



Pope Leo Celebrates the Council of Nicaea

Cardinal Zen Explodes Synodality

Cardinal Roche's Latest Attack on the TLM

Pope and Trump Back the March for Life

Peadar Tóibín TD at the Washington March

The German Synod Looms Over Pope Leo

End of Life Bill may Fall in the Lords

Islam, Jihad and Slavery

Britain's Appeasement of Islamist Radicalism

Choosing a Dog over a Baby

Nazi Past Rears its Ugly Head Again

Free Book: 'Vatican Confidential' by Cardinal Müller

Dear Friend of Family & Life,

My first duty is to thank all who have responded so generously to our emergency appeal before Christmas. As we have so often written, without you we would not exist. We are well over halfway to the amount of money, which we need to support our basic work during 2026. This will allow us the time to find new supporters and to manage our pro-life and pro-family projects, at home and overseas.

Of course, we shall be careful about how we spend the money. One decided cutback is to cease having the Personal Update printed and posted, as warned for readers in the last Update of 2025. Just in case we had doubts, the Post Office raised the price of a letter stamp by 20 cents to €1.85 from the start of February. In May 2020, the same stamp cost €1.00. Fewer people are sending letters, so *An Post* raises the price. I don't

understand that thinking behind this move. Maybe letter writing is a dying art, and if correct, so is the postal service.

In future, the Personal Update will be digital, and be received by those with a smart phone. If you haven't already given your mobile phone number to Aoife, please do so asap. The Update will also be available in pdf format on our website. I am sorry that some readers will miss the printed copy, and hope that they can find a way around this problem.

Our opening topic is about Pope Leo XIV's challenges and problems, starting with the Sunday Creed, which has guided the Church for 17 centuries.

Pope Leo Celebrates the Council of Nicaea

The year 2025 was the 17th centenary of the Council of Nicaea, which was the occasion of Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Letter, *In Unitate Fidei* (in the unity of the Faith), published to coincide with his visit to Nicaea, known today as the town of Iznik in western Turkey. He met the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople there, and together they prayed the Nicene Creed on the ruins of the city's ancient church.

The Pope's letter celebrates the achievements of the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the first Council of Constantinople in 381 in formulating a creed for the whole Church, which declared that God is both one being and three persons. The Creed we recite at Sunday Mass dates from these two councils, and was declared "universally binding" by the later Council of Chalcedon in 451, and, as the Pope states, is a "bond of unity between East and West" and "the common profession of all Christian traditions".

The Pope wrote, "There is a challenge, which we might call a 'new Arianism,' present in today's culture and sometimes even among believers. This occurs when Jesus is admired on a merely human level, perhaps even with religious respect, yet not truly regarded as the living and true God among us. His divinity, his lordship over history, is overshadowed, and he is reduced to a great historical figure, a wise teacher, or a prophet who fought for justice—but nothing more. Nicaea reminds us that Jesus Christ is not a figure of the past; he is the Son of God present among us, guiding history toward the future promised by God."

"The anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea is a precious opportunity to ask ourselves who Jesus Christ is in the lives of men and women today, and who he is for each one of us personally. This question is especially important for Christians, who risk reducing Jesus Christ to a kind of charismatic leader or superman, a misrepresentation that ultimately leads to sadness and confusion. By denying the divinity of Christ, Arius reduced him to a mere intermediary between God and humanity, ignoring the reality of the Incarnation, such that the divine and the human remained irremediably separated. But if God did not become man, how can mortal creatures participate in his immortal life? What was at stake at Nicaea, and is at stake today, is our faith in the God who, in Jesus Christ, became like us to make us 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet 1: 4)."

The Father and the Son at Nicaea

In 325 AD, Constantine, now the emperor of the whole Roman world, played a major part in the Council of Nicaea. His overriding need was political, namely to ensure the unity of the empire, and for this to happen, he wanted the Christian Church to resolve

the “trivial questions” about the God the Father and the Son, which was causing such turmoil in the eastern churches. In other words, he wanted one empire, one faith and, of course, one ruler in “the big tent”.

The 318 bishops at the Council were divided between those who favoured the Arian position in various degrees and those opposed to it, since the question had been uncertain from apostolic times, yet had never been formally decided by a truly ecumenical council. Neither did the New Testament scriptures remove the ambiguity that existed in the Church. So, the task of the Council was to determine what should be the orthodox position on this vexed question, and ensure that all the bishops were united in the one Faith.

Constantine organized the Council, selecting Nicaea as the meeting place and appointing his trusted friend, Ossius (Hosius), bishop of Cordova, Spain, as the chairman of the agenda, even though he was one of the few western bishops present at Nicaea. Pope Sylvester of Rome decided to send two legates instead of going in person, and the legates took little active part in the proceedings. Clearly the Latin Church was not bothered with the theological niceties of Arianism at this time.

As chairman, Ossius was able to control what was debated and decide when a topic should be put to a vote. He had already been persuaded by Bishop Alexander of Egypt that Arius was in serious error about the relationship between the Father and the Son. The main opponent to the party of Ossius was Eusebius, the powerful bishop of Nicomedia, at that time the imperial capital of the eastern part of the empire. Eusebius was a longtime supporter of Arius, even though he was careful not to overplay his cards.

For Arius, a priest and theologian, the Father is “unbegotten” while the Son is “begotten”, meaning that He was created *ex nihilo*, and so there was “a time when He was not.” Even though He is divine, the Son is intermediate, subordinate to the Father and not co-eternal with the Father. The Son had a beginning, unlike the Father who was without a beginning.

‘Consubstantial’, the Key Word

Ossius, supported by Bishop Alexander of Alexandria plus his deacon Athanasius, wanted the phrase *homo-ousios* (*of the same nature*) introduced to the Creed to ensure that this theology became the orthodoxy of the universal Church, not merely for those seeking baptism to join the Church but also to ensure the orthodoxy of future bishops. This phrase signified the one divine identity of substance/nature, shared by Father and Son, and two separate divine persons. For many bishops, this phrase could not be found in the New Testament, which made it a problem for them. However, the phrase, *homo-ousios*, made clear that both Father and Son were uncreated, existed from eternity and were equal. In Latin and English, *homo-ousios* is translated as “consubstantial”.

The Council finally concluded that the word, *homo-ousios*, should be in the new creed, approved by all the bishops with the exception of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis. And so the Nicene Creed became the standard declaration of faith for Christians, East and West, and part of the Holy Eucharist celebration. And so we confess today:

“I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, *consubstantial* with the Father;
through him all things were made.”

The party of Ossius may have thought they were victorious, but the scene changed quickly. Ossius retired to his see in Spain, unhappy with Constantine’s cruel treatment of his son, Crispus. In 327, Constantine summoned Arius, examined him in detail and declared he was orthodox.

It seemed that a new council at Nicomedia would bring unity to the Church, but Bishop Alexander refused to allow Arius to return to Egypt. He died in 328, and was speedily replaced by Athanasius, who continued opposing Arius and Eusebius, much to the displeasure of Constantine. By 336, the balance had swung in favour of Arianism, and the “obstinate” Athanasius was exiled to Trier in Germany, and Arius confirmed as orthodox. However, Arius died suddenly in 336 in Constantinople.

In 337, Constantine was on his death bed and was baptized by Eusebius, now the bishop of Constantinople. Ambiguity about the relation of the Son to the Father could not be accepted by the new emperor, Constantius. The third Council at Sirmium in 357, later described as the Blasphemy Council, denied any similarity of substance of the Son to the Father, suggesting inferiority and subordination. Saint Jerome wrote: “The whole world groaned and was astonished to find itself Arian.” Athanasius, although expelled from his see five times, became the “firm foundation of the Nicene Creed though his unyielding and steadfast faith”.

If Constantine had expected his “big tent” to include Ossius and Athanasius, Eusebius and Arius, his hopes were not fulfilled, and the struggle would continue with many councils and creeds for decades, up to the Council of Constantinople in 381. Yet, even as one dispute was sorted, another arose about the two natures of the Son, and led to the departure of the Monophysite and Nestorian bishops, whose churches exist to this day.

‘And the Son...’

At this point, it is important to note that the original Greek text of the Nicene Creed did not have the *filioque* (and the Son) phrase in the part about the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It was added to the Latin version of the Creed in the late 500s and was officially recognized for the western Church by Pope Benedict VIII in 1014. The Orthodox Churches condemned any addition to the Creed, and made the *filioque* addition one of the reasons for the “Great Schism” with Rome in 1054, which sadly has existed to this day.

The reason why this addition was made in various Latin churches was to emphasise the divine nature of the Son against various Arian tendencies active in the West in these centuries. By stating that “the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and from the Son*”, the Creed emphasised the Son's equality with the Father.

It would seem likely that Pope Leo XIV would like to drop the *filioque* as an unnecessary addition, thereby removing a major obstacle to the unity of Christians. When

he recited the Creed in the ruins of an ancient church of Nicaea, the *filioque* phrase was omitted.

The profession of Faith at Nicaea in 325, completed at Constantinople in 381, removed any ambiguity at the heart of our Christian Faith about “the Word made flesh”, and the Creed remains the bond of unity with the church of East and West, Protestant and Catholic, across the world.

