted on her badge, an ancient symbol for fertility and regeneration, as well as a sign of Christ’s resurrection.

Mary Queen of Scots was born in 1542 a week before her father, King James V of Scotland, died prematurely. Her life story was to be one of tragedy and romance.
Mary was to marry the English Prince Edward, son of the English King Henry VIII, but the Scots refused to ratify the agreement. Henry was annoyed by this and sought to make them accept the marriage.

The Scots were not to be bullied however, and in 1548, she was the bride of the Dauphin, the young French prince. It was hoped that this would secure a Catholic alliance against Protestant England. It was not to be. After ascending to the throne, making her Queen of France, he died in 1561 whilst still in his teens. Reluctantly Mary returned to Scotland, a young but beautiful Queen of France, and a widow.

Scotland was in conflict with itself over religion at the time. Catholics were being ousted by Protestants. A Protestant husband for Mary was sought. It seemed the best chance for stability. Mary fell passionately in love with Henry, Lord Darnley, but the marriage was not a success. Darnley was a weak man, a drunkard. He was not helped as Mary ruled entirely alone and gave him no authority.

Darnley became jealous of Mary’s secretary and favourite, David Riccio. He, together with others, murdered Riccio in front of Mary in Holyrood House. She was six months pregnant at the time. Her son, the future King James VI of Scotland and I of England, was baptised in the Catholic faith at Stirling Castle. Not something to please Protestants.

Darnley died in mysterious circumstances in Edinburgh, when the house he was lodging in was blown up one night in February 1567. His body was found in the garden of the house after the explosion, but he had been strangled!

Mary was now infatuated with James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Rumours abounded at Court that she was pregnant by him. Bothwell was accused of Darnley’s murder but was found not guilty. Shortly after he was acquitted, Mary and Bothwell were married. The Lords of Congregation did not approve of Mary’s liaison with Bothwell and she was imprisoned in Leven Castle where she gave birth to still-born twins. Bothwell meanwhile had bid Mary farewell and fled to Dunbar. She never saw him again. He died in Denmark, insane, in 1578.

In May 1568 Mary escaped from Leven Castle. She gathered together a small army but was defeated at Langside by the Protestants. Mary then fled to England.

In England life became difficult for Mary. She became a political pawn, and both Elizabeth I and the Catholic faction sought to use her. Elizabeth had her imprisoned in various castles for 19 years. Eventually Mary was accused of plotting against Elizabeth; letters in code, from her to others, were found and she was deemed guilty of treason.

She was taken to Fotheringhay Castle and despite Elizabeth’s procrastination, was eventually executed there on 8th February 1587. At her execution, she wore red under her top clothing. It is said that after her execution, when the executioner raised the head for the crowd to see, it fell and he was left holding only Mary’s wig. Mary was buried at nearby Peterborough Cathedral.

After Elizabeth’s death in 1603, Mary’s son, James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne as James I of England. Although James would have had no personal memories of his mother, in 1612 he had his mother’s body exhumed from Peterborough and reburied in a place of honour at Westminster Abbey.

At the same time he removed Queen Elizabeth to a rather less prominent tomb nearby. So today, these two Queens, Mary and Elizabeth, rest in opposite aisles in Henry VII’s chapel in Westminster Abbey, closer in death than ever they were in life.
THE ORDINARIATE in Inverness last month celebrated the Marriage of Bethan Frances Marion and Mark Paul Lindley-Highfield of Ballumbie Castle in the Church of The Immaculate Conception in Stratherrick.

The marriage ceremony was conducted by Fr Len Black in Stratherrick, in the Dalcrag area of Whitebridge, to the south of Inverness on the east side of Loch Ness, because the chapel where the Highland Ordinariate group usually meet, which belongs to the Highland Health Board, has not yet reopened following the closedown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

At Fr Len’s suggestion, Beth and Mark chose the little Catholic Church in Stratherrick because of its charm and location and its fascinating history. The church was built in 1859 and has great charm with its traditional white marble altar and reredos.

This beautiful little church of The Immaculate Conception in Stratherrick is also a place of local pilgrimage as it has the Shrine to ‘Our Lady of the Highlands’ within its grounds. A new altar at the shrine, or grotto, was dedicated by Bishop Hugh Gilbert in March 2017.

The church also has a connection with the Australian Saint, Mary MacKillop, who visited Stratherrick while retracing her family roots in Scotland in 1873. Although she was born in Melbourne, Australia, her parents lived in the Highlands of Scotland before emigrating in 1840.

Sr Mary MacKillop is best known for her activities in South Australia as one of the founders of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart (better known as the Josephites), a congregation of religious sisters that established a number of schools and welfare institutions throughout Australia and New Zealand, with an emphasis on education for the rural poor.

