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Dear Friend of Family & Life,

Since this is the last Update for 2025, and we are not sending Christmas cards, let me wish you and yours the blessings of this Holy Season. Keep in mind that a special Mass will be celebrated for your intentions on Christmas Day.

Today, I have some sad news, which comes to you from me and the four other leading members of Family & Life. This issue of the Personal Update may well be the last printed and posted version you will receive. If so, future issues starting with no. 208, will be sent to you as an email, in other words in digital form. If you don't have an email address, find someone in the family to receive it for you, letting you read it and see the book offers in every issue. Just send the email address to <aoife@familyandlife.org> or phone 01-855 2790.

Ever since the tragic referendum on the 8th Amendment in 2018, the income from our supporters has dropped, and we have been operating with a financial deficit, relying on last minute generosity to avert disaster. The Personal Update, which used to have a surplus with each issue, is now unable to pay the cost of printing and postage. All this means, if we are to survive, we may have to cut our outgoing expenses, and reduce the on-going work and projects that we have carried out since 1996.

The causes of our financial decline are plain to see. As the RIP lists of those who died show, the number of our members is declining—See the RIP list on page 22, and please remember them in your prayers. We also have fallen behind in recruiting new members. Covid too had a negative impact, as many supporters shy away from meeting the public at face to face events. Another cause is the undeniable fact that many members are not donating like they used to do. We will do our best to address these issues in the coming months.

Do you know friends who share your moral rejection of abortion and our current law? If so, please ask them to join you as supporters of F&L. Send us their email and postal address, with of course their permission.

Will you also consider making a regular donation by a standing order? The most valuable donations are standing orders, usually a monthly gift which goes automatically from your bank account to Family & Life. Even a small amount is valuable, because all together, these standing orders allow us to plan our work for the future with certainty, and maintain our most vital baby-saving work. At this point, let me thank all who have already set up standing orders, and pray God to bless you for protecting the unborn.

Please remember, if you prefer a direct bank transfer, email us at <info@familyandlife.org>, and we will send you a prepared form to sign. Let me reassure you that no standing order or bank transfer is written in stone; you are always free to change or cancel it at any time.

Please don't forget a gift to F&L in your will. If you intend to do this, don't put it on the long finger. We have a leaflet outlining how this can be done, as well as the ways in which we remember every person with an annual mass in Knock and another in Rome. You can order the information leaflet from the office and, at any time, you can avail of our free Solicitor's Will Service.

My prayer now is that you'll respond quickly by making a regular pledge, for an amount of your own choosing, by signing the Pledge on the reverse of the Reply Form or signing up to a monthly donation. See: <<https://www.familyandlife.org/donate/>> and select "MONTHLY".

St John Henry Newman, Doctor of the Church

Saint John Henry Newman was declared the 38th Doctor of the Church and the Patron of Catholic Education on November 1 by Pope Leo XIV in St Peter's Basilica. It was the Pope's namesake, Leo XIII who had created him a cardinal in 1879 and also declared St Thomas Aquinas the patron of Catholic education, now joined by the new doctor of the Church.

Unlike other doctors of the Church, Newman's theological writings did not include a compendium of Christian doctrine. Most of his writings, apart from his collection of sermons, were occasioned by challenges of people and events, requiring Newman to respond. One example was his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, written in response to Charles Kingsley, who accused him of placing expediency above truth for its own sake.

Throughout his long life, Newman recognised the threat of liberalism to the Christian Faith, especially in his own Church of England, a threat no less real today. His explanation of the development of doctrine over the centuries and the role of conscience remain valuable analyses of the modern problems of faith.

Newman was canonised in August 20 October 2019 by Pope Francis, and his feast day is October 9, the date of his conversion to Catholicism in 1845. At the canonisation the Prince of Wales, now king, spoke of the saint's role in restoring the place of the Catholic Church in the national life, showing that the UK is "a community of communities". Was this multi-culturalism the experience of Newman? Not likely, especially when he became a Catholic, and was denounced as a traitor.

In 1833, the Anglican Newman wrote the first issue of the *Tracts for the Times*, a defence of the Church of England as the *Via Media* (middle place) between Roman Catholic excesses and the Protestant "low church" of Geneva. In Tract 12, Newman called for the CoE to be known as "the Church in England", an ancient variant of the universal Church, yet expressing the "calmness and caution" of the English mind and its dislike of fanaticism and extremes.

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This middle position was a compromise, about which Newman began to feel doubts, encouraged by the Catholic Archbishop Nicholas Wiseman's article, *The Anglican Claim*, in which he quoted St Augustine's *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum* argument. Newman's doubts became a conviction. By 1845 he had resigned his Anglican living as a pastor in Littlemore, Oxford, ended the Tracts, and asked Fr Dominic Barberi to receive him into the Catholic Church.

His study of the Arian heresy in the Fourth Century made clear that his theory of the *Via Media* was a false and dangerous compromise, for which he deeply repented. At the Council of Constantinople in 381, there were three groups, the Arians, the Semi-Arians and the Orthodox. Whatever the Semi-Arians might claim, they were as heretical as the Arians. There was no middle position between any form of Arianism and orthodox doctrine.

Similarly, Newman realised that his *Via Media* theory was a form of political accommodation for Anglo-Catholics in a divided Church of England, which placed expedience over truth and made him a modern equivalent of the Semi-Arians. He only had one painful choice, and after much thought he chose to turn his back on his previous life as an Anglican clergyman, and "swim the Tiber" in 1845.

Today, the Church of England and other churches accept abortion and same-sex marriage as "politically expedient". For many seekers, this watering-down the Faith of centuries is another version of the *Via Media*, substituting social utility for Truth.

The Vatican Pimpernel from Ireland

Have you bought Ireland's new postage stamp to commemorate the ordination of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty in October 1925. He was called the Vatican Pimpernel, whose exploits in the occupied Rome in World War Two saved 6,500 escaping Allied prisoners of war, Italian resistance fighters and Jews from torture and death at the hands of the Nazi Gestapo. Joseph O'Connor, journalist and author, and brother of the late Sinéad O'Connor, did much to make the Monsignor's bravery amid the dangers of Rome well known in Ireland.

A Doctrinal Note Nixes Misleading Titles

The Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has issued a doctrinal note about certain titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Entitled *Mater Populis Fidelis* (Mother of the Faithful People of God), and signed by the Prefect, Cardinal Fernández, with the approval of Pope Leo XIV, the document makes clear that certain titles, namely the co-redemptrix and mediatrix are "unhelpful". If these two names need frequent clarifications to ensure a correct understanding, it would be better not to use them.

The basic purpose of this document is to deepen our understanding of the Motherhood of God, and foster one in harmony with the Christian message as a whole. Mary's greatness does not exist side by side with that of Christ, but is part of his saving work. She is the first and most faithful disciple.

Christ is the sole mediator and redeemer of every member of the human race, including his mother (I Timothy 2, 5). "Mary is the most perfect expression of Christ's action that transforms our humanity." She shared in the redemptive work of her Son, from the "Yes" to the message of the Angel Gabriel in Nazareth to the hour of her Son's death on the cross. Before Jesus dies, he hands over "the woman" to the beloved disciple John as his mother—and ours. (John 19, 27)

It should be clear from Luke and John that Mary was not just a passive instrument for Jesus' entry to the human race, but in St Augustine's word, the chosen and active co-operator that "the faithful might be born in the Church." This is why we call her the "Mother of the faithful People of God". At the same time, Christians should always keep in mind that Mary's achievements like the

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Immaculate Conception, was dependent on Christ and part of God's plan of salvation.

In sections 17 to 22, Fernández gives reasons for not using the term, co-redemptrix. Cardinal Ratzinger, then Prefect of the CDC in 1996, noted: "Co-Redemptrix departs too far from Scripture and patristic language and risks misunderstanding the source of all redemption. To insist otherwise is to ignore the very Christocentric foundation of Marian doctrine." Later, Pope Francis expressed opposition to this title, saying Mary "never wished to appropriate anything of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-saviour. No, a disciple."

In sections 23 to 33, the Cardinal explains how Mary can mediate the fruit of Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross to others, but again the title, Mediatrix of all Graces, is prone to misunderstanding and should not be used.

The unique role of Mary with the Saints of Heaven is to pray for the Church and its members on earth. As Mother of our Saviour she was united to her Son during his life in Palestine and at his Passion and Death "in a way that is unique and that far surpasses any other believer".

The two above names risk putting Mary on an equal level as her Son, and is what the Prefect described as "maximalism", which the Church wants to avoid.