Addendum: According to the Vatican Press Office, “Leo urged that the spiritual journey leading to the Jubilee of Redemption in 2033 be travelled together, in the perspective of a return to Jerusalem, in the cenacle, the place of Jesus’ last supper with his disciples, where he washed their feet, and the place of Pentecost, a journey that may lead to full unity, citing his episcopal motto, *In illo Uno unum.*”

Cardinal Zen Explodes Synodality

Cardinal Joseph Zen of Hong Kong, aged 93, has done it again, speaking truth to power. The occasion was the Extraordinary Consistory of Cardinals, called by Pope Leo XIV to meet in Rome on January 7 and 8 to consider the major challenges facing the Church today.

Cardinal Zen spoke for three minutes to the assembly of some 170 cardinals, and such was the impact of what he said, that the normal secrecy of such meetings was put aside, and his address was “leaked” to the world.

The Cardinal’s target was the topic under discussion, namely the creation of Pope Francis, the Synod on Synodality. He criticized the Synod as an attempt to “dismantle the ecclesiastical hierarchy”, an insult to the bishops, and which introduced “a democracy of the baptised into the Church”, a major change to her divine constitution.

This was not the only time when the Vatican and the Cardinal came into conflict. Pope Francis refused to meet him when he came to Rome in 2020 to persuade the Pope to reject the secret Vatican agreement with the Communist government in China, since it gave the atheistic regime control of the appointment of bishops, validated the state-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, and abandoned the Underground Church, brutally persecuted for its loyalty to the Pope. In his own words, the Vatican was “delivering the flock into the jaws of the wolves”, an action he described as an “incredible betrayal”.

This agreement, constructed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin in 2018, remains secret, without any public assessment despite been renewed three times. Since then, there is no evidence that Chinese government has ceased its persecution of Catholics or its unjustified control of new bishops, as was hoped for by the supporters of the agreement, who hailed it as a breakthrough for the Church in China.

The *Final Document* on Synodality

However, let’s get back to the Synod on Synodality, one of two topics selected by the bishops. Cardinal Zen charged that the synodal secretariat, led by Cardinals Grech and Hollerich—had tightly managed the Synod to deprive the bishops of their rightful authority as successors of the Apostles as well as their ability to freely decide doctrinal questions. He also condemned the repeated invocations of the Holy Spirit to silence opposition to a predetermined conclusion, as if the Holy Spirit could contradict the

teaching of two millennia. He described this “continual reference to the Holy Spirit” as “ridiculous and verging on blasphemy”.

In October 2024, Pope Francis called the *Final Document* the key text for a Synodal Church with greater participation of its members in *Communion, Participation and Mission*. The Pope emphasised that this document is “part of the ordinary magisterium of the Successor of Peter” but is not “strictly normative”, opening the way to differing interpretations and doctrinal incoherence.

This inconsistency, in the Cardinal Zen’s view, could lead to the fragmentation of the Church, as has happened in the Anglican Communion. It would also undermine the ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox Churches, for whom synodality is about the bishops’ doctrinal authority and is not shared with lay people. The bishops of the Orthodox Churches will never accept “Bergoglian synodality” nor his reshaped Synod of Bishops where lay members have formal authority with bishops.

Addendum: Pope Leo XIV’s meeting with Cardinal Zen in a private audience was a gesture that reverses Pope Francis’ closed door in 2020.

Cardinal Roche’s Latest Attack on the TLM

Call it a bombshell if you like. Cardinal Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Dicastery of Divine Worship, distributed a letter about the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) and Pope Francis’ *Traditionis Custodes* to the cardinals at the Consistory, no doubt with the June meeting in mind when the liturgy will be discussed. The letter was dated January 8, 2026, and, much to his indignation and embarrassment, it soon became public.

The document makes no attempt of being impartial, and is not an impressive piece of Vatican writing. It is muddled and repetitious with lots of holy water but little theological evidence for its claims. In fact, Roche wants to present a revised account of the Council’s reform of the liturgy, and a selection of half-truths to back up his polemic against the TLM.

While promoting the post-counciliar “reform” of the liturgy, he condemns the continued use of the TLM, and rejects any attempt to make it an approved choice for Catholics, as Pope Benedict did in his 2007 *Summorum Pontificum*.

Point 1: In § 7, the purpose of the reform was not merely “greater participation” of the faithful at the Eucharist; the *Novus Ordo* constructed by Annibale Bugnini for Pope Paul VI was anything but transparent. It can be argued that it was not what the bishops had mandated in 1963. In no previous “reform” was there a complete rewriting of the texts of the ancient Roman liturgy, which took place under Bugnini’s direction. He dismantled twenty centuries of an “organically developed liturgy” in a mere six years.

Point 2: In § 9, Cardinal Roche stated that choosing the TLM or permitting it in a diocese is “freezing division” in the Church, and morally failing to obey the Reform, mandated by the Council. This claim was contradicted by bishops who found that Pope Benedict’s making the TLM a free choice for Catholics brought peace and harmony in their dioceses.

Point 3: In § 11, his final argument is to accuse TLM followers of being schismatic and refusing to accept the authority of the Second Vatican Council. This

seems to ignore well-known facts. Many accepted the Council's documents but objected to the way it was carried out by Annibale Bugnini, who flouted the rules for the reform in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as in § 36, 1 and § 101, 1, "the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites." The basic rule was § 23, "there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church *genuinely and certainly* requires them, and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing."

Without doubt, his letter surely is partisan, largely one-sided and a scandal. As previously noted, Cardinal Roche has a history of clashing with the TLM. As bishop of Leeds in 2007, Bishop Roche issued a restrictive interpretation of *Summorum Pontificum* to allow Catholics to attend the TLM with freedom. The Vatican soon stated that his interpretation was erroneous. Next, in a drive to control spending, the bishop wanted to close the parish church of Allerton Bywater where a large group of worshippers came for the TLM. He only got his way after a bitter struggle with his lay opponents. Again, he took on the TLM after Pope Francis issued *Traditionis Custodes*, complaining that bishops did not carry out the instructions of the Pope, and ordering them to cancel dispensations for the ancient rite. For some bishops, he was acting beyond his competence.

Cardinal Roche's letter was an attempt to hoodwink the Cardinals, many of whom are unfamiliar with the controversy about the TLM. He wants them to believe that the Council voted to suppress the Mass of the Ages, and its continuation is a serious threat to the unity of the Church. His campaign to delegitimise the TLM is well known, and for many a notorious scandal. See: <https://yanhepcatholic.org/2024/03/03/cardinal-arthur-roche-pope-francis-and-the-drive-to-delegitimise-the-traditional-latin-mass/>

NEWS FROM AMERICA

[By Brendan Gleason] As we have always stated here, this column concerns itself with President Donald Trump's pro-life actions, policies and statements only. All else, whether in domestic or foreign policy, is outside our scope and our conversation.

National Day of Sanctity of Human Life, 2026

On January 22, President Trump issued a Presidential Message on National Day of Sanctity of Human Life. In it he accurately called the US Supreme Court's *Roe v Wade* abortion diktat of 1973 "a moral and constitutional atrocity" and celebrated its later demise. He wrote:

On July 4, 1776, our Declaration of Independence righteously affirmed that every human being is endowed by Almighty God with the unalienable right to life. In the 250 years since, our commitment to this truth has been the source of our strength and the foundation of our greatness... Today, we uphold the eternal truth that every human being is created in the holy image and likeness of God, blessed with infinite worth and boundless potential.

Thankfully, Mr Trump has initiated pro-life policy after policy. Pro-lifers continue to lobby him, however, so that his every policy will become consistent with his words above.

March for Life 2026: ‘Life Is a Gift’

With the theme “Life Is a Gift”, the 53rd annual March for Life took place in Washington, DC, on a cold Friday, January 23. Estimates are that up to 150,000 pro-lifers attended. Once again, the crowd was young: a great portent for the future of the baby-saving movement.

Also once again, in this era of President Trump’s second term in office, Washington officialdom was paying more attention to pro-lifers than it ever had before. Mr Trump sent a videotaped message to the pre-March rally and Vice President JD Vance delivered remarks in person. Senate Majority Leader John Thune (South Dakota) spoke, as did Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (Louisiana). And Representative Chris Smith (New Jersey), who has been the pro-life conscience of the entire Congress since the 1980s, gave a forceful, heartfelt talk.

One could say the most beautiful moment of the March for Life this year was when a choir of Down syndrome young adult members of Friends of Club 21 expertly sang our National Anthem, thrilling the attendees and prompting a loving tear or two in many a pro-life eye.

President Trump’s Remarks

In videotaped remarks from the Oval Office, Mr Trump called unborn babies gifts from God, as he affirmed the sanctity of human life. He saluted the marchers and urged them to always continue their life-saving efforts:

In 2026, as we celebrate 250 years since our founding fathers recognized the right to life in our Declaration of Independence, I want to thank every single one of you who was out on this winter day... This is a battle that must be fought, must be won, not only in the corridors of power, but above all, in the hearts and souls of the people. That is why, under the Trump administration, we're strongly defending religious liberty. We're bringing back faith in America. We're bringing back God.

