

SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

A Monthly Miscellany

January 2023

Feast Days in January 2023

1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Solemnity)

{8th. Day in the Octave of Christmas}

Holy Day of Obligation

New Years Day

2

St. Basil the Great

St. Gregory Nazianzen

3

St. Genevieve

4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

5

St. John N. Neumann

6

Epiphany of the Lord

(Solemnity) Holy Day of Obligation (*Transferred to Epiphany Sunday in the US. Not a Holy Day of Obligation in the US*)

Bl. Andre Bessett

7

St. Raymond Penyafort

8

Epiphany Sunday (*In the US*)

[Latin Mass: **The Holy Family**]

St. Apollinaris of Hierapolis

9

The Baptism of the Lord

St. Adrian of Canterbury

Christmas Ends

10

Ordinary Time Starts [Ordinariate: Epiphanytide Starts]

(1st. Week of Ordinary Time)

St. William of Bourges

11

St. Theodosius the Cenobiarch

12

St. Bernard of Corleone

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (Canada)

13

[Latin Mass: The Baptism of the Lord | *Christmas Ends*]

St. Hilary of Poitiers

14

[Latin Mass: Epiphanytide Starts]

St. Sava

15

2nd. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: **2nd. Sunday after Epiphany**]

St. Ita

16

St. Berard of Carbio

17

St. Anthony the Abbot

18

St. Volusian

19

St. Canute IV

20

Bl. Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi

St. Fabian

St. Sebastian

21

St. Agnes

22

3rd. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: **3rd. Sunday after Epiphany**]

St. Vincent Pallotti

23

St. Ildephonsus

St. John the Almsgiver

24

St. Francis de Sales

25

Conversion of St. Paul

26

St. Timothy

St. Titus

27

St. Angela Merici

28

St. Thomas Aquinas

29

4th. Sunday of Ordinary Time

[Latin Mass & Ordinariate: **4th. Sunday after Epiphany**]

St. Gildas the Wise

30

St. Hyacintha of Marescotti

31

St. John Bosc

St. Elijah, Spiritual Father of the Carmelite Order

St. Elijah is the patron of the Carmelite Order



Giovanni Lanfranco (1582-1647), “Elijah Fed by the Ravens” (photo: Public Domain / Public Domain)

“As they [Elijah and Elisha] walked on still conversing, a fiery chariot and fiery horses came between the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.” —2 Kings 2:11

Elijah was a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel at a time when the Israelites were unsteady with their religious convictions and began worshipping the false god Baal. King Ahab of Israel had married Jezebel, a daughter of the king of Sidon, and she aggressively promoted the adoration of Baal among her husband’s people, forcefully coercing many to abandon their true beliefs. Elijah was deeply troubled over their weak resolve and worked hard to persuade the Israelites to turn their hearts back toward the one true God, the God of Abraham.

Elijah warned King Ahab of an upcoming drought, which transpired and thrust the Israelites into a time of great distress and famine. However, God protected Elijah by directing him to a stream and having some ravens deliver food to him each day.

Sadly, even after three years of national suffering, Ahab and Jezebel still clung fiercely to the empty worship of Baal. Elijah then challenged a contest between the God of Israel and Baal upon Mount Carmel. Four hundred Baal prophets pathetically tried to prompt their “god,” Baal, to bring fire down upon a sacrificed bull but were unable to. Elijah then astonishingly had his water-drenched holocaust immediately obliterated with fire from heaven upon calling out to the true God of the universe. He then slaughtered the Baal prophets.

Jezebel was infuriated and threatened Elijah’s life, forcing him into hiding. Elijah fled to Mount Horeb (same as Mount Sinai) and while hiding in a cave, God spoke to him through a soft whispering sound, giving him guidance and assuring the prophet that all would be okay.

Elijah later met up with Elisha, who left his family and began to accompany the prophet. One day, as the two men were walking along, Elijah miraculously split open the Jordan River. When they crossed to the other side, a chariot of flames suddenly appeared and swept Elijah up to heaven, whereupon the amazed Elisha took Elijah’s place as prophet. About nine centuries later, St. Luke’s Gospel called John the Baptist as one “in the spirit and power of Elijah.”

Nine Days with St. Elijah

St. Elijah is honored on July 20; he is the patron of the Carmelite Order and vehicle blessings. Below are some Bible passages to help you get to know better this great prophet and saint. Consider spending nine days with this holy man through these various passages, and during your novena of days, ask St. Elijah to pray for any special intentions you might have.

- Day 1) 1 Kings 17:1–16
- Day 2) 1 Kings 18:17–29
- Day 3) 1 Kings 18:30-46
- Day 4) 1 Kings 19: 1–12
- Day 5) 1 Kings 19: 19–21
- Day 6) 2 Kings 2:1-7
- Day 7) 2 Kings 2:8-15
- Day 8) Malachi 3:23
- Day 9) Luke 1:13-17
-



ELIJAH By J. Mulligan 1980

A replica of the Lampedusa cross planned to be erected at St Paul's, Harefield



The Lampedusa Cross

Work has begun to place a replica of the now famous Lampedusa Cross in the grounds of St Paul's in Harefield

What is the Lampedusa cross?

On a Mediterranean holiday, it is a pleasure to sit in the sun gazing out at the brightly painted boats of local fisherman. They suggest wellbeing, community and the welcome of a tasty meal. Here at the British Museum, the bright colours remaining on wood from such a boat made into a cross are tinged with sorrow.

This wood comes from a boat that caught fire and sank off the small Italian island of Lampedusa, not far from the Tunisian coast, on 11 October 2013. Its cargo was some 500 people seeking sanctuary in Europe. 311 of them lost their lives on that fateful night.

Throughout history, people have set out on dangerous but hopeful journeys, leaving their homes to escape war, genocide, persecution, climate change, poverty and famine. Some reach better lives, many perish. Nowadays, their stories appear as trails of sorrow across the media and generate vehement debate. The movement of thousands of people across land and sea brings change to both their original communities and to their destinations. Acquiring objects that would act as access points to this story is important for the Museum, but finding something amid the destitution that relates directly to these historical events and can speak to future generations is challenging. Early in 2015, a BBC World Service broadcast provided a lead.