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20251104_mater-populi-fidelis_

Rolheiser's Spirituality without Doctrine

Fr James Martin SJ, a notorious promoter of the LGBT ideology, acknowledged that Fr Ronald Rolheiser has been his spiritual director for many years, and that every year he rereads Rolheiser's book, *The Fire Within: Desire, Sexuality, Longing, and God*. It is easy to understand why Martin loves Rolheiser since his campaign needs a spirituality without doctrine.

Fr Rolheiser is a prolific author of books on religion and spirituality, and seemingly widely popular in the USA, and also reprinted in *The Irish Catholic* weekly. So, it's no surprise that the Association of United States Catholic Priests (AUSCP) should ask Fr Rolheiser to be the key speaker at its 2025 Assembly. Judging from its list of member groups, AUSCP is a dissenting organisation, whose aim is to redefine sexual sin and legitimise women's Holy Orders. Rolheiser clothes their dissent with the appearance of spirituality and holiness, and so allows dissenters to be comfortable with their "revised" Catholic life.

While Rolheiser acknowledges that church doctrine supplies the necessary boundaries, he insists that the "living experience" of each individual is the centre of the Faith. Once doctrine is treated as a "lifeless rulebook", then subjective experience becomes the rule of faith, superior to the deposit of Faith and Tradition.

It's no surprise that Rolheiser's views on chastity and celibacy were welcomed by the clergy of AUSCP. When asked to define the virtue of chastity, he did not speak of the moral struggle to control the wayward tendencies of the body, nor how Christians can recover the unity of right reason and their sexuality (*Catholic Catechism*, § 2337). Instead, he called chastity "reverence" and a respectful patience. As for priestly celibacy, he called it "hell, a loneliness that God himself condemned", as well as a form of poverty, which unites one to the "poorest of the poor" who "don't have anybody".

Just where Rolheiser found these notions is a mystery. Christ made chosen celibacy a higher calling for his disciples, and later Paul praised it for those who can choose it (I Cor 7). Deliberately renouncing the natural blessing of married life for the sake of the Kingdom of God is not "hell" but a source of joy and conviction.

Secondly, he confuses celibacy with economic poverty. Millions of people live in poverty but are

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not celibate, and most celibate priests are not poor, especially in America. Rolheiser almost blames God for imposing the “misery of celibacy” on priests and religious, ignoring the fact that celibacy is a freely chosen part of one’s total dedication to the Gospel.

This treatment of Catholic doctrine and priestly life is an invitation to the very perversions that St Pius X warned us in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*—a poisonous stream that is alien to Scripture and foreign to Tradition, a novelty where psychology replaces theology, and sentiment truth.

Addendum: Well before Fr James Martin came on the scene, Fr John Harvey founded Courage International, a Catholic apostolate to help men and women, experiencing same-sex attraction, “to live a chaste life”. Based in the state of Connecticut, North of New York, Courage was started in 1978 at a request of Cardinal Terence Cooke, archbishop of New York, and held its first meeting on September 26 of that year.

Fr Harvey wrote a booklet, *A Spiritual Plan to Redirect One’s Life*, outlining his programme “for homosexually-inclined persons” to “achieve a chaste, productive and happy life.” Within a few years, Courage had spread across the US and Canada.

When Fr Harvey died in 2010, his organisation had extended its ministry to women, and received the endorsement of the Holy See in 1994. Today, 160 clergy-led “chapters” are active in many countries. A chapter meets every week, and uses various means to achieve its goals: chastity, service, the sacraments and fellowship.

The current director, Fr Brian Gannon, makes no apology for the robust Catholic teaching of Courage, noting, “The secular world has a twisted view of sexuality.” The chapters “want to follow exactly what the Church is teaching.” Courage “is such a needed ministry. It helps people find peace.”

Courage should replace the tiresome Jimmy Martin and his camp followers, celebrated in the public media and social media, and sadly constructing a false magisterium without ever saying that same-sex activity is good. After all, he is a Jesuit.

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.

‘Nobody Has a Right...’

You don’t have a right. I don’t have a right. Nobody has a right to call death upon someone God has called to life”. – Mother Angelica, founder of the Catholic network EWTN

‘Common Good’ Includes Babies

“It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop.” (*The Gospel of Life*, #101 – Pope Saint John Paul II)

The Cupich-Durbin Affair

As we reported at length last issue, Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago was going to give one of America’s worst pro-aborts, US Senator Richard Durbin (Democrat-Illinois), a “lifetime achievement” award at an archdiocesan dinner in early November. In planning to honour Durbin, Cardinal Cupich was openly defying the US Catholic bishops’ official guidelines, which specifically forbid Catholic institutions from honouring pro-aborts.

Eight active and two retired pro-life bishops publicly objected and asked the cardinal to cancel the award, but he refused. He wanted to salute Durbin for his work on immigration, in line with liberal

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Catholics' promotion of "the consistent ethic of life", a construct they use to redefine "pro-life" to mean their favorite causes, including everything except aborting babies.

Pro-life Dr John Breen, a law professor at Loyola University of Chicago, then spoke up: "All of our work is premised upon the dignity of the human person. And yet you're going to honour a man who denies the dignity of a whole class of persons? It makes no sense." He called the abortion enthusiast Durbin a "poster child for the inconsistent ethic of life".

The 10 pro-life bishops said the senator's longtime advocacy of aborting babies far outweighed anything he had done on immigration or any other matter. They pointed out the Church's doctrine on the sanctity of human life; the US bishops' naming the right to life their "pre-eminent" priority; and the fact that Durbin's ordinary, Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, had barred him from Communion because of his abortion promotion.

Pope Leo's Unfortunate Intervention in the Durbin Affair

The situation was stalemated until September 30, when a journalist asked Pope Leo about the controversy. The Pope replied that, although he was not very familiar with the case, "I think it's important to look at the overall work that a senator has done during, if I'm not mistaken, in 40 [actually 28] years of service in the United States Senate."

Getting Cardinal Cupich off the Hook

Many pro-lifers said this "look at the overall work [of politicians]" formula totally undercuts their decades-long effort to get Catholics to stop voting for the pro-abortion politicians who make the aborting of millions of babies possible. They said the remarks also pulled the rug out from under the 10 American bishops who were taking a pro-life stand against the award.

Just five hours later that same day, September 30, as pro-life journalist Jonathan Liedl reports, Cardinal Cupich announced that Durbin had decided to decline the award. The withdrawal gave Cardinal Cupich a way out of the jam he had created for himself, and Pope Leo's remarks about looking at politicians' full records gave credence to both the cardinal and the politician.

Bishops' Semi-Annual Meeting

At our deadline the US bishops were just opening their annual Fall Meeting, and some pro-life observers were wondering if liberal bishops such as Cardinal Cupich would use the occasion to attack the bishops' official position that the mass aborting of America's babies is their "pre-eminent priority" in the wake of Pope Leo's remarks about the Durbin award episode. We will analyse any developments for you next issue.

Bishops' Fall 2025 Agenda

This year, the bishops of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will elect their new president and vice president to their three-year terms. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, is finishing his term as president this year, and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore is completing his as vice president.

The bishops will elect a new president and a vice president from a list of 10 candidates nominated by their fellow bishops: first the president, by majority vote, and then the vice president from the remaining nine, also by a majority. Six of this year's candidates are archbishops and four are bishops.

None of the candidates are among the 10 who publicly objected to Cardinal Cupich's now shelved plan to honour the abortion fanatic Durbin. But on the other hand, during the entire Cupich-Durbin episode, not a single American bishop publicly backed Cardinal Cupich.

Most pro-lifers probably would consider Bishop Robert Emmet Barron of the Diocese of Winona-

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Rochester, Minnesota, and Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, to be the best candidates on the list of 10—without excluding anyone, however. We will report the results next issue.

Fallout Down the Road

Pro-life strategists have warned that in upcoming elections, including the 2026 midterms and the 2028 presidential election, pro-abortion politicians will cite Pope Leo's "I think it's important to look at the overall work" statement to legitimise themselves in the eyes of Catholic voters and to undermine pro-lifers who call candidates' abortion support a disqualifier.

Pro-lifers naturally hope that before long, Pope Leo will clarify his remarks.

Misunderstanding Pro-Lifers

In addition to saying, "it's important to look at many issues that are related to the teachings of the Church", Pope Leo also claimed pro-lifers who focus on fighting abortion are "not really pro-life". Without evidence, he brought up capital punishment, as if pro-lifers support it: "Someone who says I'm against abortion but is in favour of the death penalty is not really pro-life." Also without evidence, he brought up immigration, as if pro-lifers oppose it.