Pro-life analysts said pro-aborts would scoff at Mr Trump’s words about bringing back religious liberty, faith and God. But his pardoning of pro-life rescuers a year ago and his efforts to protect pro-life churches and pro-life pregnancy centres since then show his sincerity.

Vice President Vance’s Remarks

Mr Vance credited President Trump with the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, pointing out that his naming three pro-life justices to the Supreme Court in his first term in office created the pro-life majority that made possible the epochal *Dobbs* decision of June 24, 2022. Mr Vance also proudly reminded attendees that his wife Usha is expecting their fourth child in late July.

The vice president brought things into sharp focus when he identified aborting babies with child sacrifice throughout history. He called such baby-killing a mark of

barbarism and said, “the inheritance of our civilization is something else—the fact that, as Scripture tells us, each life is fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator.”

Mr Vance also alluded to pro-life criticisms of some Trump policies but pledged that the administration remains committed to pro-life.

Representative Smith’s Remarks

Congressman Smith urged continued pro-life efforts, and he sounded an alert:

The abortion pill—mifepristone—is baby poison that kills the unborn child by starving the innocent baby to death. The abortion pill is extremely dangerous for women... [A report] found that more than one out of ten (10.93 percent) women who take the chemical abortion drug mifepristone experience sepsis, infection, hemorrhaging, or another serious adverse event within 45 days.

The congressman, who is now 72 and was elected in 1980, also saluted his wife:

I met my dear wife, Marie, more than fifty years ago in the pro-life movement—and today, like you, we are more committed, hope-filled, determined and—let me add—more impatient than ever to see “life celebrated as a gift from God.

Pope Leo Backs Marchers

On January 22, the eve of the March for Life, Pope Leo XIV, the first America-born pontiff, sent the marchers a message of support, friendship and blessing. The Pope began his message with a strong affirmation of the right to life, quoting himself in the process:

To the Participants in the 2026 March for Life:

I send warm greetings to those of you participating in the 2026 March for Life. I likewise express heartfelt appreciation, and assure you of my spiritual closeness as you gather for this eloquent public witness to affirm that “the protection of the right to life constitutes the indispensable foundation of every other human right.” (Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 9 January 2026)

The Holy Father encouraged the marchers, “especially the young people”, to “continue striving to ensure that life is respected in all of its stages through appropriate efforts at every level of society...” He concluded with these words of blessing:

May Jesus, who promised to be with us always (Mt 28: 20), accompany you today as you courageously and peacefully march on behalf of unborn children. By advocating for them, please know that you are fulfilling the Lord’s command to serve him in the least of our brothers and sisters (Mt 25: 31-46). With these sentiments I entrust all of you, as well as those who support you with their prayers and sacrifices, to the intercession of Mary Immaculate, Patroness of the United States of America, and I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of abundant heavenly graces.

Read to the assembled marchers the next day, Pope Leo’s greetings and blessing drew appreciative cheers from the throng gathered at the pre-March rally on the National Mall.

A Missed Opportunity?

The marchers and all pro-lifers loved Pope Leo's pro-life message. But some wished the Pope's wordsmiths had added one more thing—for he possibly or probably did not author the message entirely himself. Imagine the impact if His Holiness had said something like this:

In the early 1970s I took part in one of the first Marches for Life. So I am one of you. And I am with you today—and every day.

That sentiment would have been an extra boost to the pro-life movement. It would have made headlines worldwide and especially in the United States. However, perhaps injecting a personal reference would have broken a longstanding papal protocol for such messages.

In any case, Pope Leo's message to the March for Life 2026 was beautiful, holy and most welcome. Thank you, Pope Leo!

Peadar Tóibín T.D. at the Washington March

No doubt you have heard about Aontú TD Peadar Tóibín's visit to Washington, DC, where he briefed Republican and Democrat national officials, raised awareness about abortion and other situations in Ireland, and joined with the Ancient Order of Hibernians for the March for Life. On the morning of the March, he addressed the Annual AOH March for Life Breakfast, where past AOH National Chaplain Bishop John Keehner of Sioux City, Iowa, said grace and Sister Nancy Downing spoke about the work of the St Ann Centre for Youth, Children and Families in Avondale, Maryland. Mass followed at nearby Mary Mother of God Church.

TD Tóibín and AOH chaplains and officials then joined the huge March, and also attended a pro-life reception hosted by Representatives Mike Kelly (Pennsylvania) and Chris Smith in the Cannon House Office Building. Representative Kelly, incidentally, is co-chairman of the Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus.

Life-Saving Placards at the March

It has been proven again and again that pro-life slogans save babies. Here are some you can use when your chance comes up, in whatever circumstances, to save a baby's life:

- Abortion Is Failed Manhood
- Abortion Empowers Male Cowards
- Real Men Protect the Unborn
- The Word Became FOETUS and Dwelt Among Us
- My "Clump of Cells" Is 15 Yrs. Old
- Rights Begin When Life Begins
- I'm Happy Your Mom Chose Life

Sacrificing for the Babies

Every year, people make sacrifices to join their fellow pro-lifers in Washington for the March for Life. First of all, January is... cold. Just being at the March can be sacrificial. That was especially true this year, what with unusual cold, snow and ice all

along the way for most attendees. And more than that, people travel long distances. In a show of hands at the March for Life rally, many attendees acknowledged that they had traveled at least five hours to arrive. Not only that, but more than a few raised their hands when asked about traveling 10 hours or more.

It gets worse—or, of course, actually better, considering all the sacrifices made for the babies. Students and teachers from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, drove for 40 hours. Eight busloads of students and faculty from the University of Notre Dame, in Indiana, drove 10 hours to the March. And there were many more such undaunted pro-lifers.

23rd Annual Walk for Life West Coast

Once again this year, tens of thousands took part in the Walk for Life in downtown San Francisco on Saturday, January 24, 2026. Interestingly, the police in largely leftist San Francisco are friendly to the marchers and provide good protection at the rally in Civic Centre Plaza and the march to Embarcadero Plaza. Among the Walk's perennial themes are "Abortion Hurts Women" and "Women Deserve Better than Abortion".

Persuasive Placards at the Walk

Some profound and effective life-saving signs spotted at this year's Walk for Life:

- Abortion Stops a Heart and Breaks a Heart
- A Heartbeat Is a Heartbeat, No Matter How Small
- Pray to End Abortion
- The Outcry for Human Rights Is False and Illusory
if the Right to Life Is Not Defended
- Peace Begins in the Womb
- Rights Begin in the Womb
- It's O.K. to Change Your Mind [chalked on a sidewalk outside an abortion centre]

(In other situations, other signs work, too, especially, "We'll Help You and Baby".)

13th Annual OneLife LA

"Celebrating the Beauty and Dignity of Every Human Life from Conception to Natural Death" is the theme each year of this rally and "solidarity walk" in downtown Los Angeles. As always, thousands attended this year. Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez told the crowd:

OneLife LA has never been about politics. We are a religious movement, a stirring of the heart and conscience. A movement of the Spirit. OneLife is the dream of a city of love where every human life is sacred, where every person is cherished, welcomed and cared for.

'State-Sanctioned Slaughter'

"State-sanctioned slaughter" is what the animal protection group In Defence of Animals calls a just-approved plan by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, at the behest of the Catalina Island Conservancy, to kill all the mule deer—anywhere from

400 to 1,800; no one seems sure—on Santa Catalina Island, which rests in the Pacific 26 miles off Los Angeles.

The deer were introduced to the island more than a hundred years ago and have flourished, but the Conservancy and others claim they harm the native habitat. In Defence of Animals calls the plan to shoot them all a “bloody animal extermination campaign”. More than a few pro-lifers are likely to agree with them and sympathize with the deer.

To pro-lifers also, though, the terms “state-sanctioned slaughter” and “extermination campaign” immediately bring to mind the news on January 30 that Connecticut’s state government had just created an online and billboard advertising campaign to promote its free Abortion Legal Hotline in conjunction with a hardcore pro-abortion group.

The state’s attorney general, William Tong, a Democrat, boasted, “Abortion is safe, legal and accessible here in Connecticut, and that’s the way it’s going to stay.” State-sanctioned slaughter and extermination campaign, indeed!

Bishops’ New Chiefs

At their semi-annual Fall session last November, the US Catholic bishops elected Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul Coakley as their new president. They selected Brownsville, Texas, Bishop Daniel Flores to be their new vice president. Each will serve for three years.

Archbishop Coakley opposes the death penalty, mass deportation and trans mutilations. He vigorously defends unborn babies and their right to life, and he supports mothers:

Building a culture of life in Oklahoma that recognizes the inherent dignity of every person requires the protections afforded by pro-life legislation and a profound change of heart. I encourage Oklahomans to pray for women in crisis pregnancy situations, for their families and loved ones, for families waiting to adopt, for fathers and for the many pregnancy resource centres serving these brave parents.

