

Into the Deep

Issue 255

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When Your Soul is Troubled

Pope Benedict XVI, Palm Sunday homily, 05-04-2009

"My soul is troubled" (John 12:27). Here we see Jesus' fear, amply illustrated by the other three evangelists – his fear before the power of death, before the whole abyss of evil that he sees and into which he must descend. The Lord suffers our fears together with us, he accompanies us through the final anguish into the light.

Then, in John's narrative, Jesus makes two petitions. The first, expressed only conditionally, is this: "What shall I say – Father, save me from this hour?". As a human being, even Jesus feels impelled to ask that he be spared the terror of the passion. We too can pray in this way. We too can grumble before the Lord, like Job, we can present him with all the pleas that arise within us when we are faced with the injustice of the world and the difficulty of our own "I". When we come before him, we must not take refuge in pious phrases, in a world of make-believe. Praying always also means struggling with God, and like Jacob, we can say to him: "I will not let you go, unless you bless me!" (Gen 32:26).

But then comes Jesus' second petition: "Glorify your name!". In the Synoptics, it is expressed in another way: "Not my will, but yours be done!". In the end, God's glory, his lordship, his will, is always more important and more true than my thought and my will.

And this is the essential point in our prayer and in our life: learning this right order of reality, accepting it intimately; trusting in God and believing that he is doing what is right; that his will is truth and love; that my life becomes good if I learn to adhere to this right order. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are for us the guarantee that we can truly trust God. It is in this way that his Kingdom is realized.

Vatican.va

The Hope That Does Not Disappoint

Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi Message, Easter 2021

[T]he Easter message speaks concisely of the event that gives us the hope that does not disappoint: "Jesus who was crucified has risen".

It speaks to us not about angels or ghosts, but about a man, a man of flesh and bone, with a face and a name: Jesus. The Gospel testifies that this Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate for claiming he was the Christ, the Son of God, rose on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, just as he had foretold to his disciples.

The crucified Jesus, none other, has risen from the dead. God the Father raised Jesus, his Son, because he fully accomplished his saving will. Jesus took upon himself our weakness, our infirmities, even our death. He endured our sufferings and bore the weight of our sins. Because of this, God the Father exalted him and now Jesus Christ lives forever; he is the Lord.

The witnesses report an important detail: the risen Jesus bears the marks of the wounds in his hands, feet and side. These wounds are the everlasting seal of his love for us. All those who experience a painful trial in body or spirit can find refuge in these wounds and, through them, receive the grace of the hope that does not disappoint.

Vatican.va

All issues of *Into the Deep* are at www.stoneswillshout.com

The Mystery of the Betrayer

During Lent I'm reading a book written by Pope Benedict XVI, one of his 3 books called "Jesus of Nazareth". This one is titled "Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection". The chapter is called The Mystery of the Betrayer. I'm quoting part of the chapter pages 68-69. I would like to share this with ITD readers. This is the third Lent I'm reading this book, and this part just hit me I guess it's because of all the happenings; the continuous mockery of Our Lord, around the world, Australia, and in our Churches.

Judas' betrayal was not the last breach of fidelity that Jesus would suffer. "Even my bosom friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me" (Ps 41:9). The breach of friendship extends into the sacramental community of the Church, where people continue to take "his bread" and to betray him.

Jesus's agony, his struggle against death, continues until the end of the world, as Blaise Pascal said on the basis of similar considerations (cf. *Pensées* VII, 553). We could also put it the other way around: at this hour, Jesus took upon himself the betrayal of all ages, the pain caused by betrayal in every era, and he endured the anguish of history to the bitter end.

John does not offer any psychological interpretation of Judas' conduct. The only clue he gives is a hint that Judas had helped himself to the contents of the disciples' money box, of which he had charge (12:6). In the context of chapter 13, the evangelist merely says laconically: "Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him" (13:27).

For John, what happened to Judas is beyond psychological explanation. He has come under the dominion of another. Anyone who breaks off friendship with Jesus, casting off his "easy yoke", does not attain liberty, does not become free, but succumbs to other powers. To put it another way, he betrays this friendship because he is in the grip of another power to which he has opened himself.

True, the light shed by Jesus into Judas' soul was not completely extinguished. He does take a step toward conversion: "I have sinned", he says to those who commissioned him. He tries to save Jesus, and he gives the money back (Mt 27:3-5). Everything pure and great that he had received from Jesus remained inscribed on his soul – he could not forget it.