One pro-lifer quipped, "So when Robert Prevost was a pro-lifer in his student days at Villanova University, did that mean he was pro-death penalty and anti-immigration?"

Pope Leo's unsupported—and, say pro-lifers, irrelevant—citing of the death penalty and immigration in relation to the pro-life cause exactly mirrors the talking points that America's clerical defenders of pro-abortion politicians have been using for decades. Many pro-lifers see that as no coincidence; they suspect that some Americans in the Vatican, and perhaps Cardinal Cupich himself, have been giving the Holy Father a slanted view of US pro-lifers.

Pro-lifers note that, although Pope Leo is American, he has been away from the United States for decades and that could result in his unfamiliarity with the US pro-life movement.

Pope Leo and Politicians' Consciences

US pro-lifers were all the more surprised at Pope Leo's "look at many issues" remarks, given that just a few weeks earlier he had told French politicians to follow their Catholic faith: "There is not the politician on one side and the Christian on the other." He told the officials not to follow evil party directives. Pro-lifers hope he will reiterate these points in the future.

Al Capone's 'Overall Record'

Liberal Catholics claim that pro-abortion politicians' record on every other issue is what counts, so never mind their enabling the murders of millions of infants. (That, of course, is not what Pope Leo said or meant.) In response to liberal Catholics' casting aside the pro-life cause, and what is far worse, their jettisoning abortions' millions of tiny victims, some pro-lifers have wryly brought up the case of the Chicago mobster Alphonse "Al" Capone (1899-1947).

Estimates vary, but Capone is thought to have been responsible for the murders of perhaps 200 people during his crime spree in the Windy City in the Roaring '20s and early 1930s. Yet starting in November 1930, he also funded a soup kitchen that fed thousands of unemployed men three meals a day, no questions asked, during the Great Depression.

At that time, Chicago's city government was doing little for the unemployed. When Capone, disgraced, a shell of his former self, and his crime empire long gone, died in January 1947, the newspapers found men still grateful to the man who helped them in their time of need. Of course, Capone had fed them in a vain attempt to polish his wretched public image, but so what?

Should we evaluate America's worst mobster based solely on his soup kitchen and ignore his

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murder victims? That, say pro-lifers, is how liberals evaluate pro-abortion politicians. One pro-lifer quips that he is surprised no liberal clerics have opened Capone's canonisation cause.

Pope Leo: Boost Families and Birth Rate

On October 14, as pro-life journalist Doug Mainwaring reports, Pope Leo urged Italy's President Sergio Mattarella and other officials to fight Europe's disastrously low birth rate and promote families and family values. In words applicable around the world, the Holy Father said:

"This requires commitment to promoting family-friendly choices at various levels, supporting their efforts, promoting their values, and protecting their needs and rights... In particular, I would like to emphasise the importance of ensuring all families the essential support of dignified employment, under fair conditions and with attention to the needs of motherhood and fatherhood. Let us do everything we can to give confidence to families, especially young families..."

US pro-lifers know Pope Leo has a pro-life heart, thanks to his statements such as this.

Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi Vilify Trump and Christians

Guesting on a national radio show on September 24, failed Democrat presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who is now 77, unloaded this semi-coherent word salad:

So, I think that's what makes us so special as a country, and the idea that you could turn the clock back and try to recreate a world that never was dominated by, you know, let's say it, white men of a certain persuasion, a certain religion, a certain point of view, a certain ideology, it's just doing such damage to what we should be aiming for.

After Mrs Clinton targeted "white men of a certain persuasion, a certain religion", the show's hosts exhibited a total lack of curiosity. By "a certain religion" she obviously meant Christianity. Equally obviously, for the sake of journalistic integrity the hosts needed to pin her down by inquiring, "You said 'a certain religion'. Which religion is that"? They did not.

The clear implication is that by failing to follow up with Mrs Clinton, the radio hosts were protecting her from a public relations disaster of having to name Christianity as her enemy, elaborating on that and then being hit with "Hillary Clinton rips Christianity" headlines.

Pro-lifers observed that Mrs Clinton, who has obsessively promoted abortions her entire political career, does have a major beef with Christianity—because Christians have defended babies from being aborted, all the way back to the Didache's prohibition in the First Century AD. (Among today's Christians, of course, Catholicism is the most steadfastly pro-life.)

Hillary Did This Before, Too

Mrs Clinton's recent foray into targeting those "of a certain persuasion, a certain religion, a certain point of view, a certain ideology" was not her first.

In 2016, during her losing campaign against Donald Trump, she—weirdly—called his supporters, most of them pro-life Catholics and Protestants, "a basket of deplorables". She also, well, deplored what she termed, without evidence, their "offensive, hateful, mean-spirited rhetoric". Then she insisted, "Now, some of those folks, they are irredeemable, but thankfully, they are not America." Many observers believe this name-calling contributed to her defeat.

Then, two years ago, in October 2023, Mrs Clinton, speaking to interviewer Christiane Amanpour, ventured into shocking, full-bore totalitarianism. As quoted by writer David Henderson, she called President Trump's millions of supporters "a cult" and actually said, "Maybe there needs to be a formal deprogramming of the cult members." "Formal"!

Mrs Clinton Has Targets

That call for "deprogramming" was bad enough, but then Mrs Clinton went deeper:

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Make America Great Again [i.e., “MAGA” supporters of President Trump] was a bid for nostalgia, to return to a place where, you know, people could be in charge of their lives, feel empowered, say what they want, insult whoever came in their way. And that was really attractive to a significant portion of the Republican base. So it is like a cult and somebody has to break that momentum.

Writer Henderson rightly pointed out that Hillary, by her own words, was proclaiming herself to be against Americans being in charge of their own lives and saying what they want:

Get it? Somebody has to break the momentum of a movement of people who want more freedom to live their lives as they see fit and to say what they want. And one way she proposes to rid people of this belief in freedom is “formal deprogramming”. Yikes!

Mrs Clinton’s stated objective, that “somebody has to break that momentum” toward liberty, is sinister in the extreme: her “somebody” can only mean government. Pro-lifers are surely among her targets; the Biden administration’s four years of persecutions of pro-lifers are a foretaste, say pro-lifers, of what Hillary and her ilk want more of in a future Democrat regime.

Cardinal George’s Prediction

No one, as far as we know, has commented that the two assassination attempts against then-presidential candidate Donald Trump in the summer of 2024 can be viewed in relation to the remarks about martyrdom that Cardinal Francis George (1937-2015) of Chicago made to a group of priests in 2010. The cardinal said this:

I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilisation, as the Church has done so often in human history.

Cardinal George later wrote that he was trying to encourage the priests and remind them that Divine Providence will always be with us, even in the worst scenarios:

I was trying to express in overly dramatic fashion what the complete secularisation of our society could bring... What I said is not ‘prophetic’ but a way to force people to think outside of the usual categories that limit and sometimes poison both private and public discourse.

Obviously, President Trump is neither a bishop nor even a Catholic. Nor was young pro-life, pro-family, conservative commentator-influencer Charlie Kirk, who was assassinated on a college campus this past September 10. But no one can deny that secularisation has increased in our society since Cardinal George spoke in 2010 and that so have leftist attacks on Catholic and other Christian churches and schools; on public statues of Catholic heroes such as St Junipero Serra; on pro-life sidewalk prayer warriors and counsellors outside abortion facilities; and on pro-life and pro-family speakers and outnumbered student groups at college campuses.

In spite of all this, courageous pro-lifers prayerfully forge ahead, speaking truth, spreading love and relying, as Cardinal George advised everyone to do, on Divine Providence.

Nancy Pelosi Vilified Mr Trump

Guesting on a CNN show on November 3, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (Democrat-California), the pro-abortion former Speaker of the House, savagely attacked President Trump. She fumed, “He’s just a vile creature. The worst thing [sic] on the face of the Earth.”

Pro-life steps that Mr Trump has taken were clearly at the top of her mind. She insisted, “He does not honour the Constitution... he’s turned the Supreme Court into a rogue court.” By that she had to mean his naming three justices to the Supreme Court who all voted in the Dobbs ruling on June 24, 2022, to invalidate the court’s 1973 abortion dictat *Roe v Wade*, and declare that the US Constitution has never contained any “right” to kill babies in the womb.

For years, pro-aborts have been raising the level of anger in their diatribes against pro-lifers

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everywhere, including those in government. Likewise for years, pro-lifers have been warning that some disturbed and unstable individuals will hear the hatred in the pro-aborts' denunciations, and a few could decide to commit violence against pro-life individuals.