Journalist Emma Jane Kirby returned to Lampedusa near the coast of North Africa to follow up on a news story about the October 2013 disaster that had grabbed world headlines because of the shocking loss of life. On her return visit, rather than telling of unscrupulous people smugglers, politics, and inadequate resources, Emma Jane focused on how the islanders rescued 155 people and, without waiting for authority or funding, compassionately fed and clothed them and buried those that had died, despite their own limited means. Among her interviewees was local carpenter Francesco Tuccio who met Eritrean and Somali survivors in his church. Moved by their desperate plight but with nothing but his carpentry skills to offer them, Francesco decided to make each person a small pendant cross using wood from the wreck. These were gladly accepted as tokens of welcome and compassion, reminders of the hope of new life amid the destruction. Earlier in the year, he had made a larger cross, chalice and plate for a penitential mass on the island led by Pope Francis. For me listening as a British Museum curator, the crosses were objects that could preserve the story, reveal its many aspects and demand attention.

The British Museum's Lampedusa Cross

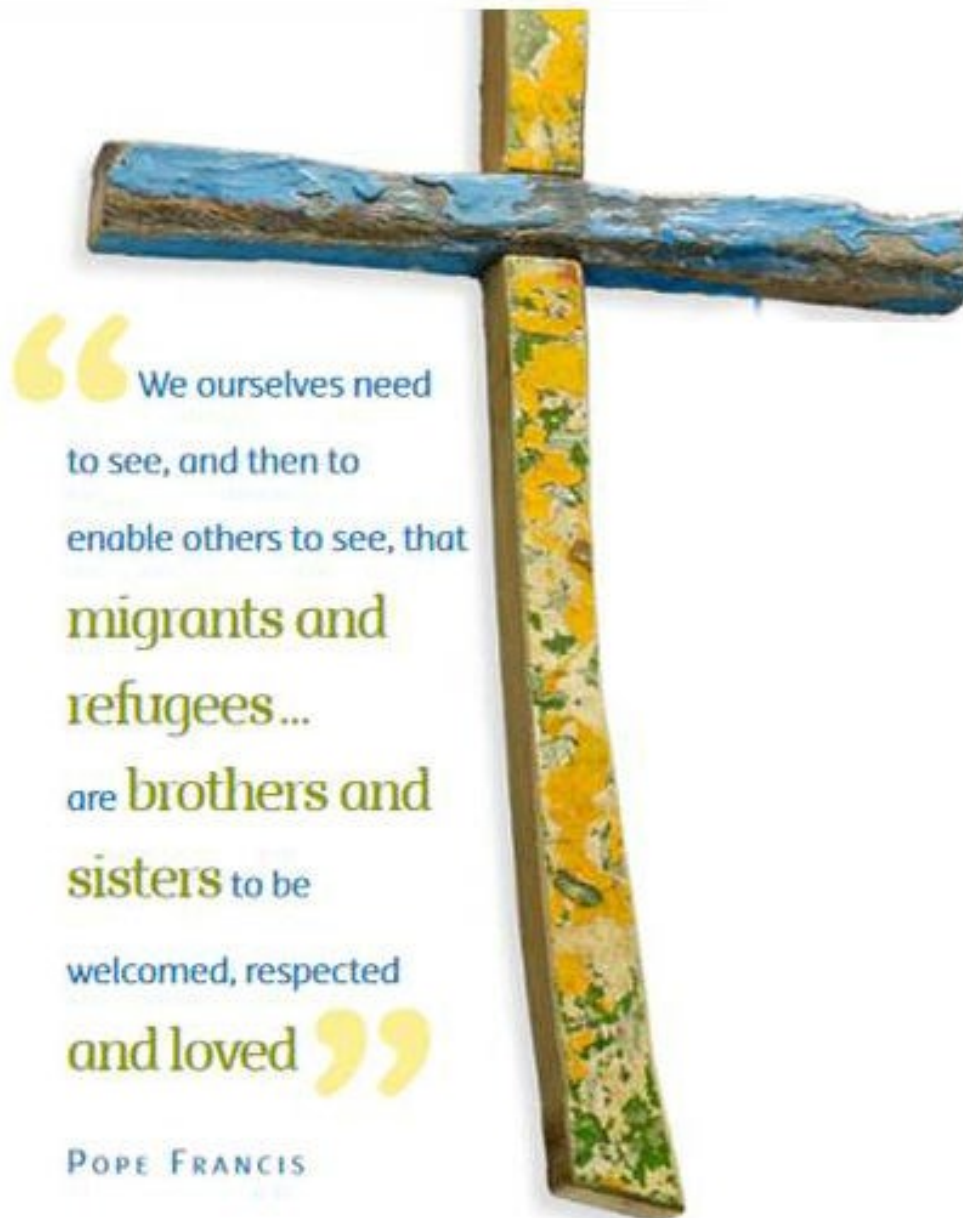
Finding and contacting Francesco among Lampedusa's small population was not difficult. He readily agreed to make a cross for the British Museum, saying he never expected such a commission, which was to be the first of many. While I was still trying to work out how to bring the work safely to London, Francesco simply popped it in the post knowing that once the cross arrived in the Museum, its status and agency would increase in significance and intensity. Although the cross is simply made by fitting two pieces of wood together with a standard carpenter's joint, Francesco realised that sending these crosses of upcycled wood to museums, churches and community organisations worldwide might help shake people from what Pope Francis called the 'globalisation of indifference'. They serve as a reminder of all the histories that are lost and of the thousands of people who are not otherwise commemorated, as well as a major moment in world history.

The boats

At the start of Refugee Week in 2016, the cross was loaned to St Paul's Cathedral where it stood its ground on the high altar beneath the great dome. At that time, I was working with Neil MacGregor on the radio series, books and exhibition *Living with gods* (Opens in new window). The story of the cross was brought into each of these elements, and with Francesco's permission, we displayed it with little boats made from upcycled bicycle mudguards packed with burnt matchstick people called *Dark Water, Burning World*, created by Syrian born artist Issam Koubraj in a collaborative response with poet Ruth Padel. These were Neil's choice for object 101 in the 2020 update of *A History of the World in 100 Objects*.

The cross was also chosen by playwright, cultural commentator and Trustee Patricia Cumper as the topic of her contribution to Director Hartwig Fischer's series of online conversations about objects of crisis during the Covid pandemic lockdown.

The Lampedusa Cross came to its first tour venue in Coventry Cathedral at the start of Coventry's UK City of Culture year, 2021. It was a poignant setting in the modern church, that stands next to the ruins of the medieval cathedral destroyed by bombing in 1940, where the charred remains of roof timbers that fell to form a cross stand witness to the agonies of war and where the clergy wear crosses based on roof nail crosses made from the ruins. The symbolism of Coventry's nail crosses, like that of Lampedusa is about reconciliation, taking responsibility, and trying to act for the dignity of all who share the world. At the Museum, it is also about thinking how best to represent diverse and developing communities, engaging with them to express how cultures mix and change in making the history of the world. The contribution of the museum's partners around the UK will help to develop such conversations and guide future transformations of the Museum.