His second tragedy – after the betrayal – is that he can no longer believe in forgiveness. His remorse turns into despair. Now he sees only himself and his darkness; he no longer sees the light of Jesus, which can illumine and overcome the darkness. He shows us the wrong type of remorse: the type that is unable to hope, that sees only its own darkness, the type that is destructive and in no way authentic. Genuine remorse is marked by the certainty of hope born of faith in the superior power of the light that was made flesh in Jesus.

John concludes the passage about Judas with these dramatic words: "After receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night" (13:30). Judas goes out – in a deeper sense. He goes into the night; he moves out of light into darkness: the "power of darkness" has taken hold of him (cf. Jn 3:19; Lk 22:53).

Josie Vitale, Morwell, Victoria

Wrong Number

For those who may take notice of numbers: My apologies for the wrong issue number on the last ITD. I notice that I made a mistake in my counting, with the Jan/Feb issue and the March issue both being issue no. 253. Oops. So this April issue has now jumped to the correct issue no. 255. Sorry for any confusion... if anyone noticed!

Ed.

The Future of ITD

As mentioned previously, please remember no more donations for ITD, as it will be finishing up in October this year when we use up our current funds. Thanks for all the messages of support – please keep them coming – I'll save them for my final issue and we'll see if ITD goes out with a bang or a whimper!

Ed.

In Times of Sorrow

Pope Francis, Angelus address 16-03-2025

Today, the second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel tells us about the Transfiguration of Jesus. Having climbed to the top of a mountain with Peter, James and John, Jesus immerses Himself in prayer and becomes radiant with light. In this way, He shows the disciples what is hidden behind the gestures He performs in their midst: the light of His infinite love.

I am sharing these thoughts with you while I am facing a period of trial, and I join with so many brothers and sisters who are sick: fragile, at this time, like me. Our bodies are weak but, even like this, nothing can prevent us from loving, praying, giving ourselves, being for each other, in faith, shining signs of hope. How much light shines, in this sense, in hospitals and places of care! How much loving care illuminates the rooms, the corridors, the clinics, the places where the humblest services are performed! That is why I would like to invite you, today, to join me in praising the Lord, who never abandons us and who, in times of sorrow, places people beside us who reflect a ray of His love.

Vatican.va

Prayer for the Pope

By Vatican News, 04-03-2025

"Let us remain in prayer with Mary Mother of the Church for the health of the Holy Father Francis," said Cardinal Robert Prevost, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, as he led the Rosary for Pope Francis in St Peter's Square on [03-03-25]. ...

V. Let us pray for Francis, our Pope.

R. May the Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful, look favourably on your servant Francis, whom you have set at the head of your Church as her shepherd; grant, we pray, that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides so that, together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

VaticanNews.va

Pope's Letter to a Grieving Mother

Vatican News 27-02-2025, by Kielce Gussie

Each month, one magazine, *Piazza San Pietro*, prints a letter addressed to Pope Francis. This month's edition was a letter sent by a grieving mother who had lost her 21-year-old son in a car accident in 2019.

In her letter to the Pope, Cinzia recounted her story of loss and the pain, sorrow, and crisis of faith her and her husband experienced after their son's death. She explained she eventually returned to her faith on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception that same year, but her husband has not.

While they started a foundation in their son's name and volunteer with the Red Cross, there were still questions resting heavy on Cinzia's heart. And, at the end of her letter, she shared them with the Pope: why God did not save her son, is he in Heaven, and is he the family's Guardian Angel?

Pope Francis opened his letter to her with this response: "There are no words, not even comforting ones, despite the best intentions" to say to someone who has lost a child. He expressed his closeness to her and pointed out there are words to describe a wife who loses her husband, a husband who loses a wife, and a child who loses their parents. But "for a parent who loses a child, there is no word."

Before beginning to tackle her questions, Pope Francis stated a premise: "always ask for the intercession of Mary." He reflected on a prayer, invoking Mary, who comforts "the pain of mothers for their children who, having left home one day, never returned."

The Pope explained that it is impossible to have all the answers "in the face of the mystery of innocent suffering" and reiterated that Mary, the Mother of God, accompanies every broken heart.