More Pelosi vs Mr Trump

Guesting on another CNN show on October 8, Nancy Pelosi slammed President Trump, and in doing so revealed much about her mindset and that of her fellow abortion-lovers. She announced, "I always say to people, know your why—why do you want to be in politics? My why is for the children." She listed several policy issues on which she disagrees with Mr Trump, such as education, the economy and environmentalism, and then proclaimed, "I want to declare, Donald Trump is the worst president for children in American history."

Pro-lifers have commented that Mrs Pelosi, 85, is in her 20th two-year term in the House of Representatives—she was first elected in 1987—and that in all that time she has never saved any children in the womb from being aborted. Instead, she protects the abortionists who slay them by the millions. She totally disregards unborn babies, their humanity and their God-given right to life. So do all pro-aborts, including pro-abortion Catholics such as Mrs Pelosi.

Her record in Congress, therefore, begs the question, "Who is worse for children?"

Days after her November 3 CNN appearance, by the way, Mrs Pelosi said she would not seek re-election in 2026. Several fellow pro-abortion Democrats are vying to succeed her.

Contractors Won't Build Abortion Centre

New Mexico's Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (Democrat) is so devoted to aborting babies that she slipped an abortion provision into a giant state funding bill—to allocate \$20 million in taxpayers' dollars for building abortion centres in the state. One of the proposed facilities is a \$10 million facility in the town of Las Cruces ("The Crosses").

She did not anticipate, however, that many New Mexico business owners and their employees are pro-life and have consciences they live by. At least three contractors and some other businesses in Las Cruces have stood up and are refusing to build the abortion centre.

As of our deadline, the project is at a complete standstill. Not only that, but New Mexico pro-lifers have begun a statewide, grassroots prayer and publicity campaign to encourage everyone to continue boycotting the proposed baby-killing centre. May they succeed!

President Trump: No 'Right' to Abortions

On October 22, President Trump said the US government is rejoining the international pro-life Geneva Consensus Declaration, which affirms that there is no "right" to abort babies. He signed the USA to the Declaration in his first term as President, but Joe Biden withdrew from the group as soon as he could.

The Geneva Consensus, attested to by 40 nations, upholds the ideals of the right to life, the primacy of the natural family and the defence of national sovereignty against globalism.

In a letter to the group, President Trump said this:

My administration is steadfastly devoted to restoring a culture that values the inherent dignity of every child, and to upholding the eternal truth that every person is created in the holy image and likeness of God, with infinite hope and boundless potential. Together with our allies and partners across the world, we will continue to build a future rooted in faith, family, and freedom.

Abortion Victims' Memorial Service

On October 18, Delaware Right to Life, Knights of Columbus and other pro-lifers held their annual prayer service in Cathedral Cemetery in Wilmington, Delaware, for 63 abortion victims

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buried together there in 1988. They also remembered the late Dolores “Dee” Becker, the pro-life leader who arranged Mass and a burial service for the babies that year.

The babies rest in a grave with a headstone, sponsored by the Knights, that depicts the Madonna of the Street and reads, “Memorial to the Victims of Abortion” and “Our thoughts and prayers are forever with the holy innocents of the world. You are not forgotten.”

The babies were those from Delaware found in 1988 among thousands of babies in labelled bags whom pro-lifers rescued from a loading dock for garbage—God forgive us all—in a Chicago suburb. Mrs Becker received the Delaware babies, and for their burial, the Delaware state police escorted the funeral cortege to the cemetery. Said Mrs Becker at the time, “We want to give the service respect and dignity, as if we were burying our own children.”

Moirá Sheridan, current president of Delaware Right to Life, says Mrs Becker made a vow that she would “never give up on the babies” targeted for abortion, and she kept that pledge.

53rd Annual March for Life

“Life Is a Gift” will be the theme for the 53rd Annual March for Life in Washington, DC, on Friday, January 23, 2026. First held in 1974, the rally-and-march draws 100,000 and more pro-lifers, most of them young, to America’s capital city to make a heartfelt, eloquent and massive public stand for our God-given right to life, for support for expecting mums and for legal protection for abortion-targeted baby girls and boys in the womb.

Organisers and attendees alike say the march is a powerful statement every year that lets politicians and America’s entire establishment know the pro-life movement is a permanent presence in American life, and will never stop defending babies and their mothers. The event solidifies pro-lifers’ awareness, unity and resolve in the cause of building the Culture of Life.

The March for Life also serves as an effective kickoff to inspire and energise everyone to go back home, and then be actively pro-life all throughout the coming year.

Pro-lifers love to invite everyone to the march, from near and far. You can urge your family, relatives and friends in the USA to attend the march. And if by Providence you should find yourself in the States in late January, do join the March for Life, and you will find yourself immersed in an unforgettable experience, a sea of kind and kindred pro-life souls.

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. Thousands attend OneLife LA, including many young people. Next year’s event will be on Saturday, January 24, 2026. The event concludes with a pro-life “Requiem for the Unborn” Mass in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

23rd Annual Walk for Life West Coast

Next year’s Walk for Life in downtown San Francisco will take place on Saturday, January 24, 2026. The event consists of a large rally in Civic Centre Plaza and a march along storied Market Street to Embarcadero Plaza. It is always on the Saturday closest to January 22, the date of the now-defunct 1973 US Supreme Court’s *Roe v Wade* abortion diktat that nullified all state protections for babies in the womb. Tens of thousands attend. Among the Walk’s perennial themes are “Abortion Hurts Women” and “Women Deserve Better than Abortion.”

‘Oíche Nollag’

... Fágaidh an doras ar leathadh ina coinne, An Mhaighdean a thiocfaidh is a Naí ar a hucht;
Deonaigh do shuaimhneas a ligean, a Mhuire, Luíodh Mac Dé ins an teach seo anocht...

Please turn...

‘Christmas Eve’

... And let ye leave the door wide open for her too,
The Virgin who is coming with her Baby on her breast;
Come on in, sure, and have a rest for yourself now, Mary,
And let God’s Son go to sleep in this house tonight...

May each of us leave the door to our heart wide open for each of the unborn baby girls and boys and their dear mums, this Christmas and every day of every year! *Nollag shona duit!*

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

Lawyers brand Exorcism as Outlawed Conversion Therapy

Just how a British church in Sheffield paid Matthew Drapper a five-figure sum of money in 2024 may be a mystery, but should be a warning to churches and believers to tread carefully around the rite of exorcism.

The church is St Thomas Philadelphia in the city centre, part of the Church of England diocese of Sheffield, and an Anglican-Baptist church where Drapper was an active member of the congregation. Judging by its website, it is more Baptist than Anglican, favouring preaching and spontaneous participation in its worship.

Drapper was taking part in a kind of weekend retreat in 2014, when he told his counsellor of the conflict between his homosexuality and the faith. The elders decided that he should be given an exorcism to get rid of the “demonic possession” of homosexuality, and cure his “ungodly lifestyle”.

Two prayer leaders carried out an exorcism in a prayer session, and claimed to see demons leaving his body. Drapper claims to have been terrified, and deeply depressed after the event. He lost his faith, left the church and made a formal complaint against the church in 2016. When it denied his allegations, Drapper went to the diocese, which investigated the incident, and eventually paid him a large sum in compensation.

Drapper’s solicitor described his experience at the church as “conversion therapy”, “an abhorrent homophobic practices” and an attempt to change his sexual identity, allegations based on suppositions far from being proved but accepted by the court.

Another gay man has recounted a similar experience at this Sheffield church when he attended a weekend retreat around the same time. His exorcism for the same sin made him vomit, and he was told that the demon had left him. “I was made to feel that it was wrong.” He also left the church and lives in another part of England.

In the meantime, both the previous conservative government and the current Labour one have committed to pass a law banning the so-called conversion therapy, “harmful practices” aimed, it is said, “to change someone’s sexual orientation or personal understanding of their own gender...” It is difficult to frame a law that will ban certain “conversion” practices but the permit science-based practices of doctors and psychotherapists? Clearly, churches should think well before expelling this demon.

Addendum: The Hilary Cass report warned of the “chilling effect” of a ban on transgender conversion therapy.

A Conspiracy Theorist or a Voice of Sanity?