“ We ourselves need
to see, and then to
enable others to see, that
migrants and
refugees...
are brothers and
sisters to be
welcomed, respected
and loved ”

POPE FRANCIS

The Layered Meaning of the Prodigal Son Parable

By Fr. Daniel Callam



In 1861, John William Burgon, the (Anglican) Dean of Chichester cathedral, preached a sermon in Christ Church cathedral, Oxford, that included the following statement:

THE BIBLE is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne! Every Book of it—every Chapter of it—every Verse of it—every word of it—every syllable of it— (where are we to stop?)—every letter of it—is the direct utterance of the Most High! . . . The Bible is none other than the Word of God: not some part of it, more, some part of it, less; but all alike, the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the Throne—absolute—faultless—unerring,—supreme![1]

What are we as Catholics to make of this typically Protestant statement? I, for one, find it extravagant, even naïve, but it is nevertheless essentially defensible as long as we recognize that Scripture has two authors: the human author who produced this or that book of the Bible and God who inspired and guided his writing. The traditional way of describing this theological fact is to say that Scripture has two senses, one which we call “the literal sense” and the other, “the spiritual sense.” The first of these, the literal, is concerned with historical fact, with the time and place of the author, with the ancient languages of the text, and so on. For instance, when David speaks of Jerusalem, he is referring to the actual city, as it was during his time, which was some 900 years before Christ. Biblical scholars are helpful here in investigating the cultural and religious settings of the reign of King David. But the spiritual, i.e., the fuller sense allows us to go more deeply into the text, in various and different ways. For “Jerusalem” can mean more than the historical city; it can also refer to the Church as the place where God meets his people. To push the point, this very building is a sort of Jerusalem where the sacrifice of the new law is offered at Mass, as the fulfilment of the animal sacrifices of the old law that were offered in the temple. But Jerusalem can also refer to the individual Christian as the dwelling place of God: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?”[2] Again, in the Apocalypse Jerusalem stand for heaven: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”[3]

Fathers of the Church, such as Saint Augustine, used this approach to the Bible freely. Suppose we were to imitate them this morning and apply their methods to the parable of the prodigal son, today’s Gospel.[4] First, what is its literal sense? That’s easy: the story is about forgiveness for the repentant sinner, the younger son. This message is exemplified by the father in the story and re-enforced by the passage with the older son. But now the fun begins, as we investigate the parable with the fuller sense, according to which, as we have seen with “Jerusalem,” the parable can be read in several ways. For we can interpret it with regard to Christ and his Church; but we can also apply it to the individual Christian, to each one of us; or, again, we can treat it as symbolic of the end of time. What happens when we read it, for instance, as symbolic of the Church? Let’s see. The parable opens with the words, “A man had two sons.” The man would be God, and the older son would represent the Jewish people who were “the first to hear the word of God.”[5] The younger son, therefore, must stand for non-Jews, i.e., the gentiles. He receives, we are told, a share of his father’s fortune. In our interpretation, that would correspond to a twofold boon that God has bestowed even on pagans: first a moral instinct, which they identified as conscience, and secondly intelligence, by which they recognized that the world had been created by God. The younger son dissipated this noble inheritance; that would indicate the decline in antiquity of religion into superstition, idolatry and sensuality. The famine in the land suggests a sterility of thought that became more and more incapable of directing and encouraging man to practice virtue. The parable states that the young man would have gladly eaten with the pigs, for the fact is that without God the rational human descends to the level of the irrational beast. His coming to his senses is the gradual recognition that something has gone horribly wrong with the human condition and that the remedy for it is to be found in his father’s house. As the younger son limps towards home, the father sees him from afar, indicative of the decision of the early Church to reach out to the gentiles by offering

them access to the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. How appropriate, then, is the son's speech: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." These words express a fact that all Christians accept, whether they are Protestant, Orthodox or Catholic, namely, that the grace of conversion is a gift that comes freely from God and which we could do nothing to deserve.

I hope your recollection of the parable is allowing you to follow this admittedly complicated interpretation of it, for every detail and be applied to some aspect of the Church. The fine robe brought out for the son, for instance, is a symbol of the beauty of the Church, "without spot or wrinkle," as Saint Paul says, and the ring placed on his finger is a sign of authority. The fatted calf slaughtered for the feast points to the riches of the Church's tradition, now made available to the new convert, and the feast itself surely is a reference to the Eucharist, the Mass that we are celebrating here and now. Then there's that mean older son—for whom, I suspect we all have a certain sympathy. His refusal to join in the festivities reminds us that many Jews refused the proclamation of the good news that Jesus has died and risen for us. The father's gentle rebuke and invitation highlight a common theme from the Old Testament, namely, that when the Messiah has come all the nations of the world will be invited to worship the one true God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that . . . all the nations shall flow to [the house of the Lord] . . . and say: "Come, let us go up . . . to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his way. . ."

This parable stops at this point, although we would all like to know something about their subsequent history. What would these sons have been like twenty or thirty years later? Well, the story is open-ended because we must complete it in our lives by thinking about it and by acting upon its message. As I mentioned earlier, this symbolic reading of this parable, like the city of Jerusalem, could be applied to the individual Christian and also final state of things, when Christ will have come again. I, however, have spoken long enough for this morning. Perhaps in three years, when this reading recurs, I shall be back in the pulpit to explore with you one of other interpretations of the prodigal son.

Footnotes

[1] J.W. Burgon, *Inspiration and Interpretation* (Oxford, 1861), p. 9.