Beatified in 1995 by Pope John Paul II, Sister Mary MacKillop was canonised, as St Mary of the Cross, by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010.!
### OBSERVANCES

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Observance</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Respect for the Planet’s Resources</strong></td>
<td>We pray that the planet’s resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>T Feria</td>
<td>The Ordinariate in Tunbridge Wells: Fr Edward Tomlinson &amp; Deacon Roy Cavey</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>W Feria</td>
<td>The Ordinariate in Wales (South East) Fr Bernard Sixtus</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>S Our Lady on Saturday</td>
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<td>S <strong>TRINITY 13</strong> (Week 23)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>M Feria</td>
<td>The Ordinariate in York: Fr John Konstantin Tee</td>
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<td>T Nativity of Our Lady (Feast)</td>
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<td>W Feria (St Peter Claver)</td>
<td>Fr Osmond Aisbitt</td>
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<td>T Feria</td>
<td>Fr Nicolas Alldritt</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>F Feria</td>
<td>Fr Scott Anderson</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>S Feria (The Most Holy Name of Mary)</td>
<td>Fr Peter Andrews</td>
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<td>S <strong>TRINITY 14</strong> (Week 24)</td>
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<td>M Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Feast)</td>
<td>All at the CDF</td>
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<td>T Feria (Our Lady of Sorrows)</td>
<td>Clergy Wives</td>
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<td>All Vocations to the clergy</td>
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<td>T Feria (St Ninian; St Edith of Wilton)</td>
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<td>M St Matthew (Feast)</td>
<td>Our Vicar General and our two Episcopal Vicars</td>
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<td>T Feria</td>
<td>Fr Stanley Bennie</td>
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<td>W St Pius of Pietrelcina</td>
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<td>T <strong>OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM</strong></td>
<td>THE PERSONAL ORDINariate OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM</td>
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<td>F Feria</td>
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<td>M Feria (St Wenceslaus &amp; St Laurence Ruiz &amp; Comp)</td>
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<td>T Ss Michael, Gabriel &amp; Raphael, archangels (Feast)</td>
<td>Our Exorcists</td>
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<td>W St Jerome</td>
<td>Fr Michael Halsall</td>
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### Saint of the Month

**The Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**8th September**

**MARY’S BIRTH** was a miracle; her parents Joachim and Anne were already advanced in age, but they hadn’t given up their hope to have a child. God had plans, and he announced them to Mary’s parents.

Thus Mary was conceived with the view of being the Mother of God’s Son who was to redeem the world. Her birth brought consolation and joy to the world by preparing it for the coming of Christ. That is why we celebrate it.
Ordinariate Groups

Where to find us at prayer in England, Scotland and Wales ...
check before travelling, as not all will have returned to normal times

**BIRMINGHAM**  St Margaret Mary, 59 Perry Common Road, Birmingham B23 7AB  MASS: Sunday: 11am (DIVINE WORSHIP). CONTACT: Fr Simon Ellis: 0121 373 0069 - birmingham@ordinariate.org.uk

**BLACK COUNTRY**  Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Cannock Road, Wolverhampton, WV10 8PG  MASS: 3rd Sunday of the month: 12 noon (followed by refreshments), also on Wed 10am  CONTACT: Fr John Greatbatch: 07799 078164 - black.country@ordinariate.org.uk

**BOURNEMOUTH**  St Thomas More, Exton Road, Bournemouth BH6 5QG  MASS: Sunday: 11.15am and Wed: 10.30am  CONTACT: Fr Darryl Jordan: 01202 485588 - bournemouth@ordinariate.org.uk

**BRISTOL**  St Joseph, Camp Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 2EN  MASS: 2nd Sunday of the month 12 noon (DIVINE WORSHIP), followed by shared lunch and Benediction at 2:30pm (subject to change in the summer months)  CONTACT: Deacon James Patrick: bristol@ordinariate.org.uk

**BUCKFAST**  St Mary’s Abbey, Buckfast TQ11 0EE  MASS: Sunday 2pm (DIVINE WORSHIP) followed by Tea/Coffee - Mass usually in St Michael’s Chapel, plenty of parking, restaurant on site, also bookshop and monastic produce for sale.  CONTACT: Fr Ian Hellyer: 01752 600054 - ian@hellyer.org

**CHELMSFORD**  Blessed Sacrament, 116 Melbourne Avenue, Chelmsford CM1 2DU  MASS: Sunday: 9.30am and 11.30am, (on 1st Sunday of the month, specifically Ordinariate), also on Mon to Sat at 9.15am with RC community  CONTACT: chelmsford@ordinariate.org.uk

**CHICHESTER**  St Richard, Cawley Road Chichester PO19 1XB  MASS: Saturday 4.15pm Sung/ Solemn (DIVINE WORSHIP)  CONTACT: Fr Graham Smith: 07710 328685 - fr.graham.smith@gmail.com

**COLCHESTER**  St John Payne, Blackthorn Avenue, Greenstead CO4 3QD  MASS: 3rd Sunday of the month, 4pm  CONTACT: Fr Jon Ravensdale: 01206 870460 - sjpchurch@btinternet.com