Candace Owens, 36, is an Afro-American “influencer”, a political commentator and author. Today, she has some 12.4 million followers on the social media. However, many have identified her as a conspiracy theorist, and not without reason. Not so long ago, she claimed that dinosaurs are a

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“fake and gay” invention by the Anti-Christ, that landings on the Moon never happened, and that science is “pagan faith”. More recently, she adopted the claim that Macron’s wife, Brigitte, is a man, and belongs to a “demonic” paedophile network controlling the world. Not surprisingly the Macrons are suing her in the US.

She is called a conservative, although for a while she espoused leftwing causes with gusto. Today, she supports President Trump and worked with the late Charlie Kirk. Owens is offended by feminism, claiming that the traditional role of women is her choice. She opposes abortion, calling it a tool for “the extermination of black babies”. There are very few significant people who have not been seized on by Owens, and used in her controversial pronouncements since 2015 when she started her political career.

Owens is married and has four children, and announced her conversion to the Catholic Church in April 2024.

Senior Monks and a Lady of Uncertain Morals

The following account shows that scandals are not confined to the Christian churches, as our social media like to suggest. In Thailand, more than 90 per cent of the 71 million population are Buddhists, and at any one time there are about 300,000 monks and 85,000 novices, living in 38,000 temples and monasteries across the country.

Monks take a vow of celibacy, and even refrain from touching a woman. Yet, scandals involving the Sangha, that is, the communities of monks and nuns, are not uncommon in Thailand, and often involve sex, money or drugs. However, the seniority of the monks involved in the latest incident has made it a major scandal, and raised questions about the wealth and privilege of the many monasteries in the country.

The police were called in when Phra Thep Wachirapamok, an abbot of a famous temple in Bangkok, suddenly disappeared. Their investigation led to Wilawan Emsawat, a lady of uncertain morals, whose mobile phones were found to contain chat messages and videos of the missing monk and other senior monks, all in compromising activities with her.

It soon became clear that this lady had used these records to blackmail the monks for large sums of money and valuable gifts like a Mercedes-Benz SLK200. Since then, some nine abbots and other senior monks have been defrocked for breaking their vows, and using the temple funds to keep Wilawan quiet.

Wilawan Emsawat, 35, known by the nickname of Golf, was arrested at her luxurious home outside Bangkok on suspicion of crimes including money laundering and receiving stolen goods. Her bank account showed that she had received some £8.8 million during the past three years, most of which she spent on gambling.

Sanitsuda Ekachai, a columnist for the *Bangkok Post*, wrote;

Women have long been depicted in mainstream teachings as ‘enemies’ of monks’ spiritual purity... and now, when the clergy’s moral decay is in full view, it’s the woman who takes the fall while the monks are cast as victims.” Yes, he conceded: “It’s a human weakness, but not one we can ignore... The scandal exposes a system of lies and hypocrisy among top monks... Monks must ask themselves: Why did they enter monkhood? For spiritual training, or to climb the social ladder and gain wealth and power through the saffron robe? This is structural rot, rooted in a clergy strong on authoritarian control but weak on monastic discipline. It’s the bitter fruit of a system that has drifted far from the Buddha’s path.

The Collapse of the Mainline Churches

This bankruptcy of churches has been years in the making. Mainline Protestantism lost interest in the transcendent truths of Christianity and married the spirit of the age generations ago. In the first half of the twentieth century, this made it the vehicle of anti-communism and, from today's perspective, the handmaid of the political right. In the 1960s, with the civil rights movement, it pivoted to the left and has maintained that progressive direction ever since, as displayed on countless church signs throughout the country. Same horse, different jockey, and capitulation to the virtue signaling demanded by the wider culture.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) real problem is its failure to grasp the church's vision and mission. That vision must focus on the church's countercultural, supernatural message of redemption through the life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Christ. That is not simply an inspiring or instructive story, analogous to one of Aesop's Fables. It is not merely a useful idiom for expressing worldly political ambitions. It is a statement about the ultimate, eternal reality, in the light of which all lesser, temporal realities are to be judged.

As one orthodox theologian writes:

The church is to be a witness of the salvation found in Jesus... The church's task is not about co-operating with other non-Christian faith traditions found around the world. The church's task is not to provide an alternative political presence. The commission that Jesus gives to his church is to go into the world and to make disciples of every nation, baptising in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching all that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19–20).

Anglican Struggles, Scandals and Divisions

Two Primates of Anglican Communion in the UK Resign. Both Archbishop Welby of Canterbury and Archbishop John of Wales resigned within months of each other. Sarah Mullally, Welby's successor, is a progressive, supporting a church blessing for same-sex couples and women's equality in the church's administration. She faces major problems in a church where attendance at Sunday worship has halved in less than a decade, and the financial state of many of its 600 parishes is precarious.

Archbishop Mullally will also be the "ceremonial head" of the world Anglican Communion where the rift between the progressive and traditional shows no signs of decreasing. The African churches voiced their opinion through Gafcon, an orthodox global movement "to reform and renew the Anglican Communion", and have rejected Mullally as spiritual head, "Today's appointment makes it clearer than ever before that Canterbury has relinquished its authority to lead."

The head of the Church of Nigeria, Archbishop Henry Ndukuba, denounced the choice of Cherry Vann as the successor of Archbishop John, and severed ties with the Church of Wales "that has departed from the teaching of the Bible." The chairman of Gafcon, called her election "an act of apostasy" and "another painful nail in the coffin of Anglican orthodoxy."

The discord over the issues of LGBT seems to grow worse by the day. The CoE bishops in 2023 voted to allow the blessing of a same-sex couple but refused to marry them. Now they have reversed plans to have a dedicated blessing service for such couples, and continue to ban clergy marrying same-sex partners in church. Clergy are permitted to enter into a same-sex civil partnership, if they remain celibate, but not into a civil marriage. I am unsure how this arrangement is anything more than a temporary makeshift, which is impossible to sustain and not likely to please any party.

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C S Lewis' Thoughts on Women Priests

The appointments of Sarah Mullally as archbishop of Canterbury and that of Cherry Vann as Primate of Wales are a good reason to consider what C S Lewis thought on the question of "Priestesses in the Church". He wrote this essay in the 1940s when the first proposals were made for women's ordination in the Church of England.

His first point was to clarify why he didn't oppose the measure. "No one among those who dislike the proposal is maintaining that women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning and whatever else seems necessary for the pastoral office."

The Middle Ages, usually blamed for the Church's corruption, were not anti-women. The Virgin Mary, Mother of God, was exalted and "almost a fourth person of the Trinity", yet at no point were any priestly attributes given to her.

His first argument focused on the role of a priest to represent God to man, and only a man can do this. God as creator, redeemer and sanctifier is male while the receiving human family is female. Only a man can be a sacramental sign of God's action.

Secondly, part of the Church's mission is to ordain bishops and priests to provide the Seven Sacraments for God's People, and has done so from the beginning. If ordaining only men was an error, then the Church's claim to God-given authority is false, and the worship of the Church has little value. As Pope John Paul II stated in a definitive manner, the Church hasn't the authority to ordain a woman.

Thirdly, Lewis appealed to the natural order of the created world used in divine worship. At the Mass, the priest stands in persona Christi, for the person of Christ. He is the Son of the Father, not the daughter. Christ is the Bridegroom, while the Church is the Bride, and we address God as "Our Father", not "our mother". To feminise or neuter the male language of Christianity, as some have attempted, would be a major distortion of the Faith, since God "has taught us how to speak of Him."

Lastly, Lewis attacked the view that regards our sex or gender as something superficial and accidental, and which can be ignored or changed at will. As we know, this erroneous understanding of gender has grown into a monster of evil in the modern world. Gender ideology rejects the organic unity of soul and body, ignoring the created difference of male and female in nature, and ignoring their roles in the worship and doctrine of the Church.

We should be clear about the difference of male and female, in nature and in worship. Yes, men and women share an equal human dignity, as St Paul writes in Galatians, "there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (3, 28) At the same time, there are functions, which are not shared, by men and women alike. The most obvious thing is that of a woman having and nurturing a baby. No amount of political agitation can change that biological fact of nature. Motherhood is not just a matter of biology; a woman has the psychological gifts to nurture a child from birth in a way a man lacks.

We live in a world that makes equality a supreme value, so we see women doing what only men used to do, and the Church criticised for not ordaining women. So, two men or two women can become "husband and wife", not to mention changing one's sex. These are perversions of the truth that human beings are equal in dignity but not identical in nature.

