

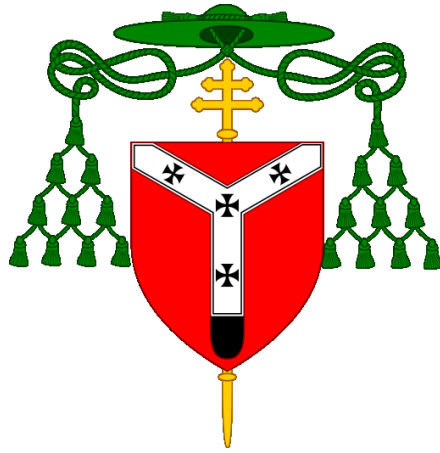
# SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

## *A Monthly Miscellany*



*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Romans 8:31-35



## St Paul's Harefield

*His eminence John Carmel, Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, has this day canonically erected the above parish of Harefield, and dedicated it to Saint Paul, Apostle of the nations.*

*5<sup>th</sup> April 1967*

**Parish Priest: Father James Mulligan**

2 Merle Avenue, Harefield

UB9 6DG

07809 398171 01895 822365

Email: [harefield@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:harefield@rcdow.org.uk)

Mass daily at 9.15am ... Sunday Vigil Mass: Saturday 6.30pm

Sunday Masses: ... 9.00am and 11.00am

Holy Hour Monday: ... 9.45am - 10.45am

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: ... Friday 8.30am, Saturday 8.30am

Rosary each weekday morning after Mass

Confessions: 6.00pm Saturday – or indeed any time that a priest is available

Online Morning Prayer: 8.00am

Online Night Prayer: 9.00pm

**Please note: St Paul's church is live-streamed 24 hours per day**

## SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD WELCOMES YOU

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, thinking of marriage, married, divorced, widowed, well-heeled or down at heel or down and out.

We especially welcome wailing babies and excited toddlers or bored teenagers.

We welcome you whether you can sing like Pavarotti or Maria Callas or Roy Orbison - or just mime (lip synch) or hum quietly to yourself.

You're welcome here if you're 'just browsing,' just woken up or just got out of bed the wrong side or just got out of prison. Whether a high flyer or a plodder.

You'll fit in here if you are a classical music aficionado or a punk rocker. You're welcome whether you are a cool dude or not, if you are an Elvis fan, a Johnny Cash fan, a Heavy Metal fan or (God forbid) a fan of Barclay James Harvest.

We don't care if you're more Christian than Pope Francis or Saint Mother Teresa, or haven't been to church since Christmas twenty-five years ago.

We extend a special welcome to those who have come only to scoff.

We welcome keep-fit mums, golf widows, football dads, joggers, bikers, starving artists, tree-huggers, line dancers, latte sippers, vegetarians, vegans, bumper sticker philosophers, existentialists, logical positivists and junk-food eaters.

We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted.

We welcome you if you're having problems, are down in the dumps or don't like 'organised religion' or have anger management issues.

We offer a welcome to those who believe in the Loch Ness Monster.

We welcome those who are tattooed, pierced, both or neither.

We offer a special welcome to those who took the wrong turning and wound up at Saint Paul's by mistake.

We welcome pilgrims, tourists, seekers, day-dreamers, doubters ... and you.

A Warm Welcome to you from Saint Paul's Harefield

# SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

## A Monthly Miscellany

November 2023

The entire month of November falls during the liturgical season known as *Tempus per Annum* or **Ordinary Time** (formerly *Time After Pentecost*), which is represented by the liturgical colour green. Green is a symbol of hope, as it is the colour of the sprouting seed and arouses in the faithful the hope of reaping the eternal harvest of heaven, especially the hope of a glorious resurrection. The liturgical colour green is worn during the praying of Offices and celebration of Masses of Ordinary Time. The last portion of the liturgical year represents the time of our pilgrimage to heaven during which we hope for reward.

### The Holy Father's Intentions for the Month of November 2023

**For the Pope:** We pray for the Holy Father; as he fulfils his mission, may he continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit. (See also <http://www.popesprayerusa.net/>)

### Feast Days for November 2023

1. **ALL SAINTS**, Solemnity
2. **ALL SOULS**, Commem.
3. *Martin de Porres*, Opt. Mem.
4. *Charles Borromeo*, Memorial
5. **THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**, Sunday
9. **Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**, Feast
10. *Leo the Great*, Memorial
11. *Martin of Tours; Veterans Day (USA)*, Memorial
12. **THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**, Sunday
13. *Frances Xavier Cabrini*, Memorial
15. *Albert the Great*, Opt. Mem.
16. *Margaret of Scotland; Gertrude*, Opt. Mem.
17. *Elizabeth of Hungary*, Memorial
18. *Basilicas of Peter and Paul; Rose Philippine Duchesne (USA)*, Opt. Mem.
19. **THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**, Sunday
21. *Presentation of Mary*, Memorial
22. *Cecilia*, Memorial
23. *Clement I; Columban; Bl. Miguel Agustín Pro (USA); Thanksgiving Day (USA)*, Opt. Mem.
24. *Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions*, Memorial
25. *Catherine of Alexandria*, Opt. Mem.
26. **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE**, Solemnity
30. **Andrew, Apostle**, Feast

# ALL SAINTS DAY

NOVEMBER 1ST



**All Saints' Day is a solemn holy day of the Catholic Church celebrated annually on November 1. The day is dedicated to the saints of the Church, that is, all those who have attained heaven. It should not be confused with All Souls' Day, which is observed on November 2, and is dedicated to those who have died and not yet reached heaven.**

**Although millions, or even billions of people may already be saints, All Saints' Day observances tend to focus on known saints --that is those recognized in the canon of the saints by the Catholic Church.**

**All Saints' Day is also commemorated by members of the Eastern Orthodox Church as well as some protestant churches, such as Lutheran and Anglican churches.**

**Generally, All Saints' Day is a Catholic Holy Day of Obligation, meaning all Catholics are required to attend Mass on that day, unless they have an excellent excuse, such as serious illness.**

**Other countries have different rules according to their national bishop's conferences. The bishops of each conference have the authority to amend the rules surrounding the obligation of the day.**

**All Saints' Day was formally started by Pope Boniface IV, who consecrated the Pantheon at Rome to the Virgin Mary and all the Martyrs on May 13 in 609 AD. Boniface IV also established All Souls' Day, which follows All Saints.**

# ALL SOULS DAY 2<sup>nd</sup> November

## How World War I influenced the celebration of All Souls Day



*The numerous casualties of the "Great War" had a direct impact on how priests celebrated Mass on November 2.*

While All Souls Day dates back to the 10th century, one major aspect of its celebration was introduced during World War I.

According to Fr. William Saunders in an article for [Catholic Exchange](#), “During World War I, Pope Benedict XV, recognizing the number of [casualties] and the numerous Masses that could not be fulfilled because of destroyed Churches, granted all priests the privilege of offering three Masses on All Souls Day: one for the particular intention, one for all of the faithful departed and one for the intentions of the Holy Father.”