**CORNWALL**  St Augustine of Hippo, St Austell, PL25 4RA  MASS: Sunday: 5pm, also on Wed 7pm  CONTACT: Fr Fr David Lashbrooke: 07427 107304 - cornwall@ordinariate.org.uk

**COVENTRY**  The Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ & All Souls, Kingsland Avenue, Earlsdon, Coventry CV5 8DX  MASS: Sundays 10.30am, Mon-Wed 9.30am, Thu 7.30pm, Fri-Sat 9.30am - all Masses currently live streamed  CONTACT: Fr Paul Burch: 02476 674161 - paul.burch@ordinariate.org.uk

**CROYDON**  At the moment the Croydon Group does not have any Ordinariate Masses, but it is hoped thinks might begin again soon - for further information  CONTACT: Jackie Brooks: 0208 777 6426 - jaxprint@btinternet.com

**DARLINGTON**  St Osmund, Main Road, Gainford, County Durham DL2 3DZ  MASS: Sundays 9.30am Parish Mass, 11.30am Solemn Mass; Mon 12 noon; Tues 10am; Wed 10am; Thurs 10am; Fri 7pm; Sat 10am, Holydays 7pm. Confessions after Mass on Thurs, Fri, Sat.  CONTACT: Fr Ian Grieves, PP: 01325 730191 - darlington@ordinariate.org.uk - www.darlingtonordinariate.weebly.com

**DEAL**  St John the Evangelist, St Richard’s Road, Mongeham, Deal, Kent CT14 9LD  MASS: Sunday 11am, 6pm Evensong  CONTACT: Fr Christopher Lindlar: 01304 374870 or 07710 090195 - www.deal@ordinariate.org.uk

**DERBY/NOTTINGHAM**  St John the Evangelist, Midland Road, Stapleford, Nottingham, Notts NG9 7BT  MASS: 1st Sunday of the month: 11am  CONTACT: Fr Christopher Cann: 01889 569579 - derby-nottingham@ordinariate.org.uk, Fr Peter Peterken: 01332 766285 - peter.peterken@ntlworld.com, Fr David Jones: 01162 302244 charlie75845@yahoo.com

**DORCHESTER**  St Agnes, 6 Whitley Road BN22 8NJ  MASS: Sunday: 4pm (DIVINE WORSHIP)  CONTACT: Fr Neil Chatfield: 07718 123304 - eastbourneordinariate.org.uk - www.eastbourneordinariate.org.uk
FOLKESTONE Our Lady Help of Christians 41 Guildhall Street, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1EF
MASS: Sunday: 11am (with parish) CONTACT: Fr Stephen Bould (Group Pastor), Fr James Houghton - folkestone@ordinariate.org.uk

HARLOW The Assumption of Our Lady, Mulberry Green, Old Harlow, Essex CM17 0HA
MASS: Sunday: 10am and 6pm, Evensong and Benediction 5pm (last Sunday of month) CONTACT: Fr John Corbyn: 01279 429388 - john.corbyn@btinternet.com

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD St Mark's, Hollybush Lane, Hemel Hempstead HP1 2PH
MASS: Sunday: 8.45am, Wed: 7.45pm CONTACT: Fr Simon Chinery: 07971 523008 - hemel.hempstead@ordinariate.org.uk

ISLE OF WIGHT St Thomas of Canterbury, Terminus Road, Cowes, PO31 7TJ
MASS: (DIVINE WORSHIP) for details, CONTACT: Fr Jonathan Redvers Harris: 01983 292739 - frjonathanrh@btinternet.com

LEYTONSTONE/WANSTEAD St John Vianney, Clayhall, Ilford IG5 0JB
MASS: Sunday: 10am (Solemn Mass), 12 noon (last Sun of month Solemn Mass, DIVINE WORSHIP) 4.30pm (Exposition), 5pm (Low); Daily (except Mon) 8:30am (Exposition) 9am (Mass); Holy Days 9am (Low), 8pm (Solemn); Confessions: Sat 10am or by appointment. CONTACT: Fr Rob Page: 020 8550 4540 - clayhall@dioceseofbrentwood.org

LONDON, CENTRAL Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick Street, London W1B 5LZ (Nearest tube: Piccadilly)
MASS: Sunday: 10.30am Solemn Mass with choir (DIVINE WORSHIP), Weekdays: 8am and 12.45pm (Novus Ordo in English), Feasts and Solemnities as advertised. CONTACT: Fr Mark Elliott-Smith 07815 320761 - markelliottsmith@rcdow.org.uk