Bishop Flores Slammed Pro-Aborts

In 2023, Bishop Flores was one of the three top bishops designated by their fellow bishops to refute 31 Catholic Democrat members of the House of Representatives who had just claimed they were “faithful” Catholics despite their firm support for all abortions. These Democrats had also denounced the US Supreme Court’s 2022 *Dobbs* pro-life decision because it not only overturned the 1973 abortion diktat *Roe v Wade*, it also proclaimed the obvious, that the US Constitution contains no “right” whatsoever for anyone to ever take a baby’s life.

The Democrats’ pledge of fealty to aborting babies descended into this blasphemy:

The fundamental tenets of our Catholic faith—social justice, conscience, and religious freedom—compel us to defend a woman's right to access abortion. We are committed to advocating for the respect and protection of those making the decision, if and when to have children.

In forceful and formidable repudiation of the Democrats, Bishop Flores joined Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services and Arlington, Virginia, Bishop Michael Burbidge. They said this:

It is wrong and incoherent to claim that the taking of innocent human life at its most vulnerable stage can ever be consistent with the values of supporting the dignity and wellbeing of those in need. "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception", including through the civil law (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2270, 2273). Abortion violates this with respect to preborn children and brings untold suffering to countless women.

To counter the Democrats' claim of going by their consciences, the bishops replied that in Catholic doctrine, "conscience is not a license to commit evil and take innocent lives. Conscience cannot and does not justify the act or support of abortion."

News Media Dishonesty

On the eve of this year's March for Life, veteran lay Catholic leader Dr Bill Donohue pointed out a flagrant instance of news media misrepresentation: that ABC News had blandly called the powerful, 100 percent pro-abortion political action fund, Emilys List, [that's right, they've dropped their apostrophe—ed.] "a liberal group that works to elect women to higher office."

The truth is that the group itself boasts that it funds pro-abortion Democrat women *only*. Not "women"—but *pro-abortion Democrat women only*. Just a slight difference! Spotlighting news media deceptions such as this is far more than quibbling, say pro-life leaders. Voters need truthful, accurate information, and they also need to know who is not giving it to them.

Next 40 Days Campaign

The next 40 Days for Life international, ecumenical, baby-saving campaign of presence, prayer and fasting outside abortion facilities will take place February 18-March 29, Ash Wednesday through to Palm Sunday. After announcing these dates, the group added this encouraging news: "Ninety-four cities have seen their LAST abortion facility go out of business following a 40 Days for Life campaign."

Pro-lifers want you to know that your prayers, whether from far or near, will fuse with the prayers of the 40 Days public witnesses on the front lines and bear truly good fruit.

Policy Wins under President Trump

The first full year of Donald Trump's second term in office has both gratified and frustrated pro-life observers. His support for the inherently anti-life IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) movement is a disappointment to pro-lifers, not to mention a tragedy for the new embryonic babies it kills. The Trump administration's seeming slow-walking of research into the dangers of the mifepristone abortion drug for the women who use it is another letdown.

But Mr Trump and his administration have delivered significant pro-life victories. Shawn Carney, director of 40 Days for Life, recently listed several new wins:

The National Institutes of Health will stop paying for research that uses the bodies of aborted babies. The Small Business Administration is looking into allegations that Planned Parenthood illegally took \$88 million in Covid-related loans. And Mr Trump is tripling the scope of the Mexico City Policy, which forbids abortion- and pro-abortion groups from using US taxpayers' dollars for committing or encouraging abortions overseas.

Mr Carney also said that “early data” indicate that use of mifepristone for at-home abortions might have begun to level off or even drop a bit in 2025. Whether that could be due to publicity about the administration’s research into the death drug or not, it is good news.

Defunding the Abortion Giant

Other pro-life wins in 2025 included the Department of Health and Human Services, under HHS Secretary Bobby Kennedy Jr, withholding millions in Title X “family planning” funds from Planned Parenthood. In addition, President Trump signed into law a federal spending bill that denied millions in Medicaid reimbursements to the abortion giant.

Under US law, the tax dollars previously given to Planned Parenthood were not paying directly to abort babies. But such money is interchangeable and as such certainly helped keep PP abortion centres open. The proof of this is that since the Trump-inspired cuts in funds in 2025, almost 70 Planned Parenthood facilities shut their doors.

Dexter Duggan, RIP

Dexter Charles Duggan, who died on January 15 aged 80, was a lifelong journalist who never hid his Catholic and pro-life convictions. He died in the saddle, so to speak, writing to the end; his last column, entitled “Reason for hope based on recent events”, ran on December 9.

Mr Duggan began his newspaper career as a boy, his obituary notes, when he typed up his own paper, which he and his little sister Mary then delivered to their neighbours. As a grown-up wordsmith, he became the editorial page editor of the *Arizona Republic* and he later worked in the editorial room of the *Orange County Register* in California.

“Abortion is the greatest human-rights violation the world has ever known”, Mr Duggan always emphasised as his unofficial central theme. As a longtime columnist for *The Wanderer*, a US pro-life, conservative Catholic newspaper, he always reported with both accuracy and verve as he skewered pro-abortion Catholic politicians and other apologists for aborting babies.

“Dexter Duggan was a knight of the keyboard”, said one pro-lifer, “and he championed the defenceless babies and mums as gallantly as any knight in shining armor ever did fair lady.” May Mr Duggan rest in peace, and may many young journalists follow his noble example.

Russell Shaw, RIP

Russell Shaw, who died at 90 on January 6, spent five-plus decades as a Catholic journalist. For years he was a communications and public relations specialist for the US

bishops and the Knights of Columbus, always ably presenting Catholic news and defending the Church and Catholic doctrine. He was also a reporter and essayist for many Catholic publications, writing thousands of articles and opinion pieces. He authored twenty-plus books as well.

Catholic writer Maria Wiering reports that Mr Shaw edited the *Our Sunday Visitor Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*, was an adjunct professor of communications at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, was a consultor for the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and co-ordinated media relations for two of Pope St John Paul II's US visits.

Mr Shaw was always unequivocally pro-life. He was a clear and steady proponent of the pro-life cause and an incisive critic of the anti-lifers. His wife of 64 years, Carmen, died in 2022; they had five children. They survive him, as do 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The Catholic reporter, author and screenwriter Eddie Doherty (1890-1975) once summed up his own credo: "All my words for The Word." Russell Shaw could have said the same. May he rest in peace—and may his Catholic and pro-life example live on and inspire many. Amen.

A Saying for All Pro-Lifers

I know well that the greater and more beautiful the work is, the more terrible will be the storms that rage against it. – St Faustina Kowalska

More pro-life news from America for you next time. **God bless – Brendan**

Crisis of the German Synod Looms Over Pope Leo

The German *Synodale Weg* or Synodal Path is reaching the climax of its journey to schism and heresy, and should be a warning to the Universal Church to avoid this form of church conversation and decision-making.

The Synodal Path's meetings began in December 2019 and concluded in March 2023. The purpose was to allow the bishops, priests, religious and lay people to consider how the Catholic Church in Germany should modernize itself, especially after the publication of the report of this Church's failure to deal with clerical child abuse.

The Synodal Assembly passed four significant resolutions in five meetings. Every one of the 230 members had a vote, and if a resolution was passed by two thirds of the votes, it became an accepted resolution.

In those three years plus, the Synod resolved that:

- a. Women should be ordained to Holy Orders,
- b. Sexual morality should be revised to allow homosexual acts and unions,
- c. Priests should be allowed to marry before and after ordination,
- d. Lay people should have an undefined authority to choose bishops and determine doctrinal issues.

The Vatican judged the Synodal Path to be contrary to the approved way of reaching decisions in the Church, according to Canon Law. It was criticized for allowing resolutions contrary to established Church teaching to be debated. Five bishops and some lay experts withdrew from the Synodal Path in protest.

In 2023 after the fifth and final meeting, a temporary Synodal Committee of 74 members was set up to establish a permanent Synodal Conference with its own statutes. The Committee was composed of 27 bishops, 20 other representatives of priests and religious orders, and 27 lay people from the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK), an active and progressive forum for lay people, which has played a key role in the Synodal Path. This Committee completed the Statutes of the Synodal Conference in November 2025, and the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK) immediately approved it.

On February 23, the Bishops' Spring Assembly will decide whether to approve or reject the Statutes of the Synodal Conference. Judging from their past co-operation, it is likely to approve the Statutes, and thereby launch the Synodal Conference into life and action to implement the resolutions of the meetings of the Synodal Path.

So, what is the authority of the Synodal Conference? Will its decisions bind bishops and the faithful? Or will they be merely advisory? What credentials, if any, will members of the Conference need? Will there be a difference between deliberations of the Synodal Conference and decision-making proper to bishops alone?

The Statutes put the roles of "Bishops and other faithful" on the same level, thus giving lay people power to decide on the Church's faith and morals. The bishops will be outnumbered by lay members in the Synodal Conference, and since their role in the German church is downgraded, will they be answerable to the Synodal Conference, which seemingly is to become the supreme authority in the "reformed" church. In this role, it will also have take over the management of the financial assets of the wealthy German Church.