Using the words of his predecessor, St. John Paul II, Pope Francis encouraged Cinzia and her husband to have hope because "there is no evil from which God cannot bring about a greater good."

VaticanNews.va

All Things Must Be Done With Love

Pope Francis, Angelus address, 03-11-2024

The Gospel of today's liturgy tells us about one of the many discussions Jesus had at the temple of Jerusalem. One of the scribes approaches Him and questions Him: "Which is the first of all the commandments?"...

Indeed, we too at times feel lost among so many things, and ask ourselves: but, in the end, what is the most important thing of all? Where can I find the centre of my life, of my faith? Jesus gives us the answer, putting together two commandments that are the primary ones: the love of God and the love of neighbour. And this is the heart of our faith.

... And Jesus tells us that the source of everything is love, that we must never separate God from man. The Lord says to the disciple of every time: in your journey, what counts are not the exterior practices, such as burnt offerings and sacrifices, but the readiness of heart with which you open yourself to God and to brethren in love. Brothers and sisters, we can do many things, but do them only for ourselves and without love, and this will not do; we do them with a distracted heart or even with a closed heart, and this will not do. All things must be done with love.

The Lord will come, and He will ask us first and foremost about love: "How did you love?". It is important, then, to fix in our hearts the most important commandment. What is it? Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself. And to carry out every day an examination of conscience and ask ourselves: is love for God and neighbour the centre of my life? Does my prayer to God impel me to go out to my brothers and sisters and love them gratuitously? Do I recognize the presence of the Lord in the faces of others?

May the Virgin Mary, who bore the law of God imprinted in her immaculate heart, help us to love the Lord and our brothers and sisters.

Vatican.va

True Worship

Last month I wrote about the problem of what happens when Christians 'presume authority' to interpret Scripture (March ITD, p.7) and how this has led to us having over 45,000 Christian denominations in the world today.

The same applies to Christians 'presuming authority' to decide how to worship God according to their own taste, whims, wishes and wills; presuming the right to determine the where, when, how and what of worshipping God. It's reminiscent of the first stanza of Psalm 105, which recalls God's Chosen People's betrayal and infidelity while Moses was communing with God on the mountain; but instead of a calf, they fashioned a 'church' in their own image, with worship according to their own likening, so to speak.

The irony of 'biblical' Christians doing this, is that it is very unbiblical, because the sacred Scriptures demonstrate and reveal very clearly that God alone determines the where, when, how and what of worship. He alone, and not man, decides the place, the time, the priest, the victim, the altar, and the pattern of worship for his covenantal people to follow. Nowhere in the Bible does it say worshipping God should be done through biblical preaching alone, singing or dancing in any place at whatever time man or the community decides.

It seems many of our Protestant brothers and sisters have forgotten that while salvation comes from God alone, this side of heaven it is only to be found in his One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which was established by his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. They forget that in John chapter six, Jesus himself is commanding and instructing Christians exactly about how we should worship God in spirit and in truth; that communion worship, which the sacrament of Baptism is ordered to, means eating his flesh and drinking his precious blood so that he can dwell in us and we in him; so that his life can live in us.

Scripturally, anyone who rejects the Eucharist is rejecting communion worship with God, and therefore denying themselves the fullness of his commands, instructions and indeed the very Word, that became flesh and continues to dwell among us.

Gregory Kingman, Morwell, Victoria

The End

A solemn part of a marriage ceremony is that at which the couple commit themselves to each other, until *death do us part*. As parents, we are well aware that we have taken part in our children becoming our major contributions to God's creation process. We made our vows as a part of living out our sacrament of marriage. Clearly God's creation continues with other people after the end of our marriage, for we are still alive as unique persons while *death did us part* as parents.

As far as creation is concerned, God clearly had some purpose in mind for 'there he put the man he had fashioned' to 'cultivate and take care of it.' So God clearly had a purpose in mind for his creation and this did not include death until after the Fall.

Yet despite the fall, God continues to use parents to carry on his creation. Indeed, God gave Noah and his family the same instruction that he had given to Adam and Eve, 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth'. So, while God placed cherubs to control entry to the Garden of Eden, there is no record of him destroying the garden that he had created for man's employment. (One wonders what has happened to the Garden of Eden!)

At the personal level one accepts one's forthcoming death because Jesus clearly demonstrates that death is followed by the resurrection. In short, death is the end; but it is also the beginning.