LONDON, SOUTH Most Precious Blood, O'Meara Street, The Borough, London SE1 1TE
MASS: Sunday: 8.30am, 11am; Mon-Fri 1.05pm, Thur (term time) 6.30pm (DIVINE WORSHIP); Walsingham Mass: 1st Sat of the month 10am (DIVINE WORSHIP); Holy Days: (additional) 6.30pm (DIVINE WORSHIP); Evensong: Thur 6pm (term time); Confessions: Sun 10.30am, Mon-Fri 12.30pm CONTACT: Fr Christopher Pearson 0207 407 3951 - parish@preciousblood.org.uk - www.preciousblood.org.uk

LONDON, WALTHAMSTOW Christ the King, 455 Chingford Road, Chingford, E4 8SP
MASS: Sunday: 11am CONTACT: Fr David Waller: 020 8527 4519 - walthamstow.south@ordinariate.org.uk

MAIDSTONE MASS: Sunday 10am, Thur 11am (DIVINE WORSHIP). CONTACT: Fr Alastair Ferguson for location: 01892 838230 - 07887 925356 alastair.ferguson@ordinariate.org.uk

MANCHESTER St Margaret Mary, St Margaret’s Road, New Moston M40 0JE
MASS: Sunday: 10.30am (DIVINE WORSHIP) MASS during the week please check the Sunday notices on the website CONTACT: Fr Andrew Starkie: 0161 681 1651 - manchester@ordinariate.org.uk - www.ordinariatemcr.com

NORTHAMPTON Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, 82 Knox Road, Wellingborough NN8 1JA
MASS: First Saturday of the month: 6pm (Sung Mass) CONTACT: Mgr John Broadhurst: 01933 674614 - frjohnbroadhurst@btinternet.com

OXFORD Holy Rood, Abingdon Road, Oxford
MASS: Sunday (of Sunday) 5pm (DIVINE WORSHIP), Sunday 11.15am, Wed 9am, Thur 7.30pm (DIVINE WORSHIP), 8pm Adoration & Confessions, 9.40pm Compline and Benediction, Fri 12.30pm (Latin), Sat 9am CONTACT: Fr Daniel Lloyd: 01865 437066 - daniel.lloyd@ordinariate.org.uk or Mgr Andrew Burnham: 01235 835038 - andrew.burnham@ordinariate.org.uk - www.oxford.ordinariate.org.uk - www.oxford.ordinariate.org.uk

PORTSMOUTH St Agatha, Cascades Approach, Portsmouth PO1 4RJ
MASS: Sunday 11am (Solemn), Mon, Fri (Requiem) and Sat 11am, CONTACT: info@stagathaschurch.co.uk - www.stagathaschurch.co.uk

READING St James, Abbey Ruins, Forbury Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3HW (next to old Reading Gaol)
MASS: Sunday: 9.15am. CONTACT: Fr David Elliott: 07973 241424 - reading@ordinariate.org.uk

SALISBURY Most Holy Redeemer, Fortherby Crescent, Bishopdown, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 3EG
MASS: Sunday: 11am, 6pm Evensong and Benediction (2nd Sunday), Wed: 7pm (in St Osmund's, Exeter Street, Salisbury SP1 2SF) CONTACT: Fr Jonathan Creer: 07724 896579 - jonathan.creer@hotmail.co.uk or salisbury@ordinariate.org.uk

SOUTHEAST St Peter’s Eastwood, 59 Eastwood Rd North, Leigh on Sea SS9 4BX
MASS: Sunday: 10.15am (said 8.30am & 6pm), 1st Sun: 12noon (DIVINE WORSHIP), Mon-Sat (except Tues) 9:30am followed by Rosary, Thur 7:30pm (check website), Confession: Sat 10am CONTACT: Fr Jeffrey Woolnough (Group Pastor): 01702 525323, 07956 801381 - fatherjeffw@gmail.com, Fr Bob White: 01268 543910 - pilgrimclub@waitrose.com, Dcn Richard Cerson: 07910 388795 - rcerson@gmail.com - www.stpeterseastwood.org www.jeffwoolnougholw.blogspot.co.uk
A new painting unveiled

Fr Simon Ellis explains

A NEW PAINTING, depicting St John Henry Newman and Blessed Dominic Barberi, has recently been installed in St Margaret Mary Church, Birmingham, which has significance for the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham.

It depicts the reception of John Henry Newman into the Catholic Church on 9th October 1845. On the left is Blessed Dominic Barberi, an Italian missionary priest (Passionist order) and on the right is St John Henry Newman. The location is Littlemore, near Oxford. Barberi had travelled to Littlemore by open coach in bad weather, which is why he was warming himself by the fire. The desk is the desk where Newman wrote the book, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine. In 1846 Newman moved to Birmingham and first lived at Maryvale (the original Oscott College). He later moved to Hagley Road to found the Oratory, which still stands today. With the encouragement of Bishop Wiseman, Newman was ordained a Catholic priest in 1847. He was made a Cardinal in 1879. When he died in 1890, 15,000 people lined the streets of Birmingham. Barberi was beatified by Pope Paul VI in 1963. Newman was beatified by Pope Benedict on his visit to Birmingham in 2010 and canonised by Pope Francis on 13 October 2019 in Rome. You can discover more about the painting under NEWS on the Ordinariate website.