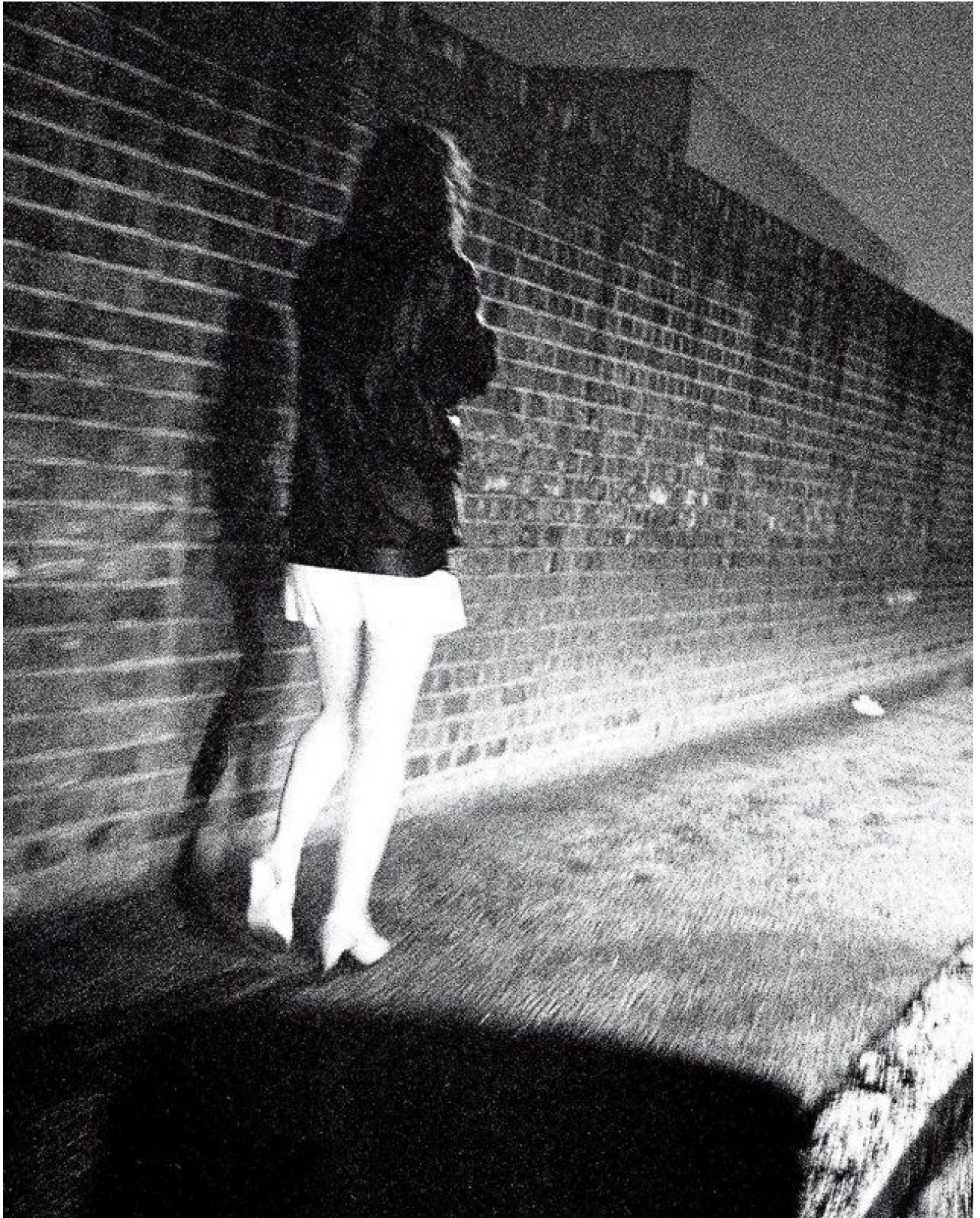
[2] 1 Cor 6.19.

[3] Rev 21.2.

[4] Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son can be found in his treatise *Quaestionum evangeliorum libri duo*, II.33 (PL XXXV, 1344-48).

[5] *Intercessions for Good Friday*.

Published in Catholic Insight magazine March 30, 2019



Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.

Matthew

21:31

Finding Christ in the Beggar

Finding Christ in the Chalice



If you cannot find Christ in the beggar at the church door, you will not find Him in the chalice.

- St. John Chrysostom.

The modern world is rife with utilitarianism, in all its aspects. This attitude even infects the way we think about people. This is contrary to the Gospel, but it is difficult not to fall down this particular pit, as it is so large and well disguised. As you do even to the least of these, you do to me. All are useful to Jesus, even the least. Our usefulness to the Kingdom of God goes beyond money, management skills, or speaking ability. It goes to the heart of being itself, to our individual humanity. To Christians there are no useless eaters, no Lebensunwertes Leben.

One way in which our utilitarianism can affect us is in our dealings with the needy. It is easy in our world to ignore the needy, thinking there are agencies whose job it is to deal with them, or that the problem is too big for our little aggregate drops in the bucket, or that the needy have created

their own problems and need to help themselves. We may even try to calculate how much of our taxes go toward the government agencies charged with care of the poor and reduce our charitable giving by that amount. If we do come to a realization that we need to help, there is another trap awaiting us: that of thinking that helping the needy is all about physical relief. While relief of misery is important, we can't eradicate it, only God can do that. This is why giving to agencies is inadequate both materially and spiritually.

Sell all you have and give to the poor. Jesus's advice to the rich young man was not necessarily about the needy. The original question was, "How can I get to heaven?" Jesus answers with the requirements of religion but adds something much greater at the end. If you would be perfect, sell all you have and give to the poor. He is no longer talking about getting by and squeaking through the narrow gate with clothing tattered; he is telling the rich young man how to be perfect. We concentrate on the result of the second part of this, but charity isn't about the poor "getting stuff," though that is a good thing; it is also about how lessening the burden of materialism changes us.

The widow gave from what little she had. When we give of our surplus it is good, but the widow giving all that she has is at the end of a transformation. Her very widowhood has put things in perspective. What does money mean to her when she has lost her precious husband? And somehow we know that if she hadn't had her mite to give, she would have poured herself out in prayer.

"When I give money to panhandlers it always seems to end up being used for drugs." "Always seems to," as if we are all-seeing and all-knowing. This is a common attitude, as if all poor people are the same and they all respond to a handout in the same way and they are all on drugs. Justice is easier than mercy, so people naturally seem to want justice before mercy, and hence we confuse rendering evil for evil with the spiritual work of mercy. We end up gloating over our moral superiority, like the Pharisee against the publican, as we think we are correcting a brother. But do we think of him as a brother? The lack of humility drives people away from the community, scattering the sheep. We don't save the world by our charity — the world has already been saved by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — but this is a time of testing our charity. And hospitality do not forget; for by this some, being not aware of it, have entertained angels. And these angels are the eyes of God, as explained in Genesis 18–19, when Abraham feeds angels, who then leave to investigate Sodom. We believe that there are angels who can interact with us. It adds another dimension to Jesus saying that whatever we do to the least of these we do to Him. And angels can certainly appear as "the least of these" to see how we respond, not that God doesn't already know, but to give us yet another chance.



Beggar Woman Rome

It is said in many different ways by many people: If any man will not work, neither will he eat. Paul was writing about those who were freeloading in the community of Christians. We have to decide inside ourselves when, if ever, are we called upon to violate God's law to stem the deterioration or demise of our culture. Can one person make such a difference by refusing to give alms that it overrides the imperative to help? Man invariably metes out injustice when he tries to distribute a certain measured amount of justice.