### **Horrors of war**

Pope Benedict XV made this change on August 10, 1915, in a papal bull entitled *Incruentum altaris*. This was shortly after Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary and after the first Zeppelin raid on London. It was early on in the war, but already there were many casualties and there was no end in sight. Looking forward to November 2, Benedict XV knew he had to do something to pray for all the newly deceased.

*Mercy touches us today in a greater way when, because of the very terrible fires of war that have lit up in almost all of Europe, we have before Our eyes so much youth that dies prematurely in battle. Even if the mercy of their relatives to support their souls will not fail, yet will it be enough to provide for their needs? Since, by divine will, we have become the common Father of all, therefore, invoking the light of heavenly Wisdom, after consulting ... members of the Sacred Congregations on the discipline of the Sacraments and of the Sacred Rites, we establish in perpetuity the following:*

*On the day of the solemn commemoration of all the faithful departed, throughout the Church it is permissible for priests to celebrate three Masses, on condition that one of the three be applied freely ... the second Mass ... is dedicated to all the faithful departed; the third is to be celebrated according to the intention of the Supreme Pontiff, as stated above.*

Another one of the reasons why Benedict XV wanted to establish this tradition was to reignite among the faithful the desire to pray for the holy souls in purgatory. Prior to this he had seen fewer and fewer Masses offered for these suffering souls and hoped priests would respond to the call and help these souls in need.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, “[E]very sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory” (CCC 1472). It is believed that our prayers here on earth, especially through the most perfect prayer of the Mass, can help shorten that time spent in purgatory and give spiritual aid to those souls. It is one of the many mysteries of the Catholic Church, confirmed in the teachings of Jesus and other places of the Bible.

What Benedict XV allowed in 1915 remains in effect today, and this is why in some parishes you will see three separate Masses celebrated on November 2.

## St Paul's Additional Prayer Programme



**St Paul's parish adds an additional prayer programme. Each first Friday of the month, an evening programme consisting of 5.30pm Rosary, 6.00pm Mass and 6.30 – 7.30pm Holy Hour, will take place.**

**All welcome**



# Pope closes Synod with Mass

*Full text of homily*



*To adore and to serve. We love God through adoration and service.*

Highlighting the “conversation of the Spirit” experienced at the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis presided over the closing Mass of the month-long gathering. In his homily he recalled how the Synod participants

**“experienced the loving presence of the Lord and discovered the beauty of fraternity.”**

**The Sunday morning celebration on October 29 in St. Peter’s Basilica marked the culmination of this first session of the Synod on Synodality looking at communion, participation, and mission. The next session will take place in October 2024.**

**Here is the text of the Pope’s homily:**

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**A doctor of the Law comes to Jesus under a pretext, in order to test him. The question he asks, however, is an important and enduring one that, at times, arises in our own hearts and in the life of the Church: “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Mt 22:36). We too, immersed in the living stream of Tradition, can ask: “What is the most important thing? What is the driving force?” What matters so much as to be the guiding principle of everything? Jesus’ answer is clear: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37-39).**

**Brother Cardinals, Bishops and priests, men and women Religious, dear brothers and sisters, at the conclusion of this stage of our journey, it is important to look at the “principle and foundation” from which everything begins ever anew: by loving. Loving God with our whole life and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Not our strategies, our human calculations, the ways of the world, but love of God and neighbour: that is the heart of everything. And how do we channel this momentum of love? I would propose two verbs, two movements of the heart, on which I would like to reflect: *to adore* and *to serve*. We love God through adoration and service.**

**The first verb, adore. *To love is to adore*. Adoration is the first response we can offer to God’s gratuitous and astonishing love. The amazement of adoration, the wonder of worship, is something essential in the life of the Church, especially in our own day in which we have abandoned the practice of adoration. To adore God means to acknowledge in faith that he alone is Lord and that our individual lives, the Church’s pilgrim way and the ultimate outcome of history all depend on the tenderness of his love. He gives meaning to our lives.**

**In worshipping God, we rediscover that we are free. That is why the Scriptures frequently associate love of the Lord with the fight against every form of idolatry. Those who worship God reject idols because whereas God liberates, idols enslave.**

**Idols deceive us and never bring to pass what they promise, because they are “the work of men’s hands” (Ps 115:4). Scripture is unbending with regard to idolatry, because idols are made and manipulated by men, while God, the Living God, is present and transcendent; he is the one “who is not what I imagine him to be, who does not depend on what I expect from him and who can thus upset my expectations, precisely because he is alive. The proof that we do not always have the right idea about God is that at times we are disappointed: We think: ‘I expected one thing, I imagined that God would behave like this, and instead I was wrong’. But in this way, we turn back to the path of idolatry, wanting the Lord to act according to the image we have of him” (C.M. Martini, *I grandi della Bibbia. Esercizi spirituali con l’Antico Testamento*, Florence, 2022, 826-827). We are always at risk of thinking that we can “control God”, that we can confine his love to our own agenda. Instead, the way he acts is always unpredictable, it transcends our thinking, and God’s way of acting consequently demands amazement and adoration. Amazement is very important!**

**We must constantly struggle against all types of idolatry; not only the worldly kinds, which often stem from vainglory, such as lust for success, self-centredness, greed for money – let us not forget that the devil enters “through the pockets”, the enticements of careerism; but also those forms of idolatry disguised as spirituality – my own spirituality: my own religious ideas, my own pastoral skills... Let us be vigilant, lest we find that we are putting ourselves at the centre rather than him. And let us return to worship. May worship be central for those of us who are pastors: let us devote time every day to intimacy with Jesus the Good Shepherd, adoring him in the tabernacle. May the Church adore: in every diocese, in every parish, in every community, let us adore the Lord! Only in this way will we turn to Jesus and not to ourselves. For only through silent adoration will the Word of God live in our words; only in his presence will we be purified, transformed and renewed by the fire of his Spirit. Brothers and sisters, let us adore the Lord Jesus!**

**The second verb is to serve. *To love is to serve*. In the great commandment, Christ binds God and neighbour together so that they will never be disconnected. There can be no true religious experience that is deaf to the cry of the world. There is no love of God without care and concern for our neighbour; otherwise, we risk becoming pharisaic. We may have plenty of good ideas on how to reform the Church, but let us remember: to adore God and to love our brothers and sisters with his love, *that is the great and perennial reform. To be a *worshiping Church* and a *Church of service*, washing the feet of wounded humanity,***

accompanying those who are frail, weak and cast aside, going out lovingly to encounter the poor. We heard in the first reading how God commanded this.