The artist, Michael Long RA, was born in Bristol in 1940. He studied art at the West of England College of Art and became Senior Lecturer and later Head of Art at Brunel Technical College. He is a member of the prestigious Savages art group in Bristol. He specialises in landscapes and in particular Cotswolds scenery, being a founder member of the Dobunni group. Michael, a graphic designer, was brought up a devout member of the Church of England, attending All Hallows, Bristol. He became a Catholic and a member of the Ordinariate in 2011.
Fr Michael Halsall writes:

One for Sorrow; Two for Joy

Fr Michael Halsall

JULY AND OCTOBER are months dedicated to two aspects of our devotion and reverence for Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of God: Our Lady of Sorrows, and the Holy Rosary respectively.

We tend to think of Mary as the Sorrowful Mother during Lent. We know from Sacred Scripture that she was present at the Crucifixion, standing at the foot of the cross with the Apostle John. She is mentioned twice when we pray the Stations of the Cross: in the Fourth Station, when she meets her Son on the way to Golgotha and in the Thirteenth Station when Jesus’ dead body is placed in her arms.

During Lent, we also sing or pray the Stabat Mater, a medieval Latin hymn describing Mary’s terrible sorrow over her Son’s suffering. It is hard not to think of Mary as we contemplate our Lord’s Passion and Crucifixion, and these are rehearsed also in the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

In that respect, it is fitting that the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows takes place the day after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – or Holy Cross Day - observed annually on September 14. On that day, we celebrate the finding of the True Cross by St Helena in the fourth century, and its veneration throughout the centuries since. On the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows, we venerate the Mother of our Crucified Lord, in appreciation of the terrible grief she endured as her Son suffered.

The feast of Our Lady of Sorrows dates back to the twelfth century. Since at least that time, Catholics have recognised seven events in the life of Mary that caused her great sorrow. That is why the image of Mary as Our Lady of Sorrows often shows her with seven swords piercing her Immaculate Heart, an image often misunderstood out of the context of this biblical reality. She is also sometimes represented by a winged heart pierced with seven swords; and the swords represent her sorrows.

Known as the Seven Dolors of Mary, these sorrows are:
- The prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:25-35)
- The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)
- Loss of the Child Jesus for three days (Luke 2:41-50)
- Mary meets Jesus on his way to Calvary (Luke 23:27-31; John 19:17)
- Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (John 19:25-30)
- The body of Jesus being taken from the Cross (Psalm 130; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:31-37)
- The burial of Jesus (Isaiah 53:8; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; Mark 15:40-47)

We can meditate on these verses during the month of September. However, it is easy for all this negative iconography to give a skewed impression of the Christian faith, especially to those who have issues with religious images. The Rosary is a beautifully balanced devotion, and places the sorrows of Mary alongside the joys of her human-divine motherhood. October places the Sorrows of Mary in true perspective, and completes our Christian hope in the Glorious Mysteries.

Fr Halsall is the Director of Vocations and Formation for the Ordinariate and is a member of the permanent staff at Allen Hall Seminary. He may be contacted as follows: michaelhalsall@rcdow.org.uk
IN THIS, the third directory since Vatican II (cf. 1971 and 1997) there’s not so much an attempt to improve on Pope Paul VI or Pope John Paul II, but a recognition of new insights including digital culture, globalisation and bioethics, which, of course, have accelerated since Covid-19.

The central thrust of the document is that ‘kerygmatic catechesis is intimately united with evangelisation’, putting the “vital encounter” with Jesus Christ at the centre, and (to quote Bishop Robert Barron) it therefore delineates “the centrality of the church’s mission of bringing the world to an encounter with Christ, an encounter that inspires and propels people as witnesses for the faith.”

I wish to make three points. First, the phenomenon of arriving at a “cultural crisis” is recognised and the experience of working with so many who live with a “detachment from a lived ecclesial and faith experience… those who have already received the grace of the sacraments, but often do not have an explicit experience of faith or do not know its power or warmth.”

Nevertheless, there is a recognition that the Holy Spirit continues to arouse the thirst for God. In that sense, we see the beginnings of a landscape in which catechesis is not divorced from good theology, liturgy, charity or service to the community. As acknowledged, evangelisation and catechesis are part of an ecclesial process, inspired and supported by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, it is good to see that the importance of beauty - and its connection with goodness and truth – is affirmed. The beauty of Christ’s actions (and words) stand at the heart of what we proclaim. Here I believe the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham may play a distinctive part, with the rich liturgical heritage reflected in Divine Worship and the way that liturgy, architecture and music are arranged.