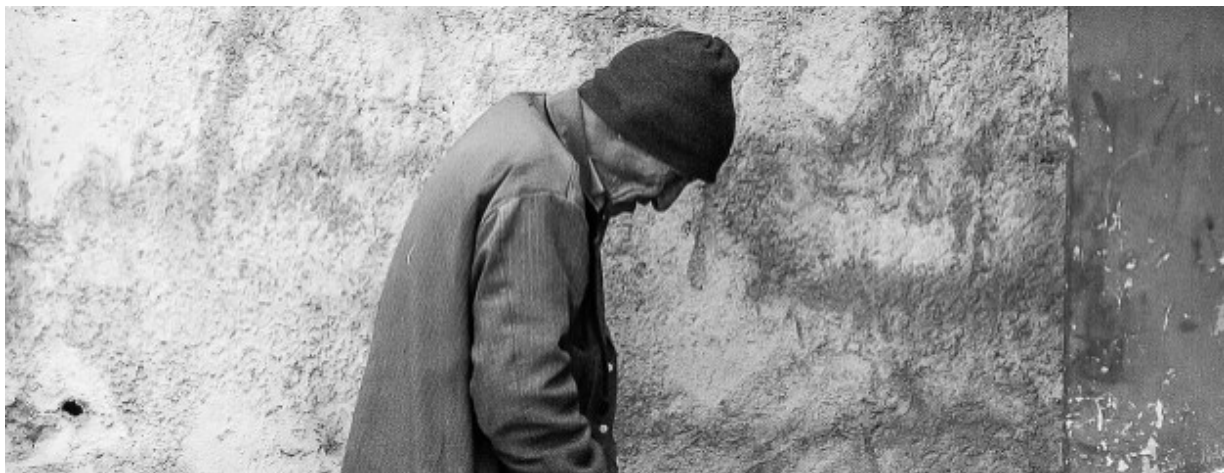
The poor will always be with you. Not only are the poor always with us, but they have always been the same. The poor of today are not different than previously. We can use this as an excuse to look the other way. And it is often easier to help today versus in a primitive culture in a desert, where resources fluctuated more in availability. The nature and causes of poverty are the same today as always, there just may be more possible causes in each general category, whether it be sickness, disability, addiction, or laziness. And today widows and orphans are better off in some places because of differences in physical and social infrastructures, such as the previously mentioned government agencies. There are modern changes in abundance of food, efficient distribution, and more and better housing.

The other protective covering that man has constructed between himself and God is rationality. It says: certainly man should be good, but everything within reason. He should be philanthropic — with moderation. He should consider the welfare of others — but of course with an eye to their deservingness and strictly within the boundaries of his own interests.

Are there undeserving poor to be distinguished from deserving poor? Or is this used as an excuse to look the other way? Oblation is a pouring out and we pour ourselves out in charity. We become the offering in the chalice. The poor also make an oblation, in ignorance, sickness, the inability to weather the vicissitudes of life.

Does God always provide? We certainly know of incidents when He has miraculously provided, perhaps even in our own lives, as in the incident of the widow's cruse. Eventually God provides but maybe not right now, not until Judgment Day. As things are set right finally on the last day, our degree of charity will weigh heavy on the balance. And those who have been the instruments of our testing will be rewarded at last for their faith.

Homiletic Review December 20, 2018 by Ann R. Morrill



The Shroud of Turin defies its sceptics

Even though it failed a carbon-dating test 40 years ago, new findings suggest that the scientists were wrong



David Rolfe, alongside a scan of the shroud, believes the fact the face is clearer in photo negatives raises questions about when it was created.

In April 2022 new tests on the Shroud of Turin — believed by many to be the burial cloth of Jesus Christ — dated it to the first century. This dating contradicted a 1980s carbon dating that suggested the Shroud was from the Middle Ages. Some people would have been surprised, but not anyone who had been following the build-up of evidence indicating the Shroud is authentic.

A total of four tests have now dated the Shroud to the first century. In addition, an immense body of other evidence suggests the cloth, which appears to carry an image of Jesus's crucified body, is genuine.

Experiment

Debate about the Shroud has been going on for centuries, provoking heated exchanges, revealing a tortuous trail of evidence full of unexpected twists and turns, and prompting more unanswerable questions than any other artefact in history. Only days before the new dating results were announced, one of the main players in the drama, British filmmaker David Rolfe, issued a million-dollar challenge to the British Museum to replicate the Shroud. The Museum oversaw the carbon tests on the Shroud and Rolfe explained: "They said it was knocked up by a medieval conman, and I say: 'Well, if he could do it, you must be able to do it as well. And if you can, there's a one-million-dollar donation for your funds.'"

Rolfe's challenge might have seemed like a stunt, but it was serious. He said if the museum accepted the challenge, he would place a million dollars in a legal holding account pending the outcome. You would think if anyone could copy the Shroud, the British Museum could. It certainly has the resources: around a thousand employees, including research scientists, links to major universities — and I'm sure the museum would not refuse outside help.

So, was Rolfe's bet risky?

Those familiar with the evidence would say no. Given all we now know about the Shroud of Turin, and the fact that no one has ever been able to copy it or even explain how it was made, Rolfe's million dollars appears safe. The reason he and so many others are convinced the burial cloth is genuine is that there is a mountain of evidence supporting that conclusion. One reason most people don't share this view is that they seem to know as little about the Shroud as they do about carbon dating. They are not aware that, contrary to the popular idea that the Shroud is a fake, it has become, in the words of a number of researchers, "the single most studied artefact in human history".

Solid science

The most recent verification of its authenticity came in April this year. A member of Italy's National Research Council, Dr Liberato de Caro, used a new X-ray technique designed specifically for dating linen. He used a method known as wide-angle X-ray scattering (WAXS), which he says is more reliable than carbon dating. He said this was because carbon dating can be dramatically wrong due to contamination of the thing being dated.

If you are one of those who know little about the Shroud, here are some basic details: It is a long strip of linen, covered in blood and carrying a faint image of the front and back of a dead man, apparently beaten and scourged, bleeding copiously from the scalp, and showing all the signs of Jesus's crucifixion, including a lance wound to the heart. It first appeared publicly in western Europe in 1355 when it was put on display in France. The owners refused to say where they got it — understandable, given that it was probably stolen. The Shroud's sudden appearance set off the fiery debate that continues to this day. You may know that many books and articles have already been written. Over the years, I have read many of them, but none offered what I was looking for — an up-to-date introduction to the subject that was accessible to non-academics. I couldn't find one, so I decided to write it myself.

Overwhelming data



Descent from the Cross Giulio Clovio (1498 to 1578)

Soon, I felt like this was a mistake. They say the worst thing you can do to journalists is to provide them with too much information, and the information on the Shroud is very close to being too much. To get an idea of how much information is involved, search for "Shroud of Turin" on [Google Scholar](#). You will get around 12,000 links.