Brothers and sisters, I think of the victims of the atrocities of war; the sufferings of migrants, the hidden pain of those who are living alone and in poverty; those who are crushed by the burdens of life; those who have no more tears to shed, those who have no voice. And I think too of how often, behind fine words and attractive promises, people are exploited or nothing is done to prevent that from happening. It is a grave sin to exploit the vulnerable, a grave sin that corrodes fraternity and devastates society. As disciples of Jesus, we desire to bring to the world a different type of leaven, that of the Gospel. To put God in first place and, together with him, those whom he especially loves: the poor and the weak.

This, brothers and sisters, is the Church we are called to “dream”: a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters. A Church that never demands an attestation of “good behaviour,” but welcomes, serves, loves and forgives. A Church with open doors that is a *haven of mercy*. “The merciful man”, said John Chrysostom, “is as a harbour to those who are in need; and the harbour receives all who are escaping shipwreck, and frees them from danger, whether they be evil or good; whatsoever kind of men they be that are in peril, it receives them into its shelter. You also, when you see a man suffering shipwreck on land through poverty, do not sit in judgment on him, nor require explanations, but relieve his distress.” (*In pauperem Lazarum*, II, 5).

Brothers and sisters, the General Assembly of the Synod has now concluded. In this “conversation of the Spirit,” we have experienced the loving presence of the Lord and discovered the beauty of fraternity. We have listened to one another and above all, in the rich variety of our backgrounds and concerns, we have listened to the Holy Spirit. Today we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with farsightedness we look to the horizon opening up before us. The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel.

Brothers and sisters, I thank you for all that you have done during the Synod and for all you continue to do. Thank you for the journey we have made together, for your listening and your dialogue. In expressing my gratitude, I would also like to offer a prayer for all of us: may we grow in our worship of God and in our service to our neighbour. To adore and to serve. May the Lord accompany us. Let us go forward with joy!

# Prayer and solitude:

*The truest way to be together with others*



***Solitude is the conscious decision to be apart for a while in order to be together in the most authentic way.***

The 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal in his *Pensées* famously stated: “I have discovered that all the unhappiness of people arises from one single fact: that they cannot stay quietly in their own room.” Solitude can be daunting, even terrifying ... especially the solitude without Christ: “Without Christ, solitude does not signify to be alone, but the absence of meaning” (L. Giussani).

But the solitude that Jesus asks of us — *When you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father (Mt 6:6)* — is the exact opposite because he is there with us in our temporary solitariness. We place ourselves in the solitude of prayer precisely to *discover* the meaning with which God desires to invest our life. “It is in silence and solitude that one rediscovers oneself, rediscovers the truth about oneself, and it’s through this truth that one gains access to that of others” (G. Bernanos). But how can busy people, enmeshed in the affairs and preoccupations of daily life, withdraw to a place of solitude? It does not mean becoming a hermit or following the desert fathers and mothers out into the wilderness. Solitude is the conscious decision to be apart for a while *in order to be together* in the most authentic way. Madeleine Delbrêl, Servant of God, reflected much on this:

*It would seem that this solitude is something that those who live among the people of the world have to forego. True solitude is not the absence of people, but the presence of God. To place our lives before the face of God, to surrender our lives to the movements of God, is to roam free in a space in which we have been given solitude. If the eruption of God’s presence in us occurs in silence and solitude, it allows us to remain thrown among, mixed up with, radically joined to all of the people who are made of the same clay as we are.*

And once we return to the mix, after having been apart for a given time to pray in private, we in turn become a kind of leaven for those in our community.

*If we imagine, in our solitude, a life in perfect harmony with ourselves, with the universe, and with all people, it is our return to the world which, by a sort of paradox, gives reality to this solitude and enables it to bear fruit (L. Lavelle).*

We each of us know that we possess a kind of solitude that “encloses something of our essential person” (M. Delbrêl). Even Adam knew it in his longing for Eve. We cherish this essential solitude, which keeps leading us back to the loving Presence of God. “God is the only friend who does not abolish essential solitude. He is the friend, rather, in whom solitude as such becomes fulfilled” (Von Balthasar).

# **The Gift': New life-affirming graphic novel engages children**



**A new graphic novel is offering parents, teachers, youth group leaders, and pastors an altogether unique way to relate a life-affirming message to pre-teens and teens while equipping them to think critically about their life choices. Titled *The Gift*, this 36-page full-colour graphic novel is a gripping tale dramatized by using realistic elements that show the struggles of adolescent pregnancy and the real-life choices that such an occurrence will require.**

**The story follows the lives of Josh and Casey, two high school students who began dating after growing up as childhood friends. To celebrate Josh's birthday, Casey decides that her "gift" will be to share their first sexual experience together. However, neither of them consider that contraception might fail. Soon after, Casey reveals that she is pregnant and that's when *The Gift* really begins.**

After that fateful night the story, much like the lives of the two protagonists, completely changes. *The Gift* becomes a “choose-your-own-adventure” story, in which readers can decide if Josh and Casey will choose abortion, adoption, or parenthood. Each path will lead readers down a realistic and emotional scenario that shows the consequences of their choices and the possible futures where they may lead.

Produced by LifeCanada National – a life-affirming association that promotes, protects, and advocates for human life at all stages – in partnership with Voyage Comics, *The Gift* is designed to get kids thinking about their choices and the real life repercussions. Complete with high quality art and a guide to group discussion, this graphic novel has enormous value as a teaching resource.

Aleteia had a chance to interview Pat Wiedemer, Executive Director of LifeCanada National, who spoke to us about the choices that went into *The Gift*:

LifeCanada National is a life-affirming charity that promotes pro-life values and educates on pro-life issues. How will this new graphic novel fit into your works?

**Wiedemer:** The effort to reach the next generation with the message of life is a challenge that requires ingenuity and utmost creativity to counter the extreme force of the anti-life trends of our day. After reviewing many of the more familiar methods of the pro-life movement, we had to admit that they were not having the impact we hoped: neither from the point of view of educating the youth nor from the point of growing in support for the movement.

To offer a new insight, we wrote a story that reflects the actual choices youth have concerning an unplanned pregnancy and we coupled it with the option of choice for the ending. What’s more we insisted on superior graphics so it can compete with the top-of-the-line graphic novels on the market. The idea of writing a graphic novel is totally different from what has been done to reach the next generation, but the graphic novel is the primary method of how youth read. If you want to enter their world, either one must use video as the tool, or the graphic novel.



***The Gift* is the first in our proposed series of Life Choices dealing with life and death decisions facing our youth: stories that make the reader think about the truth, value and dignity of all life.**

**The purpose of this life-affirming series is:**

- to offer youth high quality resources that challenge them to understand these very sensitive topics,
- to reach parents and youth organizations with a resource that is easy for them to discuss these issues with their youth, and
- to break free of many old-school approaches within the pro-life movement.