The Search for a Strong and 'Full-Fat' Religion

Today, many people, especially the young, want to believe in a "strong religion", sometimes called a "full-fat religion", and not an easy or permissive one. They search for a demanding set of beliefs where there's a clear difference between believing and not believing. They are not impressed by talk

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of meaning, relevance and welcome, still less of dialogue, much valued in the “revised churches” since the Sixties. When God appeared to Moses at the Burning Bush on Mount Horeb, he wasn’t dialoguing or inviting Moses to a welcome party (Exodus 3, 6).

Traditional theology, as in Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, understands faith as a gift of God, not an achievement of human reflection. Faith is beyond our natural power of reasoning and logic. It’s a heroic and bold adventure and “a leap of faith”, as Kierkegaard put it. Faith is not opposed to reason, but has a strong commitment to hold the revealed truths, no matter the cost. As the now proclaimed doctor of the Church, JH Newman observed: “Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.”

The Fear of the Lord

Strong religion demands that the much-derided “fear of the Lord” exists in every believer for good reasons. It is not the natural fear of calamities of nature or the dangers of human conflict, but a specific fear proper to religion. We are aware of the gulf between the creator and the created, and of man’s fragile existence.

Added to that is a rational fear of God’s justice for our sins and guilt, just as our First Parents felt after their disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Even as we trust in the mercy of God, a healthy and rational fear should follow our knowledge of God and our own behaviour, and counteract the self-satisfaction of today’s culture.

Both the Old and the New Testaments blend love and fear in the worship and service of God. This is most clear in chapter six of Deuteronomy, while the prophet Isaiah calls fear of the Lord one of the gifts of the Spirit (11, 2) and the wise men of Israel identify fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1, 7). The Virgin Mary praises God for his mercy “toward those who fear Him”. (Luke 1, 50) Without doubt, the Day of Judgment causes sinners to be terrified; yet it is the Day when God will “reward... those who fear his Name”. (Rev 11, 18)

As an early sign of Vatican Two thinking, Urs von Balthasar wrote *Razing the Bastions*, a book calling on the Church to abandon the fortress mentality of the Council of Trent, to open its doors and meet the modern world. While his words, “Our vocation is to sanctify the world!” are inspiring, tearing down the walls tends to remove the Church’s difference from the world and weaken its defences, all too obvious in the mayhem of the post-conciliar period, and the dissent and scandal that still remain.

Part of the attraction of the Traditional Latin Mass is its unfamiliar language and rituals, “shrouded in mystery”. It evokes the sacredness of the Burning Bush and Isaiah’s cry, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips”, and the terrible fear of the shepherds at the appearance of the angel at Bethlehem. (Luke 2, 9)

For the children of Adam and Eve, the fear of the Lord is one side of the necessary balance of love and fear in this world.

Science and Materialism—and the Existence of God

The philosophy of materialism is the orthodoxy that underpins modern science. It’s the theory that all reality, including our origins, thoughts and consciousness, can be explained solely by physical matter and physical processes. This is the view of Stephen Hawking and Richard Dawkins, who wrote that we do not need a creator to explain the working of our world.

Since the stars and galaxies are always moving further apart, logic dictates that the universe must have had a starting point. In 1931 the Belgian theoretical physicist Georges Lemaître termed this the

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“primeval atom”. We now call it the Big Bang. But, it would seem that if the universe had a beginning, we cannot avoid the question of creation.

The 20th century physicists got around this metaphysical headache with another theory: that of the “big crunch”. This held that the universe goes through an eternal cycle of expansion and contraction. So, a few billion years after a Big Bang, the universe will expanding and start shrinking. Drawn inward by the overwhelming force of its own gravity, the universe would squeeze into a single point, the theory went, triggering another Big Bang, then another crunch, in a repeating pattern.

This neat explanation, however, was discredited in the 1990s when astronomers discovered that two distant supernovae were further apart than they should have been. The expansion of the universe, they realised, was not slowing down—as it should have if the big crunch theory was correct—but actually accelerating.

Two French scientists, Michel-Yves Bolloré and Olivier Bonnassies, have enlisted the findings of 150 leading scientists to present an up-to-date theory of the universe, based on the evidence of the past century. They argue that the latest scientific theories lead to only one logical conclusion: an all-powerful deity created the universe and all life within it. Both are men of science but also of belief.

“The theory doesn’t work”, Bolloré said. The laws of motion lead to the conclusion that there must have been a single beginning, a starting point to the physical existence of the universe. “Nothing is infinite”, he argued. “The reasonable mind must hold that our universe has one beginning.”

A Creator Must Exist

This is not a book about God but rather why science demands the existence of such a being, and shows the inadequacy of the theory of materialism. A creator must exist according to the key scientific discoveries such as the Big Bang, the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics and the human genome. The two authors show that “in science today, God is more alive than ever.”

Another key mystery that can only be explained by the existence of some universal God, the authors argue, is the start of life, the leap from inert to living matter. “DNA appeared on earth 3.8 billion years ago, and it was a technological marvel”, wrote Bonnassies. “All living beings on earth: bacteria, human beings, plants, animals—they are all coded by this same DNA.”

According to the theory of evolution, this incredibly sophisticated data storage system—40,000 billion times more dense than the most advanced computer today—emerged from the primordial soup quite by chance. The authors write: “While we still do not know how that gap was bridged, or a fortiori, how to replicate such an event, we do know enough to appreciate its infinite improbability.”

Many areas of science require as big a leap of faith as that demanded by faith in God. “We are all believers”; he said. “Believers in God believe, with some evidence—and believers in materialism, they believe in plenty of things which are a little bit weird.”

Asking about the origins of the universe raises questions about the meaning of life itself: “I think that everybody should ask themselves, at some point in their life, Are we just the result of chance and necessity? Or are we more than that?”

God, the Science, the Evidence: The Dawn of a Revolution, by Michel-Yves Bolloré and Olivier Bonnassies, published by Palomar on October 14. 580 pages.

Marijuana Legalisation is Brain-Dead Politics

A case study in brain-dead legislation is New York State where marijuana has been legal since 2021. Today, nearly half of the states in the U.S. have made weed legal and widely accessible. On going efforts to normalise marijuana use represent a grotesque failure of political leadership. Our elites are determined to erode what remains of moral norms, and abandon the weakest and most vulnerable to self-destructive behaviour.

New York and other states have not just legalised marijuana. They spend money to promote its production and sale. As Steven Malanga reports in a recent Wall Street Journal opinion essay (“It’s High Times for the State-Subsidised Pot Businesses”), New York State has allocated \$5 million “to train community-college students how to grow, market, and retail pot.” Maryland’s idea of reparations is to fund programmes for marijuana entrepreneurs at its historically black colleges. “Illinois state colleges offer courses in ‘applied cannabis studies’.”

Steven Malanga is right to criticise state and local governments for using taxpayer dollars to subsidise legal cannabis retailers to help them compete with the underground cannabis trade. But his cannabophobia shows. For someone who champions limited government, free markets and the unintended consequences of regulation, Malagana fails to suggest removing the regulatory barriers that stunt cannabis-industry growth and keep prices high, fuelling a robust, less safe underground market. Governments instead choose costly subsidies to mask the effects of their own regulations.

Recent research also offers clearer insight than the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, whose reliance on voluntary self-reporting has faced criticism for inaccuracy. In 2018 Canada became the first G-7 country to legalise recreational cannabis.

Marijuana-use disorder is soaring among the very populations advocates of legalisation aim to help. State and local governments have a long history of using taxpayer dollars to subsidise bad economic development projects—everything from movie productions to sports arenas to industrial facilities. Now those governments are pumping tens of millions of public dollars into an even worse idea—legal pot businesses—as scientific studies increasingly demonstrate the health risks of regular marijuana use.

When marijuana legalisation began in the U.S. over a decade ago, advocates promised sweeping benefits: an end to punitive treatment of users, especially minorities—thus striking a blow for social justice—and the creation of profitable, regulated markets driving economic growth. Legalisation, they argued, would provide safer products and generate significant tax revenue, with minimal downsides, since so many were already smoking marijuana.

Steven Pinker’s War on Woke’s Trickery

The overriding goal of science is the pursuit of truth, without fear or favour. Steven Pinker, famous for *The Language Instinct* (1994) and *How the Mind Works* (1997), has no doubt: “Irrationality has gotten absolutely entrenched at the highest levels of power in the United States, and policies have sacrificed merit in favour of identity-based criteria” and of “inject[ing] social engineering into its guidelines for authors and publishing process.”

The epithet “controversial Canadian psychologist” began to attach itself to Pinker’s name after the publication in 2002 of *The Blank Slate*, which debunks the fashionable idea (beloved on the progressive left) that human nature is a cultural construct, owing little or nothing to our genetic inheritance.