John Cooney, Cowwarr, Victoria

I Deserved This Cross

Venerable Fulton Sheen

But the more penitent we are, the less anxious we are to escape our cross. The more we see ourselves as we are, the more we say with the good thief: "I deserved this cross." He did not want to be excused; he did not want to have his sin explained away; he did not want to be let off; he did not ask to be taken down. He wanted only to be forgiven. ...

His faith was so strong he was content to remain on his cross. The thief on the left asked to be taken down, but not the thief on the right. Why? Because he knew there were greater evils than crucifixions, and another life beyond the cross. He had faith in the Man on the central cross who could have turned thorns into garlands and nails into rosebuds if He willed; but he had faith in a Kingdom beyond the cross, knowing that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the joys that are to come. With the Psalmist his soul cried: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evils, for thou art with me." ...

He knew our Lord could deliver Him. But he did not ask to be taken down from the cross, for our Lord did not come down Himself even though the mob challenged Him. ... This did not mean the thief did not love life: He loved life as much as we love it. He wanted life, and a long life, and he found it, for what life is longer than Life Eternal. To each and every one of us in like manner it is given to discover that Eternal Life. But there is no other way to enter it than by penance and by faith which unite us to that Great Host – the Priest and Victim Christ. Thus do we become spiritual thieves, and steal heaven once again.

Calvary and the Mass: A Missal Companion

"Pilate does not open himself to the truth, even though it is right in front of him."

Pope Francis, 24-11-2024

The Weapons

Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi message, Easter 2009

Even if through Easter, Christ has destroyed the root of evil, he still wants the assistance of men and women in every time and place who help him to affirm his victory using his own weapons: the weapons of justice and truth, mercy, forgiveness and love.

To Him, Through Him, In Him, With Him

St Augustine on Psalm 85

God could give no greater gift to men than to make his Word, through whom he created all things, their head and to join them to him as his members, so that the Word might be both Son of God and son of man, one God with the Father, and one man with all men.

The result is that when we speak with God in prayer we do not separate the Son from him, and when the body of the Son prays it does not separate its head from itself: it is the one Saviour of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who prays for us and in us and is himself the object of our prayers.

He prays for us as our priest, he prays in us as our head, he is the object of our prayers as our God.

Let us then recognise both our voice in his, and his voice in ours. When something is said, especially in prophecy, about the Lord Jesus Christ that seems to belong to a condition of lowliness unworthy of God, we must not hesitate to ascribe this condition to one who did not hesitate to unite himself with us. Every creature is his servant, for it was through him that every creature came to be.

We contemplate his glory and divinity when we listen to these words: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made.* Here we gaze on the divinity of the Son of God, something supremely great and surpassing all the greatness of his creatures. Yet in other parts of Scripture we hear him as one sighing, praying, giving praise and thanks.

We hesitate to attribute these words to him because our minds are slow to come down to his humble level when we have just been contemplating him in his divinity. It is as though we were doing him an injustice in acknowledging in a man the words of one with whom we spoke when we prayed to God. We are usually at a loss and try to change the meaning. Yet our minds find nothing in Scripture that does not go back to him, nothing that will allow us to stray from him.

Our thoughts must then be awakened to keep their vigil of faith. We must realise that the one whom we were contemplating a short time before in his nature as God took to himself the nature of a servant; he was made in the likeness of men and found to be a man like others; he humbled himself by being obedient even to accepting death; as he hung on the cross he made the psalmist's words his own: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

We pray to him as God, he prays for us as a servant. In the first case he is the Creator, in the second a creature. Himself unchanged, he took to himself our created nature in order to change it, and made us one man with himself, head and body. We pray then to him, through him, in him, and we speak along with him and he along with us.

Divine Office of Readings, Wednesday the 5th Week of Lent

Being Thrown Off the Horse

From the writings of Servant of God Sr Clare Crockett

For me, as you know, Good Friday is very special because it was there, in Priego City, that the Lord threw me off the horse for the first time (I say for the first time because in my sovereign idiocy, I got back on the horse and the Lord had to repeat the whole "throwing me off the horse" thing many times). [...]