***The Gift* is presented as a “choose your own adventure” story. What led to this decision and how do you feel this style helps to relay the message of the book?**

**Wiedemer: Choice is the mantra of today’s gen and we are claiming back this word by truthfully showing all the choices, and emphasizing the fact that they are clearly not all equal. It is true whether we like it or not, that a young couple has three choices: abortion, adoption, or keeping the baby. Sadly, abortion seems to be the only one the public, media, or “sages of our postmodern age” put forth.**

**We also felt it was important to present the story [in such a way] that the reader has the power to choose the ending — which reflects the truth of such a crisis. What the youth of today are lacking is the presentation of fullness of each choice and what it, in truth, means, not only for the baby, but for them and their relationship with others. Of course, the reader will read each choice in this format, and this offers the comparison and chance for them to reflect and absorb the reality of each choice. We hope to empower them with knowledge before a crisis actually breaks out for them or for their friends. So to speak, we are installing a smoke detector before the fire brigade needs to be called!**

**I might add that we did not want to be old-school moralistic with this topic and teach from a top-down method. We dignify our youth when we present in an intelligent manner that teaches them to reflect and balance their choices in light of truth and life within their lived experience.**

**We hope this will allow them to be open in discussion with parents, youth leaders, and pastors and priests. Although abortion is a real option, it is not a life-affirming option, and a human life is taken. Out of**

**this I would hope a skilled leader would be able to challenge the youth, whether we can call any choice “good” if we know someone is harmed or even dies?**

**For example, every child knows that each one gets one piece of pizza at a party. After each has had one, you may go for seconds. No one may take four just because he or she is bigger, hungrier, or in a hurry. All understand that such behavior would be wrong. Obviously circumstances do not dictate the truth of an action. This is a simple example in the youth’s world where they already know there are some lines we do not cross. We already behave according to this moral rule of absolutes. Now, how much more should we realize this, when we speak of the life of another person.**

**This is one way of teaching the truth that we know must be observed for humanity to live well. Ending the life of someone must never be acted on. Legality or opportunity does not change this truth.**

**There was no option for abstinence. Is it unrealistic to expect high school aged kids to choose to abstain?**

**Wiedemer: Certainly, we can expect kids to abstain. I believe there are some positive statistics that are showing a trend toward abstinence. This is largely due to several groups who have this aspect of life as their educational mandate. I do, however, caution about underestimating the power of the “other side.” Nothing is ever “unthinkable” because of man’s fallen nature.**

**For over 60 years western society has been pushing for radical sexual freedom and “reproductive rights” to an unprecedented degree. It is all encompassing in every aspect of our lives. If we expect that kids are going to say no to the reigning theory of happiness in our world, namely blatant, overt, and constant sexual activity, we must present a convincing alternative as to why this is not true.**

**Reason and logic must be brought to the table in a way they can grasp so that what we know to be true also makes sense to the youth. Preparing the environment, the friends, and families of youth, to speak life either by uplifting abstinence and the virtue of chastity or by directly preventing an abortion is essential for accountability and is vital to the one in crisis.**

**This wisdom needs to come primarily from the parents and from those whose task it is to teach about physical, moral, and spiritual development to youth. This needs to be offered in a fashion that exemplifies why everyone is better off when we place this gift of human love in marriage and why it is healthy and good for everyone, women, men, children, and the whole civilization, when lived within marriage.**

**Our story here is about what happens after the fact. It would be an excellent idea to approach the value of abstinence, the virtue of chastity and the role of human sexuality in this format as well. It deserves its own story though.**

**After the story, *The Gift* provides readers with questions to facilitate discussion. What is the best way to utilize this resource?**

**Wiedemer: We wrote the story with many types of youth, denominations, and viewpoints in mind. I would hope that a leader would read the story together, get an assessment where these kids are at, and open the floor for discussion, guiding them to a deeper and fuller appreciation of and for life. Each segment encourages reflection on the individual choice. Was it the right one, how can we know, what were the consequences? What could have been different?**

**One particular question I would like a leader to review with the readers is, was Casey's gift the right one? Did the couple understand what they were even giving? The love of Josh and Casey is beautiful, but because of their age, this gift of self is not yet theirs to give. They are not prepared for the consequences. Their timing is off! If they were just five years older, we would celebrate a wedding and birth announcements.**

**We wrote from a clear Christian worldview, but left it broad enough so that the leadership could teach according to the specific tenets of their faith. Each denomination sees relationships and sexuality a little differently, so we kept the field open so that the Catholic, Baptist, or secular person can introduce how their faith responds to these issues.**

**One touching scene is when Casey is asked, after she has had the abortion, whether she wants to talk about this to her pastor. She answers: "No, I don't want to talk to God about this." The youth leader can use this as an opportunity to talk more on the nature and mercy of God and the gift of reconciliation. In her youthfulness, Casey hasn't got**

**that kind of relationship or understanding yet, so she fears admitting her need for forgiveness to Our Lord.**

**What keeps us from God, why are we hesitant to go and find healing ... there is much we can speak about and teach our youth that God's love will never fail, and His mercy is boundless. Planting a tree, as the story shows, might be enough for some at that point in their spiritual maturity, but as Catholics and Christians we know God can offer us more.**

**Lastly, we kept it simple. We want the youth to be able to ponder these questions and reach healthy, good conclusions that lead to life. Life for the baby, life for the young mother and father, life for the adoptive parents, and even new life for the grandparents.**

**Could you tell us about LifeCanada National's Pro-life work?**

**Wiedemer: LifeCanada National is a registered Canadian charity and our goal is to offer this life-affirming high-quality resource to any pro-life, church, school, or youth group who is seeking to teach the value and dignity of life to the next generation. It is time we take back our voice and position in the formation of society by offering our youth and pro-life leadership next-level resources. We can do this by initiatives like this that bring together the best we can offer by writing real life stories, engaging artists of superior design and presentation that can compete with the world at large. Life is always worth the effort, and we uphold every life, the babe in the womb and the young mother and father!**

**We are presently running a fundraising campaign to finance the publication of 50,000 copies for free distribution to youth groups, schools, and churches in Canada in the new year. If you would like to support this endeavor, please reach out to Pat Wiedemer, [director@lifecanada.org](mailto:director@lifecanada.org) or see our webpage [www.lifecanada.org](http://www.lifecanada.org). Voyage Comics, [www.voyagecomics.com](http://www.voyagecomics.com) is the US distributor.**

***The Gift is currently on sale at Voyage Comics.***

**[Click here to order your copy today.](#)**

# Christmas 2023 At the Vatican

*Nativity to Recall  
St. Francis'  
First-Ever  
Manger Scene*



**The Christmas 2023 Nativity scene at the Vatican will evoke the first-ever live manger, which was created by St. Francis of Assisi in Italy in the 1200s, the Vatican said Monday.**

**The Vatican's Nativity scene, which is different every year, will be unveiled at a ceremony in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 9. The Christmas tree will also be lit for the first time this season at the same event.**

**The Christmas tree and Nativity scenes will remain in place through the Christmas season, until Jan. 7, 2024, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.**

# CATHOLICS AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

*by Mary Eberstadt*



**O**n October 7, the terrorist organization Hamas decided to follow the Nazi playbook once more. As one observer of World War II put it, the Nazis “ripped the lid off Hell.” That’s what Hamas did. It ripped the lid off Hell. The comparison is inescapable. As noted earlier in this gathering, the Catholic moral record during World War II and the Holocaust was mixed. There were outstanding exceptions. But many European Christians, and others, back then and elsewhere in history, wronged our older brothers and sisters in faith. Many did not view the bond that tethers Catholics and Jews as unbreakable, but as one to escape when loopholes like war or personal advantage presented themselves. That is what we need to change. We must forge, and render visible, a new alliance between Jews and Catholics, the like of which has not existed before.