More sacred cows were prodded in *Enlightenment Now* (2018), a polemical defence of the Enlightenment values of science and reason, which, Pinker argues, have set humanity on a centuries-

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long upward trajectory towards peace, health and prosperity. To his admirers Pinker is a force of reason and rational optimism. To his detractors he is the politically incorrect reincarnation of Voltaire's Dr Pangloss.

Sport has never been more rational: nowadays in America every team has a statistician. Also, "there's more evidence-based medicine" than before. But "at the same time, irrationality has gotten absolutely entrenched at the highest levels of power in the United States".

The problem may be partly traced to "the politicisation of science". During the Covid emergency, there were "hundreds of public health experts saying that it's OK to go out in Black Lives Matter protests" because "the benefits of social justice outweigh the costs of spreading Covid." They would not have said the same, had it been a Maga rally. Pinker cited a science magazine that endorsed Hillary Clinton for president. Such things "erode the credibility of science". He says: "If science as an institution brands itself as on the political left, it should be prepared to alienate and maybe kiss off the American right."

His latest book is about common knowledge, not exactly the same as shared knowledge. Take this example: I know that other people think this bank is sound, and they believe that I think the same. Even if I suspect the bank isn't, as long as they think I don't know, it's OK to put my money there—in other words, as long as it's common knowledge.

But, once that common knowledge fails, then mayhem follows. Suspicion becomes a certainty, fear becomes panic, and the queue of bank customers stretches down the street. The new common knowledge is that the bank is bust, which in turn may not be correct.

And so with bank runs, joke-telling, nuclear deterrents, stock market bubbles, show trials and cack-handed attempts at seduction? Much of the harmony of our social life depends on common knowledge.

Woke's cancel culture among academics exists by "preference falsification", pretending to believe because of peer pressure and being punished for doubting. Woke fears private knowledge becoming public like what happened to poor Joe Biden in the debate in 2024. He was the Emperor with no clothes, and that was the end of his bid for election.

When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows: Common Knowledge and the Science of Harmony, Hypocrisy and Outrage by Steven Pinker, 2025.

R I P for the Creator of the Abortion Pill

The biochemist, Étienne-Émile Baulieu, best known as the creator of the abortion pill, the RU-486, died on May 30, 2025, aged 98. He introduced chemical abortion, today the so-called "medical abortion", which has spread across the world. Today, the two-drug RU-486 accounts for up to 70 percent of abortions in the USA alone.

He was born in 1926 in Strasbourg where his father, Léon Blum, was a Jewish doctor, and his mother Thérèse Lion a feminist lawyer. During the Second World War he changed his family name from Blum to Baulieu to avoid the searches of the Gestapo, since he was wanted as a Jew and a member of the resistance in France. When the war ended in 1945, Baulieu studied medicine and became a doctor.

He became interested in hormones when he worked with the American Gregory G Pincus, the "father of the Pill", at Harvard University in the Fifties.

Pincus' major discovery was to focus on chemicals in reproduction, first in animals, then in humans. The vital chemicals turned out to be the sex hormones, estrogen and progesterone.

The 1950s were the period when overpopulation had become the number one problem facing

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governments and scientists, and they called for “a simple, cheap, contraceptive” to reduce the number of births. Pincus began to experiment on human subjects with little or no consent like those from mental asylums, and later avoided government and legal restraints by using the poor women of Puerto Rico. By 1959, Pincus had tested the pill and were satisfied, and the FDA approved the pill for public consumption.

For Baulieu more was needed than just preventing a pregnancy, and he argued, “while the contraceptive pill changed women’s lives, it was not enough.” In those days, a pregnancy was only ended by a surgical intervention. Returning to France, Baulieu concentrated on developing a pill that would end an early pregnancy and avoid the need for surgery.

That pill would be two drugs, named RU-486 or Mifepristone, and was approved by the French government in 1988. Mifepristone blocks the action of the hormone progesterone, and cuts off the unborn child’s supply of oxygen and nutrients, causing the embryo to die. Misoprostol causes the cervix to open and the uterus to contract and expel of dead embryo. It is effective in the first nine weeks of pregnancy.

The negative response was strong and swift. Rome described RU-486 as “the pill of Cain”; Baulieu’s photo on a poster included the words, “Wanted for genocide” in Canada; and he felt it necessary to have a bodyguard on his travels. While Baulieu’s major influence in the lives of many women and their babies cannot be denied, he succeeded in making abortion seem nothing more than taking a tablet or two.

Is Reading for Pleasure a Dying Skill?

I grew up when reading a book for entertainment was one of the rewards of school exercises, study and teaching. I remember becoming hooked on reading when someone lent me *Dombey and Son*, one of Charles Dickens’ marvellous creations. So, it comes as a shock to learn that reading for pleasure is becoming a pastime of fewer young people, even after 15 years of schooling. This is happening in the UK and the US, and no doubt in Ireland.

In 1992, some 61 percent of adults in the UK enjoyed reading a book in the previous 12 months, but this had dropped to 49 percent in 2022. Among the young most describe themselves as “non-readers”. In the US, reading for pleasure has dropped more than 40 percent in 20 years. Apart from the need to read when studying for a degree or becoming familiar with work skills and technical problems, the reader for pleasure has never had such a wide variety of publications, factual or fictional, in easy reach.

Mass literacy, which came with the development of the modern printing press in the 16th century, gave people the ability to read and write complex matters, and, once acquired, is an easy way to widen one’s knowledge of the world, acquire new ideas, and enable the reader to think critically about the current problems of our society. Yet, university students reportedly “struggle to get through one novel in three weeks”, and don’t have “habits of application and concentration” needed to read.

How has this happened? The first reason is the technology that does the thinking for us, and supplies the answer in simple terms. Then there’s the social media shortcuts like TikTok, which supplies information on everything at the click of a button. No wonder that attention spans have shortened in the past 50 years.

More influential has been the changing method of teaching in schools. The traditional way called for a disciplined application of a set programme of knowledge, no doubt boring at times, and with coercion in the background. It included rote learning, one thing today that a teacher must avoid. Learning must be fun and easy. Why learn the multiplication tables when an electronic calculator is

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at hand? Is spelling important when your tablet will correct a piece of writing in seconds? And when you go to university, artificial intelligence will write the essays for you. Reading takes time and patience, so why bother when you have TikTok on your phone?

The sad fact is that English is no longer the top subject at schools and universities, and for most students reading is work, not a choice or a pleasure. Are we already in the post-literate age, addicted to our smart phone where communication is reduced to the language of a five-year old, with cartoons to express our feelings because we don't know the correct word?

Ownership of Slaves and IVF Embryos

I once thought that when slavery was abolished in the 19th century, and the concept of a human being as the property of another person was consigned to history. I'm sorry to say I was mistaken. Since the practice of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) has become widely practiced, the legal concept of ownership is applied to the unused embryos stored in clinics for future use but often indefinitely.

In most cases of IVF, the clinic removes a good number of the woman's fertilised eggs, so that more than one attempt to make her pregnant could be carried out. The remaining embryos are retained to allow the mother to have a second child or more. This has led to a vast number of embryos, left after successful IVF, being preserved by cryopreservation, that is, preserved at a low temperature in thousands of clinics across the world.

These embryos may belong to the parents as long as they pay the annual fee to the clinic. Some parents donate them for scientific research or give them to the clinic for other couples unable to become pregnant naturally. So, embryo adoption arranges for a couple to receive an unrelated embryo, which becomes adopted once it is placed in the womb of the adopting woman. Christian parents who have used IVF are aware of their "spare" embryos, and want to be sure that they go to Christian couples.

In the US, there is no federal law on this area, and the status of an embryo is left to each state to classify in its laws. Where couples divorce, legal battles occur when the wife wants to have another child, and the husband opposes it. The courts tend to require the assent of both parents to use a "spare" embryo. Unlike other countries, the regulation of US fertility clinics is largely voluntary, and the estimated 1.3 million frozen embryos have little protection in a for-profit industry. In the words of a Heritage Foundation researcher, the US is "a wild west" in IVF, surrogacy and embryo adoption. Frozen embryos are "property" and have no right to life.

As scientists and doctors know, a frozen embryo is a human being. In a 1989 legal case, Jerome Lejeune, professor of fundamental genetics at Medicine of Paris, testified against the concept of frozen embryos as "property": "I would say that science has a very simple conception of man; as soon as he has been conceived, a man is a man." The American College of Pediatricians corroborates this understanding: "A unique human life starts when the sperm and egg bind to each other in a process of fusion of their respective membranes and a single hybrid cell called a zygote, or a one-cell embryo, is created." According to Robert P George's book, *Human Cloning and Human Dignity*, the embryo "is a whole living member of the species *Homo sapiens* in the earliest stage of his or her natural development."