The leaders of the German Church, both bishops and lay members, have ignored the warning of Holy See of July 21, 2022, that the Synodal Path in Germany "has no power to oblige bishops and the faithful to adopt new forms of government and new approaches to doctrine and morality." In February 2024, the Vatican sent another warning that the proposed Synodal Conference was contrary to Church law and practice; and that warning was signed by Cardinal Robert Prevost, Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, and now Pope Leo XIV. A further warning told the bishops that, were they to approve the Statutes, their decision would "null and void" and contrary to the Pope's command.

Whatever doubt they may have, the project has gone too far and too fast for the bishops to bring it to a halt. The agenda of "synodal reform" was determined during the five meetings of the Path, turned into Statutes by the Committee, and now is poised to become the Conference, the permanent organ which will implement the agenda of the Synodal Path: to openly ignore Church teaching, place clergy and lay people on an equal level, make clerical celibacy optional, open the priesthood to women, and bless unions of any kind and any gender.

Meanwhile, the controversial Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg announced his resignation as chairman of the Bishops' Conference, after six years of leading the Synodal Path, despite opposition from five bishops and repeated warnings from the Vatican.

End of Life Bill may Fall in the Lords

The UK spends some £30 million annually on suicide prevention, along with various groups like the Samaritans. But, side by side, tabled by Kim Leadbeater in October 2024, the *Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill* is before the House of Lords, and will become law, should it be passed in that House. It now appears that this bill is a government-supported legislation, pretending to be a private member's one, even while the Prime Minister insists it is a "neutral conscience issue".

I believe that assisted dying is deeply immoral, but also that it is impossible to legalise without leading to serious danger for patients, neglecting palliative care, and forcing the medical profession and the NHS to kill patients. Nonetheless, parliament had a responsibility to consider the bill, which requires getting it into a less harmful form before peers and MPs make a final decision.

"The essence of the bill is autonomy", Falconer told the committee. What about the possibility of coercion? —especially for disabled people, for the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and those who feel themselves to be a burden? And if choice is the key principle, would people really have one, given the lack of readily available, high-quality palliative care? Lord Falconer didn't want the details discussed, and refused to answer questions in the debate.

While the bill was before the House of Lords, more than 1000 amendments were tabled for scrutiny before it is to be returned to the House of Commons. While supporters of the bill claim that many of these amendments are a deliberate effort to strangle it, opponents claim that no proper scrutiny was done by Leadbeater's committee in the Commons. As one critic put it, "This bill is full of holes which vulnerable people will fall through and be harmed, if peers don't act to change and amend it." One "hole" is the absence of a conscience clause for medical workers.

Opponents emphasise that the bill would "devalue the importance of human life", and make assisted dying the "default solution to perceived suffering". Clearly, this bill has problems for the medical profession and patients, palliative care and the health service. Falconer has threatened to use a special law to resolve the debate in the Lords before the parliamentary session ends in May.

Ireland Follows the Leaders

In Ireland, an independent TD, John Halligan, brought up a *Dying with Dignity* private members bill, which fell when the government changed. In 2020, Gino Kenny of People before Profit offered a *Dying with Dignity* private members bill, but the Justice Committee of the Oireachtas decided that the bill had so many errors and omissions, that it should be cancelled. It recommended that the issue of assisted dying should be considered by a parliamentary special committee, which was set up in April 2023.

The 12 members completed their final report in 2024, recommending the government to legislate for assisted dying under certain conditions. The current coalition government has made no move on this issue.

In Ireland, a *Dying with Dignity* law would be supported by End of Life Ireland (EOLI), and Irish Doctors supporting Medical Assistance in Dying (IDsMAID) with the assistance of Dignity in Dying UK.

Meanwhile in France, President Macron endorsed an assisted-dying law as a “law of fraternity”, passed in the National Assembly last May and now before the Senate. The Catholic Bishops have called on senators to reject the bill, asking the question: “Can a human life, however weakened, be decently considered so useless as to warrant its termination?”

Islam, Jihad and Slavery

The Prophet Mohammed had no doubts about the role of slavery in the society of his time, writing “Allah has favoured some of you over others in provision.” He had 70 slaves in his retinue, so clearly he was one of the “favoured”. The Quran followed the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, which had accepted slavery as a normal practice, usually following tribal conflicts and wars.

The Quran does not condemn or try abolish slavery, but lays down various rules about the humane treatment of slaves and their protection against harsh excesses. It also permits the male owners of female slaves to exploit them sexually, giving groups like the Islamic State justification to enslave and abuse the Yazidi women in Northern Iraq in 2014. If you converted to Islam, you could not be made a slave. In Arabia of that time, Islam was relatively humane, and promoted the welfare of slaves in contrast to the harsh treatment by slave owners pre-Islamic times.

Jihad is the Holy War against unbelievers, the military struggle, commanded by Muhammed, to make the world submit to Islam, and is not some “spiritual” struggle to become “a better person”, as claimed by modern defenders. Slavery and *jihad* went hand in hand, following an understanding that the conquered people who refused to accept Islam could be treated as slaves, if they were spared execution.

In Seventh Century, the Arab leaders adopted a more aggressive *Jihad*, attacking the eastern Roman Empire, capturing Palestine, Syria, North Africa, Armenia and Greece. Remember the battles of Yarmouk in 636, Manzikurt in 1071, the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and then Cyprus in 1570. After fall of Constantinople, Turks advanced into the Balkans, attempting to capture Vienna in 1529 and 1683.

These conquests produced vast numbers of slaves, not forgetting the many executed Christians who refused to convert to Islam, like the Martyrs of Otranto in 1480. The number of slaves over the centuries was far more than that of the European transatlantic slavery of Africans in the 17th and 18th centuries.

After the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, some 15,000 Christian slaves were rescued from captured Muslim ships. October 7 was the feast of Our Lady of Victory, set by St Pius V. The captured Turkish flag was kept near the tomb of St Pius V until Pope Paul VI returned it to Turkey.

Islam's conquest of India was brutal, with untold numbers of slaves marched through the mountains of Afghan, now called the Hindu Kush, a name meaning Killer of Hindus, because so many died on the journey.

Jihad is Justified by the Quran

In the run-up to the Barbary Wars (1801-5 and 1815-16), the Ambassador of Tunisia offered a justification for Muslim piracy to Thomas Jefferson and John Adam, claiming, "It is founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Koran, that all nations who should but have not acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as Prisoners, and that every Musselman [sic] who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise. (*Letter of American Commissioners to John Jay*, 28 March 1786).

The Barbary corsairs were pirates who operated from the ports of North Africa, today's Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, and mainly targeted the Christian countries of the Mediterranean, ransacking coastal towns to capture slaves for the home market or for ransom. Between 1500 and 1800 entire coastal regions in Italy and Spain were depopulated by Muslim raids, with nothing similar in Muslim lands.

It should be no surprise that Islamic states were the slowest and last to outlaw slavery in law, if not in practice. Saudi Arabia abolished slavery in 1962, yet according to the Global Slavery Index, 740,000 people are slaves there today. Turkey abolished the trade in black (Zanj) and white (Circassian) females in 1908. Kuwait abolished slavery in 1949, Qatar in 1952, Niger in 1960. In some countries, slavery continues, unofficially. After slavery was abolished in Europe and the USA in the late 19th century, the "great powers" colonised most of Africa, using slavery as justification for dividing up the continent.

The Modern Prophets of Doom

"The end is nigh." How often have we come across a would-be prophet proclaiming the date of the final cataclysm. The non-fulfilment of these predictions didn't make much difference to their author's confidence, and after a period of reflection they once again predicted the end of the world.

What we haven't noticed are the modern prophets of doom, the climate change prophets of doom, believing sincerely, I presume, that unless we stop pumping out carbon fumes and achieve "net zero", our world of wealth and technology will collapse.

In 2009, Charles, the then Prince of Wales, told a conference in Brazil that the world had "only 100 months to avert irretrievable climate and ecosystem collapse". Notwithstanding this non-event, in 2021 Charles warned the Cop26 summit in Glasgow, "If we do not confront the monumental challenge head-on and fast, the world as we know it will be done for."

Our own Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, was not far behind at Cop30 in Brazil in 2025 when he warned the conference, "The science is undeniable. Temperatures are rising, and the clock is ticking."

It would seem that these modern prophets of doom are now being recognized as a false and an unwelcome feature of climate change. The UN's group for climate change, the IPCC keeps away from such alarming predictions, and even Bill Gates, the world's foremost philanthropist, denied that the warming of Planet Earth will bring ecological extinction.

There's no doubt that pumping out noxious carbon fumes creates a problem, and governments should take measures to reduce it, but agitating for a return to the stone age runs the risk of making us have a nervous breakdown. Talk of stabilizing the climate is nonsense. From its origin, the earth has experienced major changes of temperature and climate. For many years it was much hotter than now, and at other times much colder. This doesn't exclude or excuse man's wasteful exploitation of the earth.

Addendum: The disappearing polar ice is a threat to the existence of the white polar bears, Green activists told us. Their numbers across the Arctic region are heading down, they said. But, low and behold; yes, the ice is melting but the bear numbers are increasing and they are fatter than ever. Clearly, the bears didn't get the message, and didn't starve.