There’s an observation by Pope Paul VI that’s been quoted many times, including by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. It is this: “Contemporary man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, or if he listens to teachers, he does so because they are witnesses.” So I’m also

going to stand and deliver as a witness. Following are three stories about anti-Semitism from different moments in my own life. Like all stories, their details are particular. But their lessons are universal, applying to us all.

The first story goes back decades in time—to rural upstate New York, where I grew up. The countryside there is glorious at its best; the rest of the time, forbidding (say, all winter). The setting of this first tale couldn't be more ordinary: a parents' night, right around this time of the academic year, at my high school.

In that part of northern central New York, by dint of religious history, people were mostly Protestant, if they were anything. Only a few families were Catholic. Almost no Jews lived in, or even near, that area. One exception happened to be our high school Spanish teacher. On that long-ago parents' night, my mother stopped by his classroom for the usual presentations and reports. A few minutes after leaving, as she was moving on to some other teacher's room, she was accosted and taken aside by another mother—one she didn't even know. This other woman was angry. Bizarrely angry. She had seen my mother exit the Spanish teacher's classroom, and she demanded to know, quote: “How can you possibly let your daughter be taught by that dirty Jew?”

When my mother came home that evening, she did not walk in with talk of presentations and reports. Nor did she enter explaining that some people hate Jews, and that this is wrong. She'd already told us that, even though, at the time, we didn't know any Jewish people. Instead, the first thing she did was to describe her encounter with anti-Semitism, and how nauseated she was by it, and what she said to that other woman. I'm paraphrasing here. The printable part of what she said was, more or less: “How dare you call this fine teacher, or anyone else, a wicked term like that?”

The lesson of story one is twofold. As it suggests, anti-Semitism is a unique evil. It has nothing to do with individual Jewish people. No, it can insinuate itself, and does, into souls with peculiar, invisible cracks of some kind. These souls needn't ever have encountered actual Jews. Most likely, that woman who took my mother aside that night never had. Part one of the lesson here is that if anti-Semitism can take root with no visible help in unpromising places, like stony soil in the remote foothills in the Adirondacks, it can grow anywhere. And so it does, as the history of anti-Semitism across Europe, especially, goes to show.

The second part of the lesson fans outward to include all of us, the living and the dead and those to come. Why, exactly, did my mother respond forcefully to that anti-Semitic comment? Not because she was a theologian. In fact, she never went to college. She didn't need to. She was reacting with what St. Thomas Aquinas called “righteous anger” because she was a Catholic. She had been taught throughout elementary and high school by sisters of the Order of St. Ursula. These nuns had a history. During World

War II, in Poland, they saved and sheltered Jewish children, and other children who'd been orphaned and abandoned. The Ursulines drilled their charges with the message that anti-Semitism and racism were wrong.

That is why, way back on that autumn evening, in an isolated corner of mostly Catholic-free America, a Catholic woman responded forcefully to an anti-Semitic challenge—because her faith had taught her that hatred of Jews, like hatred of anyone else, is a sin.

It is an iniquitous fact that some Catholics have seen no contradiction between their anti-Semitism and their religious faith. This is a historical shame that cannot be undone by those now living. But this is not a shame that need burden any of you. All you need is what those Ursuline nuns needed: the *Catechism*. It proves that there is no “get out of Hell free” card in the Catholic Church for hating Jews. Or anyone else.

That is the larger lesson of story number one. It is amazing, in a sense, that it needs reiterating at all. But the necessity seems never to end. A little while back, a friend asked if I knew about the anti-Semitism metastasizing online among some self-described Catholics, mainly on the alt-right and among some who reject Vatican II. My first reaction was an eye roll. Anti-Semitism? It's no secret that Catholics are pretty challenged these days. But that? I went googling. My friend had a point.

How do you know anti-Semitism when you see it? A few clues: inserting that article “the” before “Jews.” Holding “the Jews” responsible for societal disintegration of all kinds. Trying to re-litigate the number of people who were murdered in the Holocaust. And so on, ad nauseam.

Some of today's nouveau anti-Semites might call themselves Catholic. But they cannot, to borrow a phrase from one of our Jesuit brethren, make  $2+2=5$ . They might say novenas till all the cows in Ohio come home. But anyone who believes even remotely in the Catholic *Catechism* knows that getting one big thing wrong risks perdition.

To say that an anti-Semitic “Catholic” believes in Catholic teaching is incoherent. It's like saying “carnivorous vegan.” Or “teetotaling drunk.” It's an oxymoron. Here's a quick plea to the clergy. Although this kind of scandal lives mostly online, and although its perpetrators are few, they are real. If their diocese is your diocese, please act.

This brings us to story number two, whose subtitle should be: Words count. Words always count. The time is the mid-1980s. The setting, New York City.

After graduating from college, I was hired as an assistant editor at the magazine *The Public Interest*, thanks to a professor friend, Jeremy Rabkin,



who is also Jewish. It was run by the legendary American intellectual Irving Kristol. Irving was Jewish, as were some of the writers for the magazine. And because of those facts, back in those days before the internet, anti-Semitic hate mail slithered with some regularity into *The Public Interest* office.

These missives were easy to separate from normie office mail. Usually, they featured handwriting scrawled on both sides of the envelope, stamps in the wrong place, misplaced exclamation marks, and other spasmodic imprints of feverish minds. Inside, the contents of these letters reeked of malignancy. On and on their authors ranted about how the global Jewish conspiracy was running the world to the detriment of everyone else. (This paraphrase, again, is polite.) Often enough, they would also cite our tiny, two-room magazine office as the conspiracy's epicenter.

As it happened, at that moment in the mid-1980s, the junior staff at the magazine weren't Jews at all. Most were cradle Catholics. We thought these letters perversely amusing because their contents and presentation were so manifestly deranged. They entertained us in the way that people in their teens and twenties find the inexplicable insanity of supposed grownups, well, something to laugh about.

Enter Providence, or maybe just an exercise in cosmic comeuppance. Thanks mostly to that mentor Irving Kristol, I was next hired for another job, this one working at the United States Mission to the United Nations. My new boss was the late, great Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. She was a fearless voice for America and for human rights around the world. My work for her meant poring constantly over the documents issuing nonstop from the international diplomatic bureaucracy, trying to make sense of them.