Even a search on [academia.edu](#) turns up about 4,000 academic papers begging to be read. The oldest Shroud website, [shroud.com](#), has among its extensive resources, one comforting list of a mere 400 "essential" scientific papers and articles. But even this is a lot if you are already struggling to get through books, videos and papers from academic conferences, podcasts and documentaries going back decades.

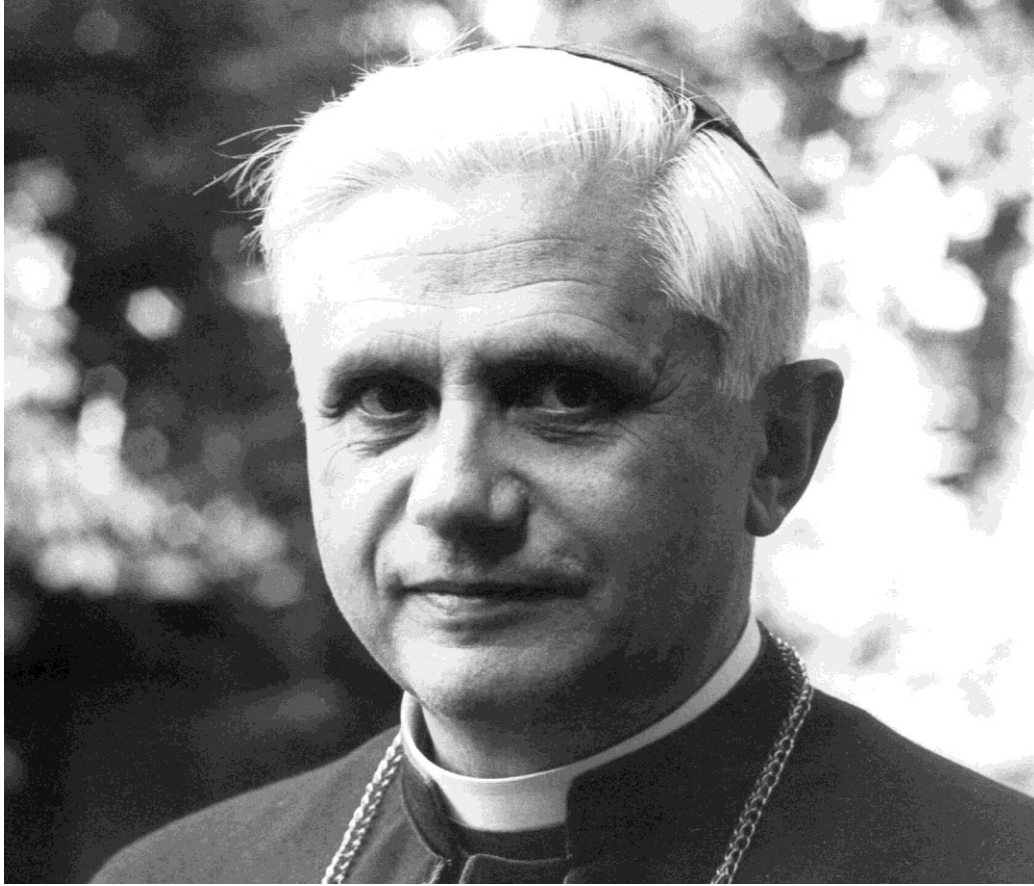
Most people, including myself (until recently), closed their minds to the Shroud when the 1988 carbon dating results were released. Those tests suggested the relatively high levels of carbon 14 on the cloth meant it came from around 1325 — give or take 65 years.

That sounds precise, but what most of us weren't told was that carbon dating had been wrong many times, sometimes by as much as a thousand or more years, due to contamination of the article being dated. In the case of the Shroud, there is a long list of reasons it could be contaminated, including the fact that it has been handled by countless people, exposed to fire, water, repairs, and other materials capable of causing contamination.

Most interesting of all, as indicated by a growing body of evidence, its carbon levels could have been raised by the radiation that appears to be the most likely cause of the image it carries.

So, even though many people still assume the carbon date was the end of the story, it may be just the beginning. If, like me, you take the time to review the evidence, it wears you down. These days, if anyone asks me if I *really* think "that Shroud thing" could be Jesus' burial cloth with his image on it, all I can say is: given the evidence, I can't think what else it could be. I am open to being talked out of this view, but so far nobody has managed to do it.

Whatever your own view, following the trail of evidence is possibly the most fascinating and rewarding journey you will ever undertake. This is partly because the case for the Shroud does not hinge on a single fact — certainly not on the radiocarbon date. It involves many interlocking facts — a big picture painted by intriguing details. My experience is that the Shroud asks more unanswerable questions than anything on the planet.



Farewell to Pope Benedict

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

One of the most consequential churchman of the last hundred years has died. Pope Benedict XVI (formerly Joseph Ratzinger) leaves a remarkable legacy in both the Church he served and in the wider society. Often pilloried by his opponents as a fire-breathing conservative, he was in fact one of the most balanced, nuanced, and stabilizing figures within the Catholic ambit.

The defining event of his life was the Second Vatican Council, the gathering of bishops and theologians from 1962 to 1965 that placed the Catholic Church in a renewed conversation with the contemporary world. Though only thirty-five when he was tapped to be theological advisor to one of the leading German cardinals, Ratzinger proved to be a consequential player at Vatican II, contributing to the composition of many of its major documents and explaining its teaching to the wider culture. At the council itself, he proved adversarial to those conservative forces who were resisting the renewal which the majority of bishops favored. One of the ironies of his life is that, in the wake of Vatican II, he found himself standing athwart progressives who wanted to push beyond the council documents and compromise the integrity of Catholicism. Thus, the “liberal” of the Council became the “conservative” of the post-conciliar years, even as, in his own judgment, his views never changed.

Someone of like mind was the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, who, upon being elected Pope John Paul II, chose Ratzinger to be his chief doctrinal officer. As head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Ratzinger spent twenty-five years articulating the teaching of Vatican II and defending it against its critics on both the left and the right. His election as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, following the death of John Paul II, was largely a function of his being perceived as a balanced man of the Council.

Pope Benedict said that Christianity is not an ideology or a philosophy, but rather a relationship to a person, to the living Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that Ratzinger, as priest, bishop, theologian, and pope, was a man of faith. But it is perhaps equally important to point out that he was one of the great defenders of reason on the world stage. At a time when many of the representatives of the secular culture were questioning our capacity to know anything as true, Ratzinger resisted what he termed “the dictatorship of relativism.” He claimed, in line with the great Catholic tradition, that certain truths—moral, intellectual, and aesthetic—can be known and that this knowledge in fact serves to unite people across religious and cultural divides. This was precisely the point of his controversial Regensburg Address in 2006. The Christian belief that Jesus is “*Logos*” or word effectively builds a bridge between Christianity and any religion, philosophy, or science that deals in truth and makes “logical” assertions. In line with this instinct, Ratzinger happily engaged some of the leading atheist and skeptical philosophers of his day.