Diane Munday, 1931-2026, R.I.P.

A little-known architect of Britain's *Abortion Act* in 1967 died in January this year, aged 94. Diane Schieferstein was born into a Jewish working-class family in East London in 1931; her parents had probably left Germany at the end of the First World War. She became Diane Munday when she married Derek Munday in 1954, and had three children. About that time, Diane joined the Ethical Union, now named Humanists UK, which advocated a "permissive society", banning capital punishment but permitting homosexuality, divorce, abortion and euthanasia.

Every year in 1950s, some 100,000 women obtained an abortion, even though it was a serious crime. Some had money to pay an obstetrician for a "miscarriage", but most chose backstreet clinics or risked a self-induced attempt with a coat hanger. There was a high number of fatalities due to botched abortions.

After she became pregnant again, Munday was able to pay a psychiatrist to declare her mentally unfit to have another child, and had a semi-legal procedure to end the pregnancy. When a friend of hers died in 1964 after a botched abortion, she joined the Abortion Law Reform Association, and began a lifetime of campaigning for "abortion on demand". At meetings across the country, she told her audiences about her own abortion, driving home her argument that criminalizing abortion drives it underground with fatal consequences for Britain's poorer women.

In 1965, Munday teamed up with David Steel, and in October 1967, the *Abortion Act* was passed in a free vote. She celebrated her years of campaigning, but considered the bill with its strict conditions only a half measure for "abortion on demand". In her opinion, the 1861 Act was not repealed but only papered over.

In 1968, she became a founding member of the Birmingham Advisory Service, an abortion outfit to help women unable to obtain the two doctors' signatures for an abortion. Today, the service is known as BPAS, an international abortion provider.

Not long before her death, an amendment to the *Crime and Policing Bill* proposed by the Labour MP, Tonia Antoniazzi, decriminalised abortion up to birth when performed by a woman by herself. In her view, this was another step to fulfil her life's purpose.

Britain's Appeasement of Islamist Radicalism

Two questions remain to be answered about the local government's cover-up of routine abuse of underage girls in British cities between 1990 and 210. What were the causes of the cover-up? Described as "a hidden world in which Asian men groomed young white girls for sex", councillors, social workers and the police were terrified of being accused of racism and discrediting the multicultural project.

. It was a conspiracy of silence during which Ann Cryer, MP for Keighley, was threatened and outed as a racist in 2003, and Labour councillors tried to have her expelled from the Labour Party. Sarah Champion, another MP who spoke up for the victims of abuse in Rotherham, was nominated for "the award of the worst Islamophobia of the year". Neither the police nor the social services made any progress on the problem. Everyone knew but no one did anything. The two MPs were shunned by the police, the social services and the Muslim imams.

Keir Starmer accused those who called for an enquiry into the grooming gangs "jumping on the bandwagon of the far-right"; now he has agreed to a national enquiry in 2025.

Among progressives, liberals and lefties, there has been an aversion to even discuss this obvious evil, practised by a small number of Pakistani Muslims. They shared the view that white people are the oppressors while ethnic minorities are the victims, even though the reverse was happening in Rotherham, Rochdale and other cities. They turned away from these horrible crimes and offered a reverse interpretation. In this way they felt justified, even though these abuses were—and are— still continuing, and the extent of them is still unknown.

Unfortunately, the Labour Party is still terrified of appearing racist. Isn't this the reason why it remained mute for so long about female genital mutilation and honour beatings, and still cannot bring itself to describe the *burqa* as a pernicious symbol of institutional misogyny?

In the meantime, the Labour government is tying itself in knots to define Islamophobia as hatred of Muslims without banning any criticism of a religion or a religious group. In attempting this, it would support the unwillingness of the local authorities and police to prosecute the grooming gangs, still active in their evil activities. It would also add a "chilling" of the right to free speech.

No one is saying that all Pakistanis or Muslims are child rapists, but that all such rapists should be punished, whatever the colour of their skin or their race and religion. Ignoring the evil deeds of the "grooming gangs" for years was a form of racism that victimized and despised the white working class.

A second question is about the silence of the religious leaders of the various Muslim communities in these British cities. The men in the grooming gangs had Islamic names, showing that they had been brought up in some form of Islamic beliefs. Islam

teachers that Muslims are superior to non-Muslims, and so has a low opinion of a British population that has little or no religious practice.

The local leaders of Muslims from Pakistan in Britain emphasise the need to protect their members, even if their behaviour is thought to be immoral or criminal. Another feature of Islam is the superiority of men over women, the seclusion of young women at home, all of which seems to be absent among the underage girls abused. Some writers have mentioned the Quran's permission for a man, married or not, to have a concubine, see verse 4, 24.

An important but mostly missed reason for the silence of the Pakistani community is the continuing existence of the clan culture, where cousin marriage encourages loyalty to its members, dehumanizes those outside and covers up even criminal activities.

Addendum: Samantha Louise Lewthwaite, born 1983, a white Christian-born daughter of a former British soldier and an Irish mother from County Down, Northern Ireland, has been accused of involvement in more than 400 murders in several terrorist attacks, including the 7/7 bombing in London in July 2005. At the age of 17 she converted to Islam, and married Germaine Lindsay, otherwise Abdullah Shaheed Jamal, who would be one of the four bombers to blow himself up, killing 26 passengers on an underground train. Later she would sell her account to *The Sun* newspaper, and portrayed herself as an unknowing victim of the atrocity.

At the end of the decade, Lewthwaite is known to have left the UK, and joined al-Shabaad, the militant terrorist group in Somalia, and to have become the "right hand" of its leader, Ahmad Umar. She played a major part in several deadly bomb attacks in Kenya, East Africa. Since 2013, she has disappeared, continues to evade the world's intelligence agencies, and has reached an almost mythical status as the "White Widow" of Islamic terrorism. She has four children of various men, and is on the Most Wanted List of the CIA and other agencies.

Choosing a Dog over a Baby

Nearly one third of couples in England prefer a dog over a child. The number of children is 15 million but remaining the same while the number of dogs is catching up. Before the Covid emergency, their number was 9 million but now is 13 million. In some areas dogs outnumber children. Has this country become a "canine utopia", with "dog dads" and "dog mums" displaying their "adorable" animal in a baby carrier? Have dogs taken the place of children in this affluent culture? Is a dog chosen to be a surrogate for the child that never was? "That childless couple that makes a graven image of their dog".

No doubt, there are advantages. Dogs don't grow up like children, becoming testy and rebellious; dogs grow old but still love you. Their financial cost is so much less, and you can leave them in the house with a bone when you go out for the evening. Seemingly, they are much more suited to dual-income couples who choose to be child-free with a dog. Another feature of these couples is their ability to describe their love of dogs on social media. These couples are known as "dinkwads".

A Child-Free Nation?

South Korea, a country that rose from the ruins of the 1950-3 war to become a model of how to industrialise an agrarian country and today is a world leader in technology. In spite of its prosperity, it has the lowest birth rate in the world. Visitors cannot fail to notice how devoted Koreans are to their pets, usually dogs, which “give and receive love endlessly”. The president of the country, Yoon Suk-yeol has called the birth rate a “national emergency”, yet he and his wife have six dogs and eight cats but no children.

How come that the birth rate of this nation is a mere 0.7? Why do so many women give up the idea of having children?

Young people claim that the cost of having even one child with both parents in full-time employment is all but impossible. Many young people prefer to remain single, and be free from any lifelong commitment. In a word, love your pets and don't get married and children, a better and cheaper life choice.

Dogs have become a major industry in Korea. Holiday agencies offer pet travel, hotels have pet-friendly rooms, and room service for dogs. Even Buddhist temples offer dogs special clothes and meditation together with their owners. Restaurants no longer ban pets, despite strict food safety rules, and offer specially prepared dog treats and more.

Another consequence of pet love is a reversal of the traditional eating of dog meat, not long ago common among the older people during the hot months of summer, but today considered abhorrent by a younger generation. A huge majority in parliament in Seoul passed a law in 2024, banning the sale of dog meat stew in restaurants, and leading to a total prohibition of breeding and selling dogs as livestock by 2027.

A Nazi Past Rears its Ugly Head Again

Bruno Streckenbach was a notorious war criminal in Nazi Germany, who never spent one single day in a German prison after the war. He had commanded the SS death squads in Poland in 1939, rounding up and shooting “intellectuals” like teachers, clergy or politicians. Anyone thought capable of opposing the invasion including Communists, gypsies and Jews was to be shot. Then, after the German army invaded Russia, he directed the *Einsatzgruppen* to kill Jews by hundreds of thousands in a “Holocaust of bullets”.

In 1977, as Streckenbach was dying of heart disease and cancer, he confessed his wartime atrocities to a journalist, Gerd Heidemann, who was amassing an archive of documents on the Hitler regime. When Heidemann died in 2024, his vast collection of tapes, photographs and documents were gifted to the Hoover Institution, an NGO think tank where an academic discovered Streckenbach's four hours on tape and made it public.