At the United Nations, I learned that the anti-Semitic madness encountered back in the *Public Interest* office wasn't some harmless outpouring of ineffective malevolence after all. Anti-Semitism, usually but not always under the guise of anti-Zionism, was the central theme sounded through that vaunted institution's marble halls. To judge by what the representatives of many governments at the United Nations maintained in one venue after another, the most ominous problem on Earth was not, say, nuclear weapons. Or the Gulag archipelago that still existed, imprisoning millions. Or that so many people around the globe knew nothing but crushing poverty and ill health. Or that terrorism was once more ascendant.

No: According to the sententious declarations of not one, but sometimes a majority, of foreign representatives, the pre-eminent threat to what was incomprehensively dubbed the "international community" was something else. One small nation—the longest-running functioning democracy in that area of the world. Which just happened to be the one and only nation run mostly by Jews.

The United Nation's ferociously lopsided and negative focus on Israel has been confirmed by many independent observers. One 2014 analysis from the Center for Economic Studies Institute in Munich, Germany, for example, summarized: "We compiled data on all United Nations General Assembly resolutions on which voting took place between January 1990 and June 2013 and find a preoccupation with one country: in 65 percent of instances in which a country is criticized in a resolution, the country is Israel."

No Catholic is being asked, anywhere, to rubber-stamp the internal or external politics of any government, including Israel's. But we should consider a different question, obvious to anyone who's spent time listening to what is said and sometimes screeched at the United Nations: If Israel were anything *but* the Jewish nation, would the entire history of what transpires in that place look different?

This is the lesson of story number two. During the past few weeks, we've heard a lot of "on the one hand this, on the other hand that." It's the dumbed-down version of what Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, calls "a pox on both your houses." In other words, moral lines can't be drawn in the matter of October 7, or anywhere else. Everybody's wrong.

Whatever else may be said of this reaction, it is not Catholic. As Andrew Doran of the Philos Project has written, "the monstrosities in Israel crowd out moral ambivalence." Longstanding Catholic teaching acknowledges that human beings have the duty to protect their own lives, hence, a right to self-defense.

St. Augustine first put forth "just war theory" in the fifth century. St. Thomas Aquinas adapted and explicated it further in the 13th century. Eight hundred years later, Vatican II reiterated the teaching. Not only should Catholics refrain from moral equivalence. We have a positive obligation to discern what is just and unjust.

In the way that evil has of reproducing itself, the murderousness of Hamas now unleashes torment and death outside Israel, on the people of Gaza, and on the hostages taken on October 7. Like many civilians caught up in World War II, in different countries, they are victims of the just pursuit of murderous enemies. There is one villain here: Hamas. The suffering of the people of Gaza demands prayer and aid—and understanding why this has fallen on them demands clarity of the kind that students of just war theory will recognize.

There's a second lesson from story number two. This one goes out to all Americans, not just Catholics. The representatives at the United Nations and elsewhere proclaiming that "Zionism is racism" despise one other nation on earth as well as Israel: the United States. The same voices that cheer when Jews are hurt or killed also cheer when Americans are hurt or

killed. This was true in 1983, almost exactly forty years ago, when some of bloody Hamas's likeminded bloody terrorist friends invaded a barracks in Beirut where America and other countries had sent a peacekeeping force. Those terrorists killed 307 people, most in their sleep, including over 200 United States Marines. This point about common enemies was also true in 2001, when haters of America and Israel flooded streets around the world, exulting in the deaths of American citizens. And it is true today, as the enemies of both Israel and the United States once again high-five the slaughter of innocents.

American leaders know this. In 1975, delivering what some have called the most famous speech in United Nations history, Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democrat, responded to a resolution declaring that Zionism is racism. He said: "In all our postwar history there had not been another issue which has brought forth such unanimity of American opinion. [One] after another, the great private institutions of American life pronounced anathema in this evil thing—and most particularly, the Christian churches have done so."

Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, a longtime Democrat who switched to the Republican side precisely because of her concern for the protection of human rights everywhere, had her own choice words for the calumnies that made the rounds of the United Nations. She also said, after her service there: "I think the Holocaust is possible again. I didn't think so before I came to the U.N., but I think so now." We can be proud not only of our Catholicism, but also of our country, and both its political parties, for consistently taking the side of justice despite fierce and often malignant opposition on the so-called world stage.

Story number three. It is February 2023. The setting for this final act of witness is my first-ever trip to Israel under the auspices of The Philos Project.

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus asks, rhetorically, "What did you go out into the desert to see?" It's a question that travelers to the Holy Land of any faith can only answer for themselves. But one sight that did not exist until the second half of the twentieth century should not be missed by anyone. That is Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum.

Obviously, Israel is about much more than the Holocaust. To focus on Yad Vashem is not to detract from any of the country's enormous historical, social, spiritual, cultural, or other riches. But for anyone who has been to Israel, and even more, for those who have not, to scant Yad Vashem in discussing anti-Semitism would be inexplicable. Let me cite the observation of the late British novelist Martin Amis. Amis, who was not Jewish, was once asked why his mind and work returned so often to the Holocaust. He replied by citing a German novelist, who said, because "no serious person ever thinks about anything else."

Students and fellow participants, we try to be serious people. So we will talk for a moment about Yad Vashem. As one might expect, horrors abound in just about every square inch of that place. There are the numbing, overwhelming statistics everywhere that try to take the measure of the Shoah. There are the items that look like things you might see in the cabinet under your kitchen sink, like canisters of Zyklon B, used to make killing gas. There is a board game invented in the late 1930s to teach anti-Semitism to children, which involves moving pieces toward the goal of getting Jews out of Germany. Its name translates, basically, “Out with the Jews!” Its wooden pieces are grotesque caricatures of supposedly Jewish faces.

Like most tours of Yad Vashem, ours ended in a room dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations—that is, to the brave non-Jews who helped to rescue Jews from the Holocaust, sometimes dying themselves on account of those acts of solidarity. That’s where this number appeared: 28,217. That is how many of the Righteous have been catalogued meticulously to date, from all over the world.

28,217: The number seemed stuck in my head, like a song that won’t go away. How to interpret it? 28,217. In a way, unlike other statistics about the Holocaust and World War II, this seems like a sum that human beings can at least grasp.

28,217: That’s only ten thousand more people than live in Steubenville, Ohio. It’s just ten thousand fewer people than can fit in PNC Park Stadium, in Pittsburgh.

Or to invoke another metric: On that same trip to Israel, we visited the offices and warehouse of a pro-life group called Efrat. Founded by a Holocaust survivor named Hershel Feigenbaum, who lost most of both sides of his family, Efrat has for forty-six years provided counseling, cribs, weekly care packages, and other vital help to women and families who want babies rather than abortions. This is another sight that visitors who come to the desert should see, especially ardent pro-lifers. How many people have come to exist in Israel, because of this organization’s good work? 84,727. That’s how many. 84,272. Weirdly. Almost exactly three times the number of the Righteous at Yad Vashem.