It was very important for me to accompany the Lord. I imagined that He was still in prison, so I went there to see Him and to place myself in His presence. I presented to Him my cold soul and my hard heart and I told Him that sometimes I think that my faults and my sins are bigger and stronger than me. Sometimes I want to give up and give in to the temptation that I cannot fight anymore. The Lord listened to me attentively and at the end He said to me, "Are your sins and all the bad things you have greater than Me? You have all my blood, I have given everything for you."

Sisterclare.com

Catholic Stats Quiz

Answers on page 9

1. Match the continents with the percentage of Catholics they have:

Africa	<1%
Americas	≈11%
Asia	20%
Europe	20.4%
Oceania	47.8%

2. Did the world's Catholic population increase or decrease from 2022 to 2023?
3. What is the world's total Catholic population?
- 1.391 billion
 - 1.406 billion
 - 1.539 billion
4. Which country has the most Catholics in Africa?
- Uganda
 - Nigeria
 - Democratic Republic of Congo
5. Which country has the most Catholics in the world?
- India
 - Brazil
 - United States of America
6. Which 3 countries in South America have over 90% of their population Catholic?
- Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay
 - Argentina, Brazil and Colombia
 - Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina
7. Which 3 countries in Europe have over 90% of their population Catholic?
- Spain, Portugal and Malta
 - Malta, Poland and Italy
 - Italy, Poland and Spain
8. How many Catholics are there in Oceania?
- 1.9 million
 - 11 million
 - 14.5 million
9. How many Catholics are there in the Philippines?
- 23 million
 - 53 million
 - 93 million
10. How many Catholics are there in India?
- 23 million
 - 53 million
 - 93 million

Source of statistics: Vatican News article of 20-03-2025, based on The *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2023 published by The Vatican Publishing House

Olive Oil

Pope Benedict XVI, Chrism Mass Homily 01-04-2010

At the centre of the Church's worship is the notion of "sacrament". This means that it is not primarily we who act, but God comes first to meet us through his action, he looks upon us and he leads us to himself.

Another striking feature is this: God touches us through material things, through gifts of creation that he takes up into his service, making them instruments of the encounter between us and himself. There are four elements in creation on which the world of sacraments is built: water, bread, wine and olive oil.

Water, as the basic element and fundamental condition of all life, is the essential sign of the act in which, through baptism, we become Christians and are born to new life. While water is the vital element everywhere, and thus represents the shared access of all people to rebirth as Christians, the other three elements belong to the culture of the Mediterranean region. In other words, they point towards the concrete historical environment in which Christianity emerged. God acted in a clearly defined place on the earth, he truly made history with men. ...

Within these three elements there is a further gradation. Bread has to do with everyday life. It is the fundamental gift of life day by day. Wine has to do with feasting, with the fine things of creation, in which, at the same time, the joy of the redeemed finds particular expression.

Olive oil has a wide range of meaning. It is nourishment, it is medicine, it gives beauty, it prepares us for battle and it gives strength. Kings and priests are anointed with oil, which is thus a sign of dignity and responsibility, and likewise of the strength that comes from God.

Even the name that we bear as "Christians" contains the mystery of the oil. The word "Christians", in fact, by which Christ's disciples were known in the earliest days of Gentile Christianity, is derived from the word "Christ" (Acts 11:20-21) – the Greek translation of the word "Messiah", which means "anointed one". To be a Christian is to come from Christ, to belong to Christ, to the anointed one of God, to whom God granted kingship and priesthood. It means belonging to him whom God himself anointed – not with material oil, but with the One whom the oil represents: with his Holy Spirit. Olive oil is thus in a very particular way a symbol of the total compenetration of the man Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

In the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday, the holy oils are at the centre of the liturgical action. They are consecrated in the bishop's cathedral for the whole year. They thus serve also as an expression of the Church's unity, guaranteed by the episcopate, and they point to Christ, the true "shepherd and guardian" of our souls, as Saint Peter calls him (1 Pet 2:25). At the same time, they hold together the entire liturgical year, anchored in the mystery of Holy Thursday. Finally, they point to the Garden of Olives, the scene of Jesus' inner acceptance of his Passion.

Yet the Garden of Olives is also the place from which he ascended to the Father, and is therefore the place of redemption: God did not leave Jesus in death. Jesus lives for ever with the Father, and is therefore omnipresent, with us always. This double mystery of the Mount of Olives is also always "at work" within the Church's sacramental oil.