Third, it is good to see the definition of catechesis as an authentic “laboratory of dialogue” (to quote Pope John Paul II in his address to the 15th World Youth Day in 2000) and this defines the heart of all authentic teaching and learning. In Fr Stephen Wang’s excellent online course ‘Sycamore’, (sycamore.fm), for example, we have, at last, a resource which takes the starting point of the catechumen (or enquirer) seriously, even including contributions from people who express difficulties. In a good laboratory you do not always work from a prescribed instruction sheet!

We read some very optimistic sentiments on godparents (section 125), but for those of us on the ground in parishes, we may conclude that finding - and instructing - godparents is a huge challenge in a secularised society. Finally, Catholic Schools are described as a “community of faith that have at their heart evangelical values” (310) which can only be described as an aspiration, notwithstanding notable exceptions and the heroic efforts of so many Catholic Headteachers, teachers and parents.

If you read nothing else, then study sections 160-61, which represent a summary of Jesus Christ the catechist who walks with, prays, rouses, moves, forgives, provokes and steps aside to leave a space for the missionary initiative of the disciples.
Strange Synodical processes!

The Revd Paul Benfield

**GENERAL SYNOD** usually meets in February in London and July in York. Dates are always reserved for an additional short meeting in London in November, but this is not usually used except once every five years for the inauguration of a new Synod.

This year should have seen elections for a new Synod and the opening by HM Queen in November. However, Covid 19 has changed everything. The Coronavirus Act 2020 contained a clause allowing the Privy Council to delay the election of a new Synod.

This happened at a virtual meeting of the Privy Council in May, and elections have been postponed for a year with existing members holding their seats until July 2021.

The Officers of Synod (the two Archbishops, the Prolocutors of the Convocations of Canterbury and York and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity) used their powers to cancel the meeting scheduled for July.

The members of Synod did meet by electronic conferencing facility for an informal session on a Saturday in July, but no formal business could be done as there is no provision in the constitution or standing orders to meet otherwise than physically in the same place. At this virtual meeting there was a Presidential Address by the newly confirmed Archbishop of York, but most of the day was taken up with questions.

Many of these concerned the House of Bishops’ guidance on the use of churches for private prayer and live-streaming during the Covid lockdown and why the term ‘must’ was used if it was only guidance and not law.

The Archbishop of Canterbury answered these questions and said the House had not taken legal advice before issuing the guidance/instruction. One journalist described him as being ‘tetchy’.

Since Covid 19 seems likely to disrupt normal life for many months it was decided that arrangements ought to be made for Synod to hold virtual meetings if necessary. This can be done only by passing primary legislation – either an Act of Parliament or a Measure of the General Synod.

The government was approached about finding parliamentary time to pass legislation allowing virtual synods, but it declined to find time. I have heard from more than one ministerial source that this was partly because the government was annoyed with the bishops’ response in the early days of the pandemic.

So the only way of passing legislation is for Synod to meet physically to pass a measure. On the 24th September there will be a one-day session of Synod solely to consider the legislation and, hopefully, consider all three stages necessary in one day.

Social distancing rules mean that it would be impossible for the five-hundred plus members of Synod to attend a meeting in Church House yet each of the three houses must be quorate or Synod can do nothing. Complicated consultations have gone on to try and get volunteers who are prepared to attend, making sure that there is a good geographical representation, gender balance, BAME representation and that the main groupings in Synod are fairly represented.

Added to this is the problem that those who wish to put down amendments to the draft legislation ought to be allowed to attend. It is legally impossible to prevent a duly elected member from attending, but the Corporation of Church House, which owns and operates the building are insisting on very strict safety measures.

The Corporation can bar entry so anything could happen. Imagine the Archbishop of Canterbury being the last to arrive and being refused entry to the building! 😞
‘No Christian girl in Pakistan is safe’

Fionn Shiner reports

“With this ruling, no Christian girl in Pakistan is safe,” said Lala Robin Daniel, a family friend and advocate of Maira Shahbaz, a 14-year-old Christian girl who was abducted at gunpoint, bundled into a car by a group of men and forced to convert to Islam.

Mr Daniel was speaking to Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) following a ruling on 4th August by the Lahore High Court, Pakistan, which decided that Maira should return to her abductor, Mohamad Nakash.

This overruled the earlier decision by the Faisalabad Sessions and District Court, removing Maira from Mr Nakash’s home and placing her in a women’s shelter while the veracity of her alleged marriage and conversion was investigated.

Mr Nakash, who is already married and has two children, claimed he had married Maira and – in spite of evidence invalidating the marriage certificate and showing that she is underage – Lahore High Court ruled in his favour, as Judge Raja Muhammad Shahid Abbasi stated that the teenager had embraced Islam.

The Grand Mufti of a local mosque, Muhammad Asad Ali Rizvi Efi of the Sunni Rizvi Jammah Mosque, Jhung Bazar, Faisalabad, had earlier produced a fatwa condemning the marriage as false.

Mr Daniel said: “The marriage certificate that Mr Nakash produced is undoubtedly fake. The signature from the Imam solemnising the marriage is false, no mention is made of Mr Nakash’s pre-existing marriage, there is no consent from the woman he is already married to – everything about it reveals it to be a fraud.”