Back to 28,217. Any non-Jew who helped a Jew during the Nazi period took a grave risk. By the time the Nazis occupied Poland, that risk had become catastrophic. That’s because it is one thing to risk your own life. It’s another to risk your entire family’s, sometimes your entire town’s. Those, under the Nazis, were prescribed punishments for Poles who helped Jews.

Yet according to Yad Vashem, over 7,000 non-Jewish people of Poland chose to help Jews anyway—one-quarter of all those honored as Righteous. The number is more astonishing because anyone on the ground knew exactly what lay in store for Catholic Poland. The Nazis dreamed of

exterminating most of the Poles once they had finished with the Jews. Only a remnant, according to plan, would be kept alive for the necessary slave labor. Toward that end, the Nazis pre-emptively and savagely executed many in the Polish elite, many in the Church, and nearly anyone who threatened to be a leader. Go to Auschwitz, outside Krakow. You will find some of their stories, as well as an understanding of the Holocaust that will never, ever leave you. The Nazi occupation of Poland was the crucible in which John Paul II, among many other heroic Poles, was forged. Or go to Dachau, in Germany, which has been called “the world’s largest cemetery of the clergy” because of all the priests imprisoned and killed there.

28,217.

A book by Grzegorz Gorny and Jansz Rosikon called *The Righteous!* tells the stories of some of those Poles who helped to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. These include the family of Jozef and Wiktoria Ulma and their seven children, ranging in age from eighteen down to two years old, plus the baby in Wiktoria’s womb at the time. The Ulmas were a Polish Catholic family who hid Polish Jews in their home during the Holocaust. On March 24, 1944, the Nazis rewarded these acts of charity with execution of them all—exactly as Hamas just destroyed whole families of Israel.

A month before Hamas’s massacres, every member of the Ulma family was beatified in their village of Markowa.

28,217. Since October 7, many universities in the United States and elsewhere have disgraced themselves. Some students sided openly with the murder of innocents. Some administrators stayed mute out of cowardice. As is more visible with each passing day, it is not the atheists or agnostics of the world who can be counted on to have the backs of Jews, or others, needing aid and solidarity. Rather, it is other people of the Book.

We want Jews inside and outside the United States to know that Catholics are stepping up to stand with them, to spurn moral equivalence, and to be that refuge when it is needed. It is faithful Catholic institutions that can harness and ride moral energy into the future with the creative, confident leadership absent in today’s non-Christian and anti-Christian schools.

Solidarity with our older brothers and sisters in faith is not a fast-track to affirmation. Solidarity may never win you likes, anywhere. But as the historian Norman Davies put it in his introduction to that book, *The Righteous!*, “There are ‘righteous Poles,’ who are known to Yad Vashem, and others whose names are known only to God.”

It does not matter whether your good deeds are inscribed for all to see—or whether they are known only to God. It only matters that you do them.

The newly founded Coalition of Catholics Against Antisemitism is the spearhead of that new cause. A [Statement of Solidarity and Action](#) stating the aims of this group is now making the rounds. Catholics in public life and from private life are signing on, from academia to government to think tanks, to Catholic colleges and universities, and Catholics of every vocation to come.

Hamas and the other enemies of the Jewish people who revel in killing often say, scornfully, “the Jews love life.” So they do. And so do we. To love life as Catholics do is to love the Jews from whose roots we grew. Many people these days ask where the pro-life movement is now. The answer is, where it’s always been: fighting against the destruction of the innocent, from conception to natural death.

There is more than enough room in that loving formulation to include under its protective umbrella the people of the Covenant. From now on, so be it. Fellow Catholics: Go show the world what being our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers really means.

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*This essay is adapted from a lecture delivered at a [conference](#) on the future of Jewish-Catholic relations during a time of rising anti-Semitism, co-hosted by Franciscan University of Steubenville and The Philos Project.*

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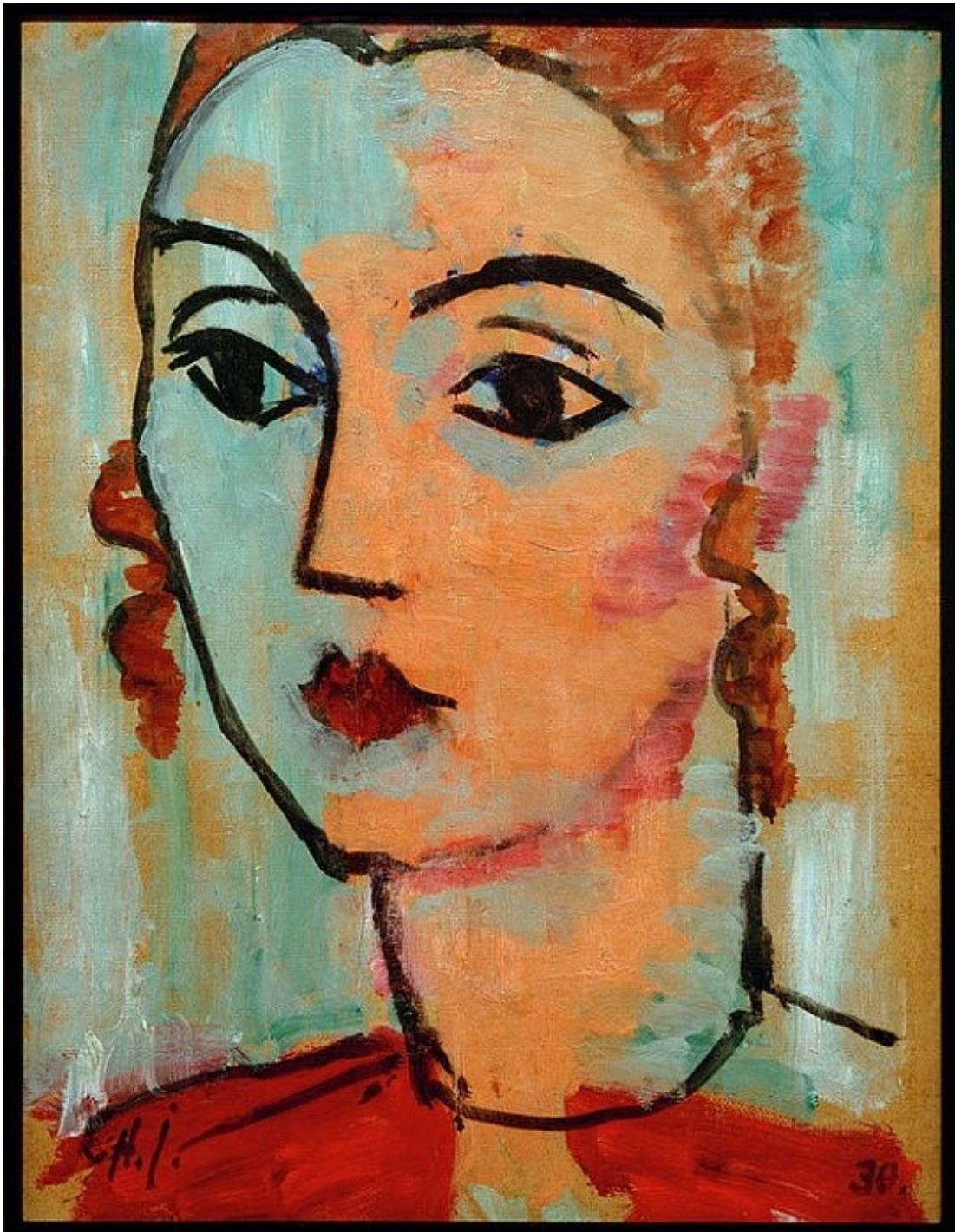
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## PAINTING OF THE MONTH