After the first war ended in 1918, Streckenbach, a native of Hamburg, joined the Freicorps, took part in an attempt to seize power in Berlin, and then at the age of 29 joined the secret state police, known as the Gestapo, in 1931. His reputation as a ruthless enforcer of the Nazi agenda led to his appointment as head of the Gestapo in Hamburg in 1933, where he could put his violent ideas into practice.

After the invasion of Poland, Streckenbach organised the Einsatzgruppen, task forces whose purpose was to secure military control behind the German army, and find and exterminate all opposition to the German occupation in Poland and then in Russia. By the end of the war, some historians estimate that these Einsatzgruppen had murdered up to two million people including the Babi Yar massacre of nearly 44,000 Jews in two days. What started with individual arrests, torture and killing as a police chief became a radical ideology to murder large groups of people on an industrial scale.

During the war, Streckenbach held senior posts in the SS headquarters in Berlin, acting as Himmler's immediate officer. He became tired of the desk job, and opted for a military post in the Waffen-SS. After some training he led a division in the North-East of Russia in 1944, and was taken prisoner when the Red Army surrounded his troops in the Courland Pocket, Latvia in May 1945. A Soviet military court sentenced him to 25 years for war crimes, and, after 10 years in Vladimir Prison, he was released and returned to Hamburg.

Throughout the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war crimes, Streckenbach's name was constantly mentioned in connection with the realisation of the Final Solution, yet it was not until June 1973 that Streckenbach was charged with the murder of over one million Soviet Jews. However, he pleaded that his heart disease would make a trial all but illegal, and it was postponed indefinitely. He died on October 28, 1977.

Hitler Gave the Order for the Holocaust

During the four-hour interview, Streckenbach raised the question, Did Hitler give the order for the final solution? "This is something that interests every one of us. Was Hitler the initiator? Did he know, did he give the order?"

Some historians have taken the line that subordinates encouraged the slaughter of the Jews to win Hitler's approval, and that he never gave the order. Streckenbach had no doubt: "Personally, I have to tell you: I simply can't imagine that any man apart from or below Hitler would have started these things on his own initiative."

A Welcome with a Firm Purpose of Amendment

There's plenty of talk about the Church's lack of "welcome" to certain groups of people, Catholic or otherwise. Allow me to quote Pope Francis' message on Trinity Sunday in 2023: "*Emphasize, everyone—to welcome them as brothers and sisters? Do we offer everyone the food of God's forgiveness and Gospel joy? Does we breathe the air of home, or do we resemble more closely an office or a reserved place where only the elect can enter?*"

To my mind this suggests a very strange and foreign church, which didn't exist in the Fifties when I was growing up. It just has happened that I recently read the autobiography of Rudolf Höss (or Hoess), who was for over three years the Nazi Commandant of the notorious Auschwitz extermination camp in Poland, where he organised the deaths of some 2,500,000 people—by cold and starvation, disease, slave labour, physical torture, and, above all, by Zyklon B poisonous gas. The victims of this Nazi "cleansing" were Russian and Polish prisoners of war, Roma gypsies, criminals and political dissenters, and above all, Jews of all ages.

Höss disappeared in May 1945 when Germany surrendered, but was tracked down in 1946. He was tried before a Polish court and sentenced to death in April 1947. Shortly before execution, Höss returned to the Faith of his childhood, and made a last confession to a Jesuit priest who also gave him Holy Communion with the Last Rites.

If that isn't the face of a welcoming church, then what is? It is hard to think of a more evil man than Rudolf Höss who organized the mass killing of men, women and children. Where else would he have been more hated than in Poland, which suffered so monstrously from Nazi brutality. Yet the Catholic Church in Poland offered this mass murderer an open door to "the food of God's forgiveness" before he died.

What seems to be forgotten today is the nature of the sacrament of confession. The priest would have asked Höss if he had true sorrow for his actions, did he regret them and renounce the Nazi ideology that justified him in Auschwitz. Had Höss replied that he still support the extermination of the Jews, he would not have received an absolution of his sins and a welcome into the Church.

Today, if someone confesses that he is in a marital union, contrary to Church teaching, he must be sincere in his desire to amend his life. Otherwise he is rejecting the Church's teaching on marriage. Confession is not just about the past but also about the future. True sorrow comes with a firm "purpose of amendment" and a pledge to "avoid the occasions of sin".

Getting Real about 'Soft Drugs'

In Ireland's Dáil Eireann, a Bill entitled an *Act to Amend the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977* has passed its third reading. It would allow a person who is at least 18 years of age to have possession, for the person's personal use, of either or both cannabis and cannabis resin that in each case does not exceed a small amount. No surprise that this bill was sponsored by the People Before Profit gang, Gino Kenny, Richard Boyd Barrett, Brid Smith, Mick Barry and Paul Murphy. Various polls suggest that there exists a wide approval of this bill, treating cannabis as if it were no worse than alcoholic intoxication.

Some parties of the Left have called for a reform of the drug laws to be changed from a criminal justice to a public health problem. This view is a serious underestimate of the dangers of cannabis. The drug, especially the skunk variety, is far from being a "soft drug". It is correctly associated with serious addiction, violence and crime, and is more dangerous than heroin. As a cause of birth defects, it is worse than thalidomide in the 1950s.

The British police have called for its current Class B soft drugs to be raised to Class A dangerous drugs. After years of holding the opinion that marijuana wasn't a serious threat to health, the police are rejecting the progressive view that blames the law, not the drug, and are opposed to concentrate their efforts on "harm reduction", as if they were dealing with alcohol abuse. This view encourages the private use of marijuana, even the extra strong "skunk", but more seriously, it proves that the "broken windows" theory of policing is correct. Ignore so-called small acts of disorder leads to thinking that authority doesn't care, and opens the way to more serious crime and disorder.

In 2024, most of those caught with marijuana were let off with a caution and a promise "to be good", even as the mounting evidence of the increasing numbers of young people with psychosis was in full view. The distinction between "hard" and "soft" drugs is a dangerous fallacy. All drugs are dangerous.

Sweden abolished this distinction and saw drug use decline, but unfortunately changed back under pressure from the liberal consensus, thanks to George Soros and company.

The Latest Outbreak of an Old Disease

In December 2024, Dublin's city council accepted a motion to rename the small Herzog Park in Rathgar to the Hind Rajab Park, in memory of a five-year-old Palestinian girl killed in Gaza. The instigators of this racial proposal were the usual suspects, Sinn Féin and People Before Profit councillors. At the last minute, the Council's chief executive, alarmed at the rising condemnation, removed the motion on a technicality.

The Herzog Park controversy is the latest indication that anti-Semitism is increasing in Ireland, as it has in the UK and other countries in Europe.

The park in Rathgar was named after Chaim Herzog in 1995, an Irish citizen born in 1918 and reared in Dublin. He was the son of Ireland's Chief Rabbi, an active supporter of Irish independence. In 1942, he joined the British army and fought against the Nazi regime and was among the troops to liberate the captives in the notorious Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945.

At the end of the war, he went to the new state of Israel where he joined the Israeli Defence Forces and fought in the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Later, he entered politics in the Sixties, was elected to the Knesset in 1981, and then became President of Israel in 1983 for ten years. Herzog died in 1997, and is buried in Jerusalem.

This motion was not merely about the name of a park but suggests that Ireland no longer regards its Jewish citizens as part of the nation. The horrors of the war in Gaza have been harnessed to vilify, not just the Israeli government, but Jews in general.

Political Protest

"The proposal should be withdrawn in its entirety and not proceeded with", said Prime Minister Micheál Martin. He added that going ahead with the decision to rename Herzog Park would erase the distinctive and rich contribution to Irish life of the Jewish community, and that such denial of history would "without any doubt, be seen as anti-Semitic." The Irish deputy prime minister, Simon Harris said he completely opposes plans to rename the park. "It is wrong. We are an inclusive republic."

Helen McEntee, foreign affairs minister, also urged councillors to vote against the name change, commenting, “The government has been openly critical of the policies and actions of the government of Israel in Gaza and the West Bank, and rightly so, but renaming a Dublin park in this way—to remove the name of an Irish Jewish man—has nothing to do with this and has no place in our inclusive republic.”

The current President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, the son of Chaim, stated that removing the name would be “shameful and disgraceful”, and would harm “the unique expression of the historical connection between the Irish and Jewish peoples”.

Councillors Innocent and Indignant

The Council members were indignant at what they called government ministers’ “outrageous interference”, and protested that they were entirely innocent of anti-Semitism, even though they blamed “the Israeli intelligence” agency for the international furore. Just where they found the evidence for their nasty allegations against Herzog was omitted, although there is no shortage of such hate books about the Jewish race.

Ciarán Ó Meachair of Sinn Féin claimed that “This was a full court press by the Zionist lobby”, and accused Chaim Herzog of commanding soldiers “who raped, murdered, and pillaged innocent civilians.” People Before Profit’s Conor Reddy claimed that Herzog “played a role in ethnic cleansing, in genocide, in racism, and apartheid.” Lastly, Cieran Perry accused the Taoiseach of “carrying out the instructions of the Israeli lobby”, wherever that might be. At this point, you wonder when the little Green Men from Mars will arrive.