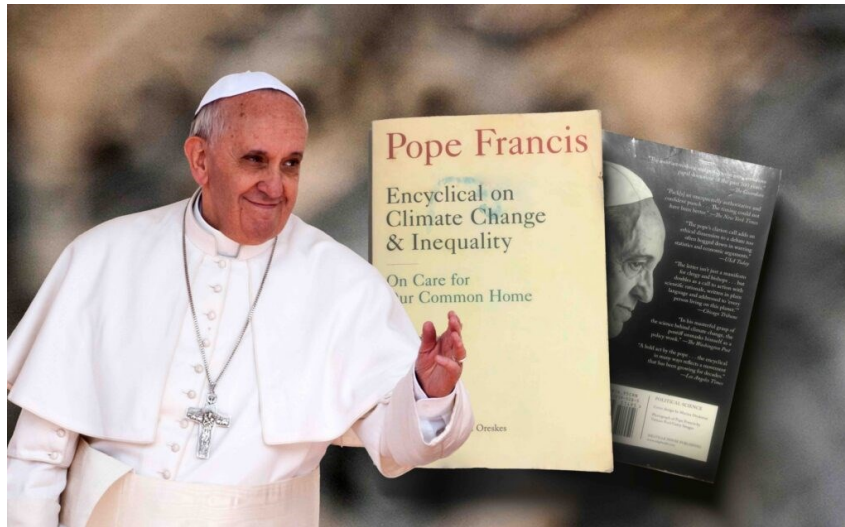
I alluded above to his reputation in some circles as *Panzerkardinal* (the tank-Cardinal), an uncompromising, even cruel, reactionary. Those who knew Joseph Ratzinger personally could only shake their heads at such a characterization. For he was, in fact, a gentle, very kind, soft-spoken academic, whose particular gift was the finding of common ground. The thousands of bishops who came to Rome for their *ad limina* visits during Ratzinger’s years as prefect were typically impressed by the man’s extraordinary capacity to listen to all perspectives and then to find an illuminating synthesis. His friends say that after a long day of work during the John Paul II years, Ratzinger most liked to visit one of the bookstores near the Vatican, find the latest book of theology, and make his way to a quiet corner of a nearby restaurant and dine alone (his favorite dish was *cacio e pepe*) while absorbing the text. I cannot help but think that the last ten years, spent in quiet retreat in the Vatican gardens, represented the way he really wanted to live all of his life.

When I was a visiting scholar in Rome in the spring of 2007, I made it a point to attend Pope Benedict’s Wednesday general audiences in St. Peter’s Square. Before a sizable crowd, the Pope would lecture on some aspect of the faith or on one of the great theologians of the Catholic tradition. His extraordinary learning, erudition, and command of languages were on clear display. But what always impressed me the most about him was his evident love for Christ. Pope Benedict said that Christianity is not an ideology or a philosophy, but rather a relationship to a person, to the living Jesus Christ. In his bearing, his gaze, the tone of his voice, and his manner, I could sense that he *believed* this, more to the point, that he lived it.

Thank you, Pope Benedict, for the thousand ways that you have blessed the Church. And may God grant you peace.

Laudato Si' summary

by [Christopher Rice](#) | May 5, 2022



Together we will revisit Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* to draw inspiration for the year ahead in preparation for the 8th anniversary of the letter on 24 May 2023.

But to be clear, the best way to fully understand *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis' teachings isn't by reading a *Laudato Si'* summary; it's by reading and studying the 184-page encyclical letter. To truly grasp Pope Francis' messages, you'll need to read *Laudato Si'* more than once. But it also can be helpful to review a *Laudato Si'* summary from time to time and remind yourself how Pope Francis, relying on thousands of years of Catholic teaching, calls on all of us to live out our faith by caring for our common home.

Below, [Laudato Si' Movement](#) has compiled a handful of helpful *Laudato Si'* summaries that, when put into action, will help you bring Pope Francis' encyclical to life in your community.

We're also sharing our own *Laudato Si'* summary about what is *Laudato Si'*, why this encyclical is so important, and how we can bring *Laudato Si'* to life.

Laudato Si' summary – What is *Laudato Si'*?

Laudato Si' is an encyclical of Pope Francis published in May 2015. It focuses on care for the natural environment and all people, as well as broader questions of the relationship between God, humans, and the Earth. The encyclical's subtitle, "Care for Our Common Home," reinforces these key themes.

An encyclical is a public letter from the Pope developing Catholic teaching on a topic often in light of current events. *Laudato Si'* is addressed to "every living person on this planet" (LS 3). Hence, it is offered as part of an ongoing dialogue within the Catholic Church and between Catholics and the wider world.

What does *Laudato Si'* mean?

The title of an encyclical is typically drawn from the first words of the document. That is, encyclicals do not receive a topical title, but are instead named by their opening phrase, often one suggestive of a major theme of the work.

The first words of *Laudato Si'* are Italian and translate as "praise be to you." They are part of a quotation from St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures" that opens the encyclical in which the saint praises God by meditating on the goodness of sun, wind, Earth, water, and other natural forces.

The choice of this passage to begin *Laudato Si'* is a reminder of how people of faith should not only respect the Earth but also praise and honor God through their engagement with creation.

Laudato Si' summary: What are the main sections of *Laudato Si'*?

Laudato Si' is divided into six chapters, each of which can be read in a sitting of 20 to 30 minutes.

"Chapter One: What is Happening to Our Common Home" summarizes the scope of current problems related to the environment. Issues discussed include pollution, climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, and global inequality.

"Chapter Two: The Gospel of Creation" draws on the Bible as a source of insight. The Genesis creation stories are interpreted as enjoining responsible cultivation and protection of nature. Past attempts to justify the absolute human domination of other species are "not a correct interpretation of the Bible" (LS 67). The natural world is further portrayed as a gift, a message, and a common inheritance of all people.

"Chapter Three: The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis" explores social trends and ideologies that have caused environmental problems. These include the unreflective use of technology, an impulse to manipulate and control nature, a view of humans as separate from the environment, narrowly-focused economic theories, and moral relativism.