In four sacraments, oil is the sign of God's goodness reaching out to touch us: in baptism, in confirmation as the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, in the different grades of the sacrament of holy orders and finally in the anointing of the sick, in which oil is offered to us, so to speak, as God's medicine – as the medicine which now assures us of his goodness, offering us strength and consolation, yet at the same time points beyond the moment of the illness towards the definitive healing, the resurrection (cf. Jas 5:14).

Thus oil, in its different forms, accompanies us throughout our lives: beginning with the catechumenate and baptism, and continuing right up to the moment when we prepare to meet God, our Judge and Saviour.

Vatican.va

"I accept whatever He gives, and I give whatever He takes."

St Teresa of Calcutta

The Creed, and the Date of Easter

Pope Francis, Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 (n.17)

The coming Jubilee Year will also coincide with a significant date for all Christians, namely, *the 1700th anniversary of the celebration of the first great Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea.*

It is worth noting that, from apostolic times, bishops have gathered on various occasions in order to discuss doctrinal questions and disciplinary matters. In the first centuries of Christianity, synods frequently took place in both East and West, showing the importance of ensuring the unity of God's People and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. The Jubilee can serve as an important occasion for giving concrete expression to this form of synodality, which the Christian community today considers increasingly necessary for responding to the urgent need for evangelization. All the baptized, with their respective charisms and ministries, are co-responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God's presence in the world.

The Council of Nicaea sought to preserve the Church's unity, which was seriously threatened by the denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ and hence his consubstantiality with the Father. Some three hundred bishops took part, convoked at the behest of the Emperor Constantine; their first meeting took place in the Imperial Palace on 20 May 325. After various debates, by the grace of the Spirit they unanimously approved the Creed that we still recite each Sunday at the celebration of the Eucharist. The Council Fathers chose to begin that Creed by using for the first time the expression "We believe", as a sign that all the Churches were in communion and that all Christians professed the same faith. ...

At the same time, Nicaea represents a summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of fitting ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).

The Council of Nicaea also discussed the date of Easter. To this day, different approaches to this question prevent celebrating the fundamental event of our faith on the same day. Providentially, a common celebration will take place in the year 2025. May this serve as an appeal to all Christians, East and West, to take a decisive step forward towards unity around a common date for Easter. We do well to remind ourselves that many people, unaware of the controversies of the past, fail to understand how divisions in this regard can continue to exist.

Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals is a global movement that sets up school feeding projects in some of the world's poorest communities, where poverty and hunger prevent children from gaining an education.

Our idea is a simple one that works. We provide one daily meal in a place of learning to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that offers a way out of poverty. The average cost of feeding a child for a whole school year is just AU \$34.80 but we welcome donations of any size.

For over 20 years, we have been providing life-changing school feeding to some of the world's most vulnerable children. We currently feed over 2.6 million children every school day across the globe.

marysmeals.org.au

Quiz Answers

Catholic Stats Quiz on page 7

1. Africa 20%, Americas 47.8%, Asia ≈11%, Europe 20.4%, Oceania <1%.
2. Increased, by 1.15%
3. b. 1.406 billion
4. Democratic Republic of Congo, with almost 55 million Catholics; Nigeria is second, with 35 million.
5. Brazil, with 182 million Catholics (which is 13% of the world total).
6. a. Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay
7. c. Italy, Poland and Spain
8. b. 11 million
9. c. 93 million
10. a. 23 million

Source of statistics: Vatican News article of 20-03-2025, based on The *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2023 published by The Vatican Publishing House

Possible Pell Miracle

From an article by Tess Livingstone in The Australian, 27-03-2025

The miraculous recovery of an American baby boy who stopped breathing for 52 minutes after falling into a swimming pool is being credited by senior Catholic clergy to the intercession of the late cardinal George Pell. In a speech at Campion College near Parramatta on Wednesday night, Cardinal Pell's successor as Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher, said he received a report last week about a baby, Vincent, who had just been discharged from hospital in Phoenix, Arizona.

"He's 18 months old and fell into a swimming pool," Archbishop Fisher told the gathering. "He stopped breathing for 52 minutes. His parents prayed for the intercession of Cardinal Pell. The boy survived and came off life support free of any damage to brain or lungs or heart. He's fine now and his doctors are calling it a miracle." Vincent spent about 10 days in hospital and was discharged a few days ago. ...