This month the painting is selected by Fr Jim



***Portrait of Lisa Kümmel ... Alexej von Jawlensky***

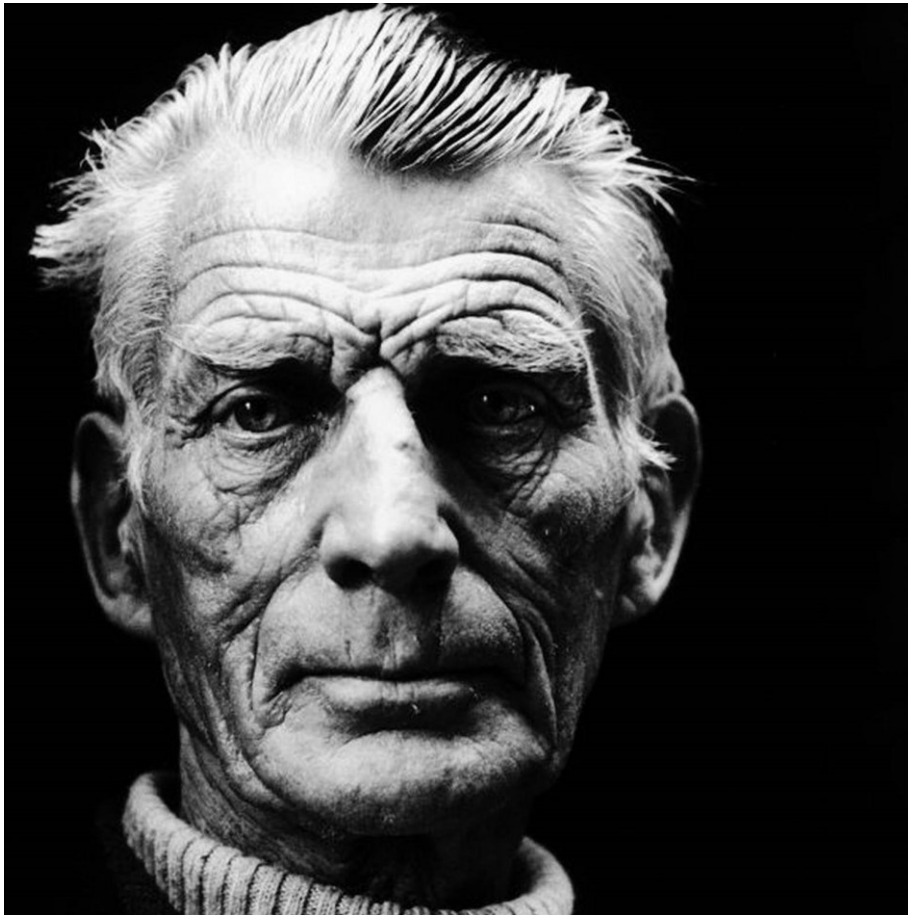
Alexej von Jawlensky was born in Russia, and started out with a military career. He began his art studies comparatively late, in his mid-twenties, and in 1896 left the army and went to Munich where he enrolled at art school. Another Russian artist, Wassily Kandinsky, was a fellow student, and the two became great friends. In 1905 Jawlensky spent some time in France, where he was influenced by the work of Gauguin, Van Gogh and the Fauves. He showed several paintings at the famous Salon d'Automne exhibition of 1905, in which the Fauves were given their name.

*Lisa Kümmel (1897-1944) was a German painter*

# THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN OR WRITTEN WORD

*Something I have listened to, read,  
appreciated and remembered*

This month the featured contribution is by Fr Jim. An extract from Samuel Beckett's novella *Ill Seen Ill Said*.



Samuel Beckett

Often we are drawn to that we simply do not understand. For example, I have no idea why I am drawn to the paintings of Frank Auerbach – on first glance these paintings are seemingly ill-conceived and meaningless. I have no idea why I like the music of Webern – to many his music sounds atonal and harsh. Not sure why I like the writing of Jack Kerouac which on the surface is undisciplined and meandering. Not sure why in 1964 I loved the record *Louie Louie* by The Kingsmen when all my schoolfriends thought that the lyrics were meaningless and the music mindless cacophony. But, I was pleased to see, it became a classic in its genre. And why do I return regularly to *Ill Seen Ill Said*?

In *Ill Seen Ill Said* the world of an old, dying woman is depicted in a stream of consciousness. The woman watches her memories float by. She is alone in a cabin – a cabin whose whereabouts in never clear. She walks the edge between life and death. The imagery evoked by Samuel Beckett (a resolute agnostic) is resolutely biblical.



## *Ill Seen Ill Said* ... (The opening passage)

From where she lies she  
sees Venus rise. On. From where she lies  
when the skies are clear she sees Venus rise  
followed by the sun. Then she rails at the  
source of all life. On. At evening when the  
skies are clear she savours its star's revenge.

At the other window. Rigid upright on  
her old chair she watches for the radiant  
one. Her old deal spindlebacked kitchen  
chair. It emerges from out the last rays and  
sinking ever brighter is engulfed in its  
turn. On. She sits on erect and rigid in the  
deepening gloom. Such helplessness to  
move she cannot help. Heading on foot for  
a particular point often she freezes on the  
way. Unable till long after to move on not  
knowing whither or for what purpose.

Down on her knees especially she finds it  
hard not to remain so forever.

Hand resting on hand on some convenient support.

Such as the foot of her bed. And on them  
her head. There then she sits as though  
turned to stone face to the night. Save for  
the white of her hair and faintly bluish  
white of face and hands all is black.

# ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

## HOLY HOWLERS

*Typos, misprints, inadvertent double entendre and all manner of infelicitous error published in church notices, bulletins and newsletters*

We are pleased to note that there has been a change of mind by the Housing Department regarding the name for the new Housing complex for the elderly. 'St Peter's Close' did seem somewhat inappropriate.

Let us join David and Lisa in the celebration of their wedding and bring their happiness to a conclusion.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday:

'I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours.'



PERHAPS SPRINKLING WITH HOLY WATER  
WAS NOT THE BEST WAY TO  
LAUNCH THE CHURCH WEBSITE