"Chapter Four: Integral Ecology" presents the encyclical's main solution to ongoing social and environmental problems. Integral ecology affirms that humans are part of a broader world and calls for "comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within

natural systems themselves and with social systems” (LS 139). While the study of ecosystems has become well-known in the science of ecology, integral ecology expands this paradigm to consider the ethical and spiritual dimensions of how humans are meant to relate to each other and the natural world – drawing on culture, family, community, virtue, religion, and respect for the common good.

“Chapter Five: Lines of Approach and Action” applies the concept of integral ecology to political life. It calls for international agreements to protect the environment and assist low-income countries, new national and local policies, inclusive and transparent decision-making, and an economy ordered to the good of all.

Lastly, “Chapter Six: Ecological Education and Spirituality” concludes the encyclical with applications to personal life. It recommends a lifestyle focused less on consumerism and more on timeless, enduring values. It calls for environmental education, joy in one’s surroundings, civic love, reception of the sacraments, and an “ecological conversion” in which an encounter with Jesus leads to deeper communion with God, other people, and the world of nature.

How does *Laudato Si’* relate to past Catholic teaching?

Pope Francis is not the first pope to address environmental issues. Pope St. John Paul II taught on numerous occasions about a duty of stewardship toward nature. For example, in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II wrote about nature as a gift from God and the need for humans to cooperate with God in promoting the rightly ordered flourishing of the environment (CA 37). Further, *Centesimus Annus* outlined a connection between natural ecology and “human ecology” (CA 38), anticipating the concept of integral ecology in *Laudato Si’*. Pope Benedict echoed these same teachings during his papacy, for example, in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (see CV 48-52).

As outlined in *Laudato Si’*, its vision of an integrated approach to concern for all people and the environment has roots in Scripture and the history of Catholic thought, in particular in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, tracing back to the late 19th century. Further, Catholic scholars and activists have been outspoken on the connection between social and environmental issues for many years.

What is unique about *Laudato Si’* is how Pope Francis develops and expands on these themes at length in a highly prominent way, devoting an entire encyclical to the topic at a time when the wider world is also becoming actively engaged in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

What does *Laudato Si’* say about climate change?

Climate change is one of the most prominent topics associated with Laudato Si', both because the encyclical speaks in detail about the moral imperative to address it and because the threat of the climate crisis has grown only more severe since the encyclical's publication.

Laudato Si' affirms the "very solid scientific consensus" that climate change is occurring as well as the evidence that human activity is the primary driver of this warming (LS 23). Climate change is "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day" (LS 25). Further, the encyclical stresses that existing efforts to reduce climate change have been deeply inadequate. This is because "many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms" (LS 26).

In turn, several ways to address the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis are outlined. These include a drastic reduction in carbon emissions and those of other greenhouse gases, the development of renewable energy sources and related storage capacity, and a transition to energy efficient methods of production and transportation (LS 26). For example, a switch from coal and oil to solar and wind power would embody these recommendations. The increased protection of tropical forests is also discussed (LS 38-39).

What does Laudato Si' say about the poor?

One key theme of Laudato Si' is that efforts to reduce climate change and help people in poverty should not be pitted against each other, but instead pursued as a unified project. It would be wrong to cut emissions in a way that harms the marginalized in society or places an unmanageable burden on very poor countries. As the encyclical states, "We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (LS 139).

Low-income countries are expected to suffer the worst effects of climate change and need financial assistance in making the transition to sustainable practices (LS 25).

Accordingly, there is a duty for rich countries to take the lead in reducing their own emissions and in providing funds to developing countries seeking to do the same (LS 170-173). Laudato Si' also notes how climate change will cause a rise in the number of migrants leaving homes destroyed by environmental degradation and calls on people to welcome and support these environmental refugees (LS 25).

What is Laudato Si' asking people to do?

Chapter six of Laudato Si' outlines steps a person can take in the process of ecological conversion. These include prayer and contemplation, learning more about nature, observance of the Sabbath day of rest, and reduced participation in materialistic forms of consumer culture. A step as simple as giving thanks at mealtime (LS 227) can be a reminder of integral ecology and an individual's relation to God, nature, and other people.

Most Catholics have positive memories and experiences of nature but may not have connected these with their faith, so the advice in this section can be helpful in linking spirituality with environmental awareness.

In addition, Laudato Si' is clear that many environmental problems extend beyond individuals to broader economic and political systems. This is a fact that can be challenging to think about.

Even if every reader of the encyclical became environmentally engaged in their personal mindset and lifestyle, this would not be enough to stop problems like the climate crisis and pollution. That is because the main decisions impacting the availability of renewable energy and sustainable practices are not made by individuals, but by governments and large corporations.

Accordingly, it is important for people of faith to get involved in politics and work strategically for positive change. Some of this can happen at the local level through the formation of renewable energy cooperatives and similar initiatives (LS 179). Other work can be done through non-governmental advocacy groups, such as the Laudato Si' Movement. In addition, the encyclical calls on Catholics to enter the arena of national and international politics, pushing back against the incentive for leaders to prioritize short-term gains and instead advocating for policies that support the disadvantaged and advance the long-term common good (LS 178).

What does Laudato Si' predict for the future?

Laudato Si' describes a wide spectrum of possibilities for the coming century. It is bracing in its discussion of the threats facing humans and the environment.

Many of the problems surveyed would have been much easier to address 30 or 40 years ago and are now already causing widespread harm. However, the encyclical also offers hope – both in specific policies it recommends and in its promise of integral ecology a new, more fulfilling outlook on politics, the economy, and everyday life.

As the encyclical states, “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning” (LS 205).

For this reason, “although the post-industrial period [of the last few decades] may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities” (LS 165). We can also consider that ecological conversion is not a purely human process, but an encounter with God leading to a grace-filled change of heart and mind. It is this kind of experience which Laudato Si’ recommends as a way for people of faith to begin moving toward a better and more caring world.

How to get involved and more about what is Laudato Si’

- [Lead your community: Become a Laudato Si’ Animator](#)
- [What is an encyclical?](#)
- [When was Laudato Si’ written?](#)
- [Join a Laudato Si’ Movement Member Organization](#)
- [Laudato Si’: When did Pope Francis write the encyclical?](#)
- [Catholic Church and climate change: Why Catholics care about climate change](#)

More Laudato Si’ summaries:

- [Catholic Climate Covenant: Laudato Si’ Summary & Action Steps](#)
- [The Jesuit Post: An Overview of Laudato Si’](#)
- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Laudato Si’: On Care For Our Common Home](#)
- [CAFOD: Pope Francis’ encyclical: your questions answered on Laudato Si’](#)
- [America Magazine: Top 10 Takeaways from Laudato Si’](#)
- [St. Francis of Assisi in North Carolina, USA: Pope Francis – Laudato Si’ chapter summaries](#)