Archbishop Fisher was speaking at the Australian launch of a new biography – George Cardinal Pell, Pax Invictis, published by Ignatius Press.

If the boy's recovery were to be cited in future as one of the two miracles necessary for canonisation in the Catholic Church, that process would not normally start until after January 2028. Consideration for canonisation normally begins at least five years after the subject's death. The long, complex process often takes decades or centuries. ...

theaustralian.com.au

Leave Your Jar at His Feet

Pope Francis, General Audience 26-03-2025

...To that Samaritan woman, to whom according to cultural precepts He should not even have spoken, He gives the highest revelation: He speaks to her of the Father, who is to be adored in spirit and truth. And when she, once again surprised, observes that on these things it is better to wait for the Messiah, He tells her: "I am he, the one who is speaking with you". It is like a declaration of love: the One you are waiting for is Me; the One who can finally respond to your desire to be loved.

At that point the woman runs to call the people of the village, because mission springs precisely from the experience of feeling loved. And what proclamation could she have brought, if not her experience of being understood, welcomed, forgiven? It is an image that should make us reflect on our search for new ways to evangelize.

Just like a person in love, the Samaritan forgets her water jar, leaving it at Jesus' feet. The weight of that jar on her head, every time she returned home, reminded her of her condition, her troubled life. But now the jar is left at Jesus' feet. The past is no longer a burden; she is reconciled. And it is like this for us too: to go and proclaim the Gospel, we first need to set down the burden of our history at the feet of the Lord, to consign to Him the weight of our past. Only reconciled people can bring the Gospel.

Dear brothers and dear sisters, let us not lose hope! Even if our history appears burdensome, complicated, perhaps even ruined to us, we always have the possibility of consigning it to God and setting out anew on our journey. God is merciful, and awaits us always!

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Life Worth Living

I read on the side of a Lifeline truck: "Crisis support. Suicide prevention". I couldn't help thinking of how 'assisted suicide' is now legal and increasingly accepted. The line in the sand must be whether someone else agrees with your perception that your life isn't worth living. Isn't that a terrible tragedy, that in the depths of your despair, wanting to end your own life, someone else could agree that you're actually making the right choice be willing to help you end your life.

Ed.

Lectio Divina

Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime, by Fr John Speakman (p.68)

There are not many undertakings in my life which have had as profound an effect as the practice of *lectio divina* (sacred reading).

Lectio divina (pronounced *lexio diveena*) is the practice of spending at least half an hour each day reading the Sacred Scriptures in a relaxed, systematic, attentive way.

[Now right at the start I'll get your attention big time by telling you the Church offers a Plenary Indulgence, under the usual conditions, to those who read the Scriptures for half an hour a day.]

Reading (*lectio*) is the first step in the process. This is an art in itself and very challenging. The Bible is a big book and its size can easily discourage us. Fortunately, in *lectio* we take it only a page or two, or even a paragraph, at a time. There is no rush to get the Bible finished. Each day we read only what can be 'processed' in the thirty minutes we have set ourselves.

Our aim is not to finish the Bible – our aim is to *read* the Bible for half an hour a day.

We start at the beginning with the Book of Genesis. We read a line or a few lines. We pause. Questions will come: *What does this word mean? When was this written? How does he know this?* To answer these questions we need to do some Bible study. *Lectio*, however, is not Bible study. The ultimate aim of *lectio* is to 'let the Bible study us', as someone else once said. In Bible study we get into the Bible. In *lectio divina* we let the Bible get into us.

We may find this distinction puzzling at first but it isn't really. We are so accustomed to taking the primary role in all our activities, so that *our activity* is our primary concern, that we find it disconcerting to be asked to do something so that we can be docile to the more important activity of the other, so that the Other may do something to us.

So much of our prayer is habitually directed to getting God to change his mind about something – our illness, our work, our family – that we can balk at a prayer whose intent is to allow God to change us.

Let me repeat – the main focus of our *activity* in *lectio divina* is to give God an opportunity to come to meet us, to let God have free access to our hearts and minds, a bit like the way we give access to the surgeon and his scalpel when we go to hospital.

Purgatory

Things Serious, Silly, and Sublime, by Fr John Speakman (p.67)

Fr Charles Arminjon in his book, End of the Present World and the Mysteries of the Future Life, proposes a particularly moving and salutary thought on Purgatory:

In the glow of those terrible flames, we shall realize the profound degree of evil contained in the faults we consider slight and unimportant.