The Church is very clear and definitive about IVF. It removes the act of human generation from its natural place in the married love of a man and a woman, and turns it into a mechanical action of a laboratory. Secondly, it nearly always results in the death of "unwanted" embryos, because they are abandoned by donors, found to be imperfect or donated for research.

From Far and Near

◆ In 2022, Nicholas John Roske obtained a Glock-17 gun and ammunition, and travelled from his home in California to Washington to kidnap and murder Brett Kavanaugh, a Supreme Court judge. He was infuriated because the Supreme Court was going to invalidate the *Roe v. Wade* decision that made abortion a constitutional right. Two other judges were on his death list.

When he approached Kavanaugh's home in the middle of the night, he saw two US marshals guarding the residence, and reversed the plan, contacting the local police, who arrested him.

Today he is a woman, Sophie Roske, not the man of 2022. He pleaded not guilty to the charge, but decided to change his gender and plea in 2025. As a woman, he was sentenced in October 2025 to eight years in prison for an attempted murder of a Supreme Court judge. The Attorney General of the Trump government is to appeal against this relatively light sentence.

It is ridiculous to allow men to identify as women, so that they might escape the rigour of the law, share in women's privacy, and even pretend to be lesbians. Today, too many institutions believe that being a woman is a matter of self-identity, and not one's physical reality. Some countries consider legalising self-identity a mark of progress, and sadly one such is Ireland.

◆ Pope Leo's blessing of the block of ice from Greenland was a stunt for kiddies environmentalism, climate change et cetera. Did it attract the attention of the world to the serious problems of climate change? I don't think so. Has a block of ice become more important than the slaughter of Catholics in Nigeria? What did it signify? Nothing in particular, unlike baptismal water, the oil of chrism, and the bread and wine of the Eucharist. This blessing was part of the opening of the Raising Hope Conference in Rome, and I wonder if the Pope wasn't tricked into blessing a block of ice by the organisers of this conference.

◆ The pandemic of shop-lifting: According to an English anonymous writer. "I confronted a shoplifter but I was made to feel like the criminal. I didn't plan on saying anything—it just happened—but the sight of a man in a bright red tracksuit openly stealing while everybody watched made me so angry. What I didn't expect was to be castigated for getting involved. Is this the new normal, where we tolerate criminals and silence anyone who speaks out?"

◆ Persecution of Christians continues in the Middle East. Christians there have fell from 20 percent of population in 1925 to a tiny four percent today. The causes are steady oppression by the Muslim majority: in Syria by the murderous Islamic State, in Egypt by widespread discrimination, and in Iran by imprisoning converts from Islam. The silence of western nations is due to the association of Christian faith with colonialism, white domination and privilege.

◆ Francis Graham-Smith, a pioneer of radio astronomy, first measured the accurate positions of certain distant galaxies, containing quasars, in the early 1950s. The research he undertook with Sir Martin Ryle, his predecessor as astronomer royal, demonstrated that the universe must have had a definite beginning, demolishing the then-favoured "steady state" theory of Sir Fred Hoyle and others that the universe had always existed. He also dismissed the expectation of space travel. "Space travel is far too dangerous", he added. "Stars are like fireworks. You stand clear and study them from afar." Francis Graham-Smith died on June 20, 2025, aged 102.

Requiem in Pace

We pray for the following friends and supporters of Family & Life who have died recently: Angela McEvoy, Helen Birchall, Jenny Ely, Dan Kennedy, Sarah Doherty (sister of Rose Anne Doherty), Irene Healy, Sylvia Scott, Mrs M Smith, Des Gurkian (Councillor), James Byrne, Robert Campbell,

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Frank Foley, Frances Loughran, Christine St Leger and Fr Desmond Campion.

Every month Fr O'Boyle offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the intentions of our supporters and the repose of the souls of our deceased donors as well as the members of the Eternal Friends Society.

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

Contributors: Brendan Gleason and David Manly

PS “You are about to read many startling prophecies concerning the current crisis in the Church and the world”—prophecies that are “eye-opening, hard-hitting, and enlightening.” So begins an absolute must-read book about Church-approved but little-known messages of Our Heavenly Mother that every Christian should learn, absorb and act upon immediately.

It's Our Lady's Prophecies: God's Messages for Our Time, by Catholic author James Valois, who introduces you to the miracles that the Servant of God Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres experienced in Quito, Ecuador. In these stunning revelations about modern times, including our present century, you'll discover...

... how, when Mother Mariana received the apparitions, “she was so appalled that she died”, and how “she was raised to life again”; how, although the prophecies took place in the past, they concern today's apocalyptic crises and contain crucial messages for us; how the prophecies resemble those of Our Lady of Fatima; the unusual title that Mary appeared under; and how she foretold that “she would not become well-known under this title until the end of the twentieth century.”

You'll also learn Mary's many grave predictions that have come true in our time; the marvellous turnaround that she foretold would occur just when “all will seem lost”; how these prophecies connect with other Marian prophecies; why Mary chose Ecuador to appear in; and how every bishop of that nation has approved her messages, down to today.

Stunning, little-known prophecies from Mary

You'll read, too, about startling visions and other miracles in Mariana's life, years before Mary's momentous revelations; the sufferings, including a demonic attack, that she and her fellow sisters endured while journeying to the New World; the ominous first prophetic vision she experienced; what Jesus revealed to her about her future; and the dazzling miracles she worked in her life.

This extraordinary book likewise explores three grave twentieth-century evils that Jesus asked her to do penance for, in advance; appalling examples of those sins all around us; a miracle that proves Our Lady loves to prepare treats; the beautiful, consoling words of her first apparition to Mother Mariana; the incredible privilege that Mary granted her; grave trials that Mother Mariana endured; Heaven's miraculous protection of her convent from every evil, down to today; and what a great saint declared we must do in evil times.

You'll also learn about Mary's warning that a certain element would infiltrate governments,

Please turn...

causing persecutions of religious communities; how she foretold an “accursed sect” would try to destroy Mother Mariana’s convent; the “truly Christian president” whom Mary foretold; the holy, heroic Catholic president who arose; his astonishing success in ending decades of revolution, chaos, corruption, oppression and anti-Church plots; the momentous spiritual step he took for his country; and the price he paid.

Urgent warnings from Heaven about our times

The author also explains Mary’s warnings to Mother Mariana about the unspeakable sacrileges of our era; how Mary said “Satan will reign... by means of the Masonic sects” in her country; the grave attacks he’d make on our society; the “iniquitous laws” he’d foster; why Mary told Mother Mariana to create a dazzling statue of herself and Baby Jesus, and the story of its miraculous completion.

You’ll also encounter Mary’s detailed prophecies about the heresies, sexual impurity, clerical infidelity, disasters, persecutions, wars and other “calamities” to come in our time; the “holy way” in which wealthy people should use their riches; the staggering number of Christians suffering martyrdom today; and how some people miraculously survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

This riveting book relates, too, the miraculous thing the holy statue did at a crucial moment, and how that changed history; the miracle that was discovered when Mother Mariana’s coffin was opened; why we shouldn’t despair at today’s crises; Mary’s inevitable, coming triumph; the five spiritual weapons we must use today; why pro-life work is absolutely vital; and much more.

***Our Lady’s Prophecies* will thrill you with its story of Mary’s powerful maternal love, which radiates from its 107 pages. You’ll gain hope and strength from her call to conversion, prayer, penance, and defence of the Faith and morality, which will bring about her ultimate, glorious and complete victory.**

James Valois’s unique book sells for €15.55 (£ST13.65), 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 tick the Reply Form and use the Freepost/Response-Paid envelope today. We’ll send you your FREE COPY by return post.

Dear friend, isn’t it incredible? **Centuries ago, when Our Lady appeared to Mother Mariana, she saw and accurately foretold the crises that’d ravage our times.** But I’m sure she also saw that you would remain faithful to Her Son and would bravely oppose today’s evils. How she must love you for helping Family & Life to defend God’s babies!

Please help our work to grow. Please give a gift of any size today, whether a major gift or a “widow’s mite”. Every euro or pound you send will go to work immediately, saving babies, changing minds and renewing lives. Thank 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 at www.familyandlife.org/donate **May Mary always hold you close to her Immaculate Heart!**

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