All councillors were united in denying they were anti-Semitic but were merely critical of the state of Israel. Would a scholarly debate about the actions of Israel allow this distinction? Maybe! But in today’s political climate, anti-Israel is anti-Semitism.

The decision of RTÉ to withdraw from the 2026 Eurovision contest after its Swiss-based central committee refused to exclude Israel is no surprise. The Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain joined Ireland in refusing to share a stage with an Israeli singer, in this case Yuval Raphael, 25, who escaped being murdered at the Nova Music Festival in October 7, 2023 by hiding under a pile of corpses for eight hours. Apparently, this little detail escaped the notice of the decision-makers in RTÉ.

According to Alan Shatter, a member of the Jewish community and a former Fine Gael minister, “It’s confirming an international perspective that Ireland is not merely exceptionally hostile towards Israel but that there is a problem of systemic anti-Semitism in Ireland.”

Let me conclude with a comment about women’s lives in Afghanistan today:

“In four years of Taliban rule, more than 100 edicts against women have been issued in Afghanistan. Girls must leave school at 12; women cannot work in almost any capacity outside the home (female civil servants had to relinquish their jobs to male relatives); they cannot drive, cannot leave their homes, use parks, shops, restaurants, health centres or cemeteries without a man in attendance. They cannot sing or dance; they cannot be seen through the windows of their homes nor their voices heard on the street outside. They cannot play sports, be treated by trained midwives, access the courts or travel outside the country. Books by women were recently removed from the country’s

libraries; outside the home, women must cover their entire bodies at all times, even their hands, with a chador — the hijab is too immodest because it shows their eyes. One mullah recently suggested that the chador should only allow one eye to be exposed as women only need to see the pavement in front of them.”

Requiescant in Pace

We pray for the following friends and supporters of Family & Life who have died recently: Joan Rodrigues, Breda Dorrian, Kay Lonergan and Hilary O’Sullivan.

Please remember them in your prayers.

Every month Fr David O’Hanlon offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the intentions of our supporters and the repose of the souls of our deceased donors.

Grateful For the Past, Providing for the Future

As we prepare to celebrate St Patrick’s Day, it’s a good time to consider the debt we owe to those who have gone before us. During the age of the Vikings, the raiders pillaged and destroyed the great monasteries and churches across Ireland, and killed or enslaved priests and monks, and laid waste to the country. Today, Ireland’s heritage is under siege by modern Vikings who despise the Christian understanding of human life and the family, and wish to erase them from the law and public life. I invite you to pray that Ireland’s patron saint will come to our aid at this perilous time.

Beneath all the kitsch that has been added to St Patrick’s Day in recent years, it is a day to honour our national apostle, but also to be grateful for all the generations who have passed on the faith and the values that have shaped our country. And they did this, often at a great cost, so that today we are the beneficiaries of their sacrifices.

Will future generations be able to look back on us in the same light? Will they be able to say that we passed on the treasure entrusted to us? Hopefully they will. One effective way to ensure that the values we hold dear remain strong is to ensure that the work of Family & Life continues in the future. A bequest, whether large or small, will help us to plan and prepare a secure foundation for our work to progress. There is much that needs to be done.

If you are thinking about leaving a bequest to Family & Life in your Will, please let us know. Benefactors are enrolled in the Eternal Friends Society. Further information is available from the office.

Please remember them in your prayers. God bless you and yours,



Contributors: Brendan Gleason and David Manly

PS Are you dismayed by the doctrinal confusion that the Pope Francis years brought? Would you like inside information on the suppression of the Tridentine Mass, the looming German Church schism, the rumoured Vatican “gay lobby”, the sex-abuse scandals, the abdication of Pope Benedict XVI, the sacking of Cardinal Müller, women’s ordination, Rome’s secretive pact with Communist China, and more?

Then here’s good news: you’ll learn the “inside” story on these and other Church controversies in *Vatican Confidential: A Candid Conversation with Cardinal Gerhard Müller*. The Cardinal, who headed the Church’s doctrine office under Pope Benedict XVI, is a world-class theologian and a foremost defender of the traditional Faith. In this eye-opening interview with respected Vatican journalist Franca Giansoldati, you’ll discover...

...why the Cardinal says, “At this moment, I see the Church on the edge of a precipice” as horrific as the Turks’ “sack of Constantinople”; the cause of “the disintegration of doctrine”; how, on a crucial question, Francis “left an open wound unhealed”; the sordid details of the Cardinal’s sudden firing from his position in the Holy Office; who had backstabbed him; his alarm at a profound change he sees in the Church worldwide; and the radically different entity that many influential people seek to transform Her into.

Stunning revelations about Vatican controversies

You’ll also learn how “downright heresies” crossed his desk in Rome; the only course of action that’ll save the Church now; the unprecedented phenomenon in the Church that’s attacking (1) doctrine, (2) the papacy and (3) pastoral practice all at once; and the brave anti-Nazi German Churchman whom the Cardinal emulates.

The Cardinal also reveals a famous cardinal’s shocking proposal that’d destroy the Church; an act of Francis that subverted “the Petrine foundation of the papacy”; the “magical circle” of unqualified people around Francis; questionable practices for

nominating bishops under him; how he fired priests like “an absolute monarch”; his cruel humiliation of an aged prelate; how reform of the Curia relates to orthodoxy; and gross flaws in the German synodal approach.

This eye-opening book likewise relates who, in the Vatican, acted leniently toward sex-criminal priests; how, under Francis, “dogmatic theology [was] irrelevant, as if it had little to say”; the Tridentine Mass’s enemies in Rome; a powerful Churchman’s appalling ignorance of the Church’s nature; and wildly erroneous concepts of Christianity that many Catholics have today.

Outspoken prelate pulls no punches

The Cardinal also explains his sobering outlook for Europe; his vision of the Church in 50 years; his warnings about the world’s elitists who meet in Davos; how we should handle mass Third World immigration; how the Church should—and *shouldn’t*—give pastoral care to homosexuals; the Cardinal’s shocking analysis of trends in the German Church; horrifying sacrileges that some bishops allow in Germany; and how “something much worse than schism” might be coming there.

There’s still more: a little-recognised, “horrible” reason why Benedict resigned; why his abdication posed many still-unresolved problems for the Church; the shocking reason why a twentieth-century pontiff thought about resigning; whether bishops should stay out of politics; techno-elitists who are plotting “the final leap of evolution” and “the final stage of a path that negates Christianity”; and the growing danger of a “Big Brother” controlling humanity.

You’ll read, too, the reasons for the Church’s teachings on women’s ordination; where the push for female deacons and priests is headed; how centuries of spiritual decline produced legalised abortion and euthanasia; the grave spiritual state of pro-abortion “Catholic” politicians; the “terrible incoherence” of bishops who let them receive Holy Communion; how such bishops resemble certain infamous bishops of the past; and why a certain head of state today is worse than two of history’s bloodiest mass executioners.

The Magisterium: light in the darkness

This thought-provoking book also explores the truth about Liberation Theology; how the Church’s teachings can narrow the gulf between the poor and the mega-rich; why She opposes both Marxism and unbridled Capitalism; how Church teachings are the only moral guide for the economy; and heroic “episcopal role models” from history “who should... inspire us” to uphold human dignity against tyranny.

You’ll also discover the “very serious” evils that the Vatican’s deal with Communist China has created; how the Church should deal with oppressive regimes; the contemporary bishop who praised a totalitarian dictatorship; the terrifying trend that’ll be the biggest challenge for our current pope; how the Church should handle it and other grave problems; why the gates of Hell won’t prevail against Her; and many, many more facts, insights and inspirations that only Cardinal Müller could impart.

Vatican Confidential: A Candid Conversation with Cardinal Gerhard Müller sells for €15.10 (£ST13.10), excluding postage, handling and packaging, but IT’S YOURS

FREE AS OUR THANK-YOU GIFT for your contribution of €50 or more (or £40 or more) for Family & Life's work. Simply donate now here and receive the free gift:

Press the link or copy it into your browser:

www.familyandlife.org/donate

Dear friend, Cardinal Müller is a hero of the Faith. He's spent his life defending Church teachings and still defends them bravely, despite opposition from all sides.

I think you're heroic, too. That's because you bravely proclaim the truth about the sanctity of human life, no matter what others think. You pray for an end to abortion, no matter how distant the victory might seem. You contribute faithfully to the work of Family & Life, even though it requires sacrifice.

Your prayers and generosity help make all our successes happen. **Please send a Lenten sacrifice to Family & Life today.** We'll be grateful beyond words for any size of gift. It'll go to work immediately, rescuing babies, saving young people from the horror of abortion, and supporting all our programmes. God bless you!

PPS SAVE TIME! To receive your FREE GIFT more speedily, simply phone through your donation to our office right now at (353) 1 855 2145, or e-mail your credit card details to me at aoife@familyandlife.org Remember, you can also donate quickly and easily through our online service:

www.familyandlife.org/donate

May you grow in holiness during Lent!