Special Offers on Fr Speakman's Book!

Fr Speakman's book (see above) costs only \$15. It makes a perfect gift for family, friends, priests, parishioners, colleagues, neighbours, patients in hospitals, the housebound elderly, those in prison, the sick and the suffering, those who need hope and inspiration, those who need to see and hear and feel the presence of God in their lives. See if you can offer one to your local library or school library or to your hospital if they have a library, and we'll cover the costs. Ask your parish piety stall if they'll stock a few, and we'll give them a discount. They can contact me at stoneswillshout@bigpond.com for details.

Throughout 2025, all orders through ITD will be sent with **free postage!** No matter how many you order. Or where you are in the world. Let's just get the word out there! - Ed.

Eucharistic Adoration in Gippsland, Victoria

Bass	Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Bairnsdale	1 st Friday after 9.10am Mass
Heyfield	1 st Fridays 10am – 4.30pm
Cowwarr Ord.	Wednesday (Mass 10am) – 11am 1 st Saturday (Mass 10am) – 11am
Churchill	Saturday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Cranbourne	Fri & Sat in church: (9.30 Mass) – 11am
Drouin	Thursday 10am – 11am 1 st Friday 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Dec. on)
Lakes Entrance	Friday 9.30am – 11am
Maffra	Wednesday (5pm Mass) – 6pm
Moe	Wednesday (9am Mass) – 10.30am
Morwell	Friday 10am-11am (Sacred Heart Church)
Orbost	Wednesday (9.30am Mass) – 11am
Rosedale	First Wednesday 9.30am – 10.30am
Sale	Friday 10am - 11am Mass
Trafalgar	Wed & 1st Sat: (9.30am Mass) – 10.45am
Traralgon	Wednesday 11am – 12 noon
Warragul	Saturday 10am – 11am 1 st Fri 4pm–8pm (every 2 nd month, Jan. on)
Wonthaggi	2 nd Friday (9.30am Mass) – 10.30am

Alleluia!

Pope Benedict XVI, Urbi et Orbi address, Easter 2009

Resurrectio Domini, spes nostra! The resurrection of Christ is our hope!

This the Church proclaims today with joy.

She announces the hope that is now firm and invincible because God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. She communicates the hope that she carries in her heart and wishes to share with all people in every place, especially where Christians suffer persecution because of their faith and their commitment to justice and peace. She invokes the hope that can call forth the courage to do good, even when it costs, especially when it costs.

Today the Church sings “the day that the Lord has made”, and she summons people to joy.

Today the Church calls in prayer upon Mary, Star of Hope, asking her to guide humanity towards the safe haven of salvation which is the heart of Christ, the paschal Victim, the Lamb who has “redeemed the world”, the Innocent one who has “reconciled us sinners with the Father”.

To him, our victorious King, to him who is crucified and risen, we sing out with joy our *Alleluia!*

Vatican.va

Contact *Into the Deep*

www.stoneswillshout.com

stoneswillshout@bigpond.com

12 Vincent Road, Morwell, Vic, 3840, Australia

 find us on  facebook

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Editor: Janet Kingman

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ITD's bank details for **Direct Deposits:**

Account name: Janet Kingman

BSB: 013-745 (ANZ)

Account number: 2901-63632

The purpose of ITD is to provide a forum for those who:

- no longer have a voice in diocesan newspapers,
- wish to understand and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church,
- wish to support and defend those who are unjustly treated by Church bureaucrats and organisations,
- wish to campaign for the renewal of our Catholic schools,
- wish to promote Eucharistic adoration in all parishes,
- wish to have a means of support and contact for one another in remaining true to our Catholic faith.

Letters to the Editor:

Readers are encouraged to contribute letters. There is no guarantee that every letter will be published, and we reserve the right to edit letters. Name and contact details must accompany letters, however, if there is sufficient reason, anonymity will be preserved when publishing. Letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of ITD.

Mary, our Mother,

And Mother of the Redeemer,
Gate of heaven and Star of the sea,
Come to the aid of your people,
Who have sinned, yet also yearn to rise again!
Come to the Church's aid,
Enlighten your devoted children,
Strengthen the faithful throughout the world,
Let those who have drifted, hear your call,
And may they who live as prisoners of evil,
Be converted!

Pope John Paul II