Maira’s family also produced a birth certificate that shows she was 13 in October, the month she supposedly married Mr Nakash. He says she was 19 at the time of the marriage.

Lawyer Khalil Tahir Sandhu, who represented Maira in court, put forward 11 arguments in her favour, quoting Pakistani state law which shows that as Maira is underage, she can change her religion only with her mother’s permission.

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Entering into the full communion of the Catholic Church under Pope Benedict XVI ten years ago, we former Anglicans found ourselves with a profound sense of ‘coming home’. We had been ‘shivering at the gates’, in Newman’s phrase, and now we were within the citadel.

As someone said, whereas the saints had been our cousins, now they were our brothers and sisters. The shock some of us received was considerable. We thought we had left ‘churchmanship’ behind but bumped into it again.

Those of us who like both a full-scale Missa Solemnis and a simple over-the-counter Novus Ordo celebration were perplexed at being expected to take sides. We thought we had left behind doctrinal flaccidity and moral chaos but encountered it in new guises.

Pope Benedict had been – and remained – our lodestar but things were quickly changing. Some of this, undoubtedly, was down to a change of papacy. Pope Francis is sometimes hard to read but liberal causes, of one kind or another, quickly claimed him as a champion. This was the view of the outsider too: I remember a hospital doctor telling me that, though he wasn’t a Catholic and rather disliked the previous fellow, Pope Francis was like a breath of fresh air. Instead of Pax vobiscum we have Buona sera.

What wasn’t down to the change of papacy were the consequences of burgeoning social media. British Catholic commentary is mainly moderate but posts from the other side of the Atlantic are often shrill and judgmental, some going as far as to refer pointedly to the Pope by his surname, as if he weren’t pope at all.

Somewhat disoriented, those of us who arrived nine or ten years ago, have relied on trusted commentators to accompany us. One of these commentators has been George Weigel, well-known to British readers as the biographer of Pope St John Paul II. He has now given us a view on what life under the next Pope ‘must’ be like.

Weigel’s voice is authoritative not just because he wrote magisterially on the pontificate of Pope St John Paul II but because he has been in conversation with subsequent popes. He takes the view - very much that of Pope St John Paul II - that authority in the Church should be exercised centripetally, rather than centrifugally. I suspect that that debate – focused authority and governance versus dispersed authority and governance – is at the heart of the matter.

Ecclesiologically, both sides make telling points: the monolith may be necessary to hold together the Church in all its fragility – amidst secular decay, intrusive totalitarianism, warring nationalisms; the federal model takes the more Cyprianic line, not unknown to Anglo-catholics, that every bishop (however implausibly) is head of the local Church and the Pope is Primus inter Pares. We thought we had escaped from that….
ST PADRE PIO was an Italian priest who was known for his piety and charity, as well as the gift of the stigmata, which has never been explained. He was born Francesco Forgione, on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, Italy. His parents were peasant farmers. He had an older brother and three younger sisters, as well as two other siblings who died in infancy. As a child, he was very religious and by the age of five he reportedly made the decision to dedicate his life to God. Fortunately, his parents were also very religious and they supported his Catholic development. His family attended daily Mass. Francisco served as an altar boy at his local parish. Francisco was known for taking on penances and his mother once scolded him for sleeping on a stone floor. Francisco's community was also supportive. Saints’ days were popular celebrations and commonly celebrated in his town.

From a tender age, Francisco had a peculiar ability. He could see guardian angels, spoke with Jesus and with the Virgin Mary. This was not something taught to him, but occurred so naturally that he assumed other people could see them too.

Although Francisco and his family were very religious, they were also very poor, which required that he work. He spent many years as a child tending a small flock of sheep owned by his family. Unfortunately, the work meant he was unable to attend school regularly, so he quickly fell behind other kids of his age.

Francisco was sickly as a child. He suffered an attack of gastroenteritis at the age of six and when he was ten, he had typhoid fever.

In 1897, after three years of schooling, Francisco expressed to his parents that he wanted to become a friar. His parents travelled to a nearby community of monks and asked if Francisco could join them. He was evaluated, despite his young age, and was told that he needed more education before he could join.

To prepare Francisco, his parents decided to hire a private tutor. To pay the cost of the tutor, Francisco’s father travelled to America to find work, and sent the money home.

At the age of 15, Francisco was finally ready and he entered the novitiate of the Capuchin friars at Morcone. He took the name of “Pio” in honour of Pope Pius I, whose relic he often saw at his local chapel.

At the age of 17, Brother Pio became extremely ill and could digest only milk and cheese. He was sent to the mountains for better air, and when this did not work, he was sent home to his family. Amid all this, he continued to study for the priesthood.

On one occasion during prayer, a fellow monk astonishingly reported he saw Pio levitate during an episode of ecstasy.

Brother Pio became a priest in 1910, but was permitted to remain at home because of his poor health.

In 1915, with World War I afflicting the world, Padre Pio was summoned for military service. He was compelled to leave a tiny community of monks, with whom he was then housed, and drafted into medical service. However, he was so sickly that he was often sent home, only to then be recalled for service. In March 1916, he was finally dismissed because of his poor health.

On September 20, Padre Pio was hearing confessions when he felt pain in his hands and feet. He noticed the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, appearing on his hands and feet. The experience was painful. Bleeding occurred. The wounds smelled of roses, and although they continued to weep, they never became infected. Doctors who later examined the stigmata were amazed at their perfectly round shape. By 1919, word began to spread about Padre Pio’s stigmata and people came from far away to examine him.

Padre Pio became popular with the people he encountered, who soon began to attribute supernatural occurrences to him. For example, he was said to levitate and to be able to perform miracles.

His popularity became a source of concern for the Church and the Vatican began to restrict his activities to minimise public interaction. Padre Pio himself was... continued at the foot of the next page >
uncomfortable with his new found popularity and the attention he received because of his stigmata. A Church investigation into his stigmata concluded that his condition was not faked.

By 1934, the Vatican began to change its attitude towards Padre Pio and he was again allowed to perform public duties. He could preach, despite never being officially licensed by the Church to do so. Pope Pius XI encouraged people to visit him.


Padre Pio used his new found popularity to open a hospital in San Giovanni Rotondo. The facility opened in 1956. Pope Paul VI reviewed the controversies surrounding Padre Pio and dismissed any concerns over his conduct and the authenticity of his stigmata.

Padre Pio became internationally famous. He was known for his piety, charity and the quality of his preaching. He famously advised, “Pray, hope and don’t worry.”

He had other illnesses as well, including cancer, which was miraculously healed after just two treatments. Other problems, such as arthritis, which plagued him in his later years, never went away. Padre Pio died on September 23, 1968. His funeral was attended by over 100,000 people.

Pope John Paul II recognised Padre Pio as a saint on June 16, 2002. His feast day is September 23. He is the patron of civil defence volunteers, adolescents, and the village of Pietrelcina.
The Doctrinal Note recognises that “the parents, godparents and the entire community are called to play an active role, a true liturgical office” — but this, according to the conciliar text, requires that “each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 28).

A wound inflicted on the ecclesial communion

“With debatable pastoral motives”, the note continues, “here resurfaces the ancient temptation to substitute for the formula handed down by Tradition with other texts judged more suitable”. However, “the recourse to pastoral motivation masks, even unconsciously, a subjective deviation and a manipulative will”, the note affirms. The Second Vatican Council, in continuity with the teaching of the Council of Trent, declared it did not have “the authority to subject the seven sacraments to the action of the Church,” and declared definitively that no one “even if he be a priest may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority”.

In fact, the Congregation asserts, “modifying on one’s own initiative the form of the celebration of a Sacrament does not constitute simply a liturgical abuse, like the transgression of a positive norm, but a vulnus [wound] inflicted upon the ecclesial communion and the identifiability of Christ’s action, and in the most grave cases rendering invalid the Sacrament itself, because the nature of the ministerial action requires the transmission with fidelity of that which has been received”.

The nature of ecclesial ministry

In the celebration of the Sacraments — the Doctrinal Note explains, — the assembly does not act “collegially”, but “ministerially”; and the minister, when pronouncing the sacramental formula, “does not speak as a functionary who carries out a role entrusted to him, but he enacts ministerially the sign-presence of Christ, who acts in His Body to give His grace”. The note continues, “In this light must be understood the tridentine injunction concerning the necessity of the minister to at least have the intention to do that which the Church does’. That intention, it goes on to say, cannot remain “only at the interior level”, with the risk of subjectivism, but must also be expressed in an “exterior action” carried out not in one’s own name, “but in the person of Christ”.

The note concludes by saying that modifying “the sacramental formula implies a lack of an understanding of the very nature of the ecclesial ministry that is always at the service of God and His people and not the exercise of a power that goes so far as to manipulate what has been entrusted to the Church in an act that pertains to the Tradition.”

Therefore, it says, “in every minister of Baptism, there must not only be a deeply rooted knowledge of the obligation to act in ecclesial communion, but also the same conviction that Saint Augustine attributes to the Precursor, which ‘was to be a certain peculiarity in Christ, such that, although many ministers, be they righteous or unrighteous, should baptise, the virtue of Baptism would be attributed to Him alone on whom the dove descended, and of Whom it was said: It is He Who baptises with the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 1:33).

Earlier responses

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has previously answered questions about the validity of Baptisms confirmed with the formulas: “I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier” and “I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer”.

The answer then was the same as the answer given on Thursday: Such “baptisms” are not valid, and those who undergo a ceremony using those formulas must be unconditionally baptised. 🌹

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