LETTERS

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All correspondence, including email, must give a full postal address and contact telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

Whims of markets

Whilst the report from Cardinal Peter Turkson and the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission on the global economy (Church in the World, 29 October) is timely, it has some important weaknesses. It accepts that globalisation is here to stay and that it will remain in the care of a capitalist system. And it expresses dissatisfaction with extreme neo-liberal strands of capitalist ideology.

It may be true that capitalism has created wealth and employment for hundreds of thousands of workers in the past century. But we should also acknowledge that it has reduced to dire poverty and unemployment a similarly large number of working people. The reasons for this lie with the dependence of industry and enterprises on the whim of the market and of the investing corporations exclusively interested in dividends and share prices.

It is all very well to advocate a concerted move towards the common good and a curb on corporate greed overseen by some global authority. However, the evidence from the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank suggests that the richer nations of the G20 and the northern hemisphere will continue to monopolise the power levers which might otherwise produce a more equitable arrangement.

The message from the protesters on Wall Street and at St Paul's Cathedral is that the capitalist system is incapable of healing itself and that globalisation may not be the true path towards the common good.

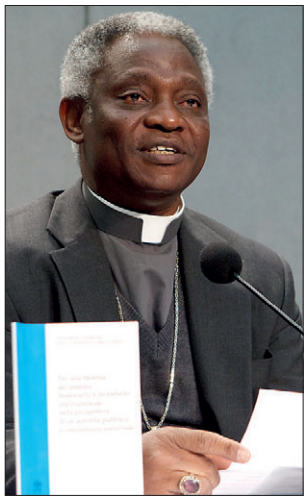
The report might have recognised that there are alternatives to capitalism which remove the excesses of economic dominance and corporate greed. 2012 is designated as the UN International Year of Cooperatives. Perhaps we should take seriously the benefits that co-operatives could bring to society and the common good

Frank Campbell
Southampton

Allegation without evidence

The tragic story of children being sold in Spain from the 1930s is a scandal that has taken too long to become known. But Hugh O'Shaughnessy (Letters, 29 October) is wrong to drag Opus Dei's name into that story on the basis of a 1987 book by Michael Walsh. The original, pre-publication version of Walsh's book began with the story of an orphanage in Peru, which – as O'Shaughnessy relates – Walsh alleged to be doing something "remarkably like selling babies".

Before the main printing of the book, we made it clear that Opus Dei does not and never has run any orphanages in Peru. The bizarre charge was entirely baseless, and yet the allegation was left exactly as it was when the book was eventually published.



Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Photo: CNS

Surely in 2011, a quarter of a century on, after several years of intense media scrutiny have given rise to dozens of serious, non-partisan publications about Opus Dei, it is a journalist's responsibility to make use of them – and not to rehash baseless myths.

Jack Valero
Opus Dei Information Office, London W2

Character of Catholic schools

I fear that Ashley Beck's comments (Letters, 22 October) about the declining Catholic population in many Catholic schools are rather wide of the mark. The original article ("Keeping the faith", 15 October) was exploring the opportunities for evangelisation afforded by this demographic trend, and raised some important questions which merit wide discussion. The director of schools for the Plymouth Diocese is surely right that "the Catholicity of our schools is not defined by the religious backgrounds of the children they take in, but by what they have to offer children". Catholic schools should be reaching out to the disadvantaged in their communities, proclaiming their values through their commitment to social justice. This is a more inspiring vision than the notion that Catholic schools should be reserved for Catholics – a viewpoint which is more characteristic of a tribal religion than a missionary one. And is it not odd to suggest that we can judge the success of our schools by the number of conversions to the Catholic faith? Would Fr Beck apply this criterion to all missionary work, I wonder?

John Harris
Acle, Norfolk

Moral vacuum

Clifford Longley (22 October) is surely wrong in his claim that "is it against the rules?" is not a moral question. The very questioning shows moral awareness. Our own church regulates our lives in this manner in both her recognition of biblical regulatories (for example the Books of Moses) as well as her formulation of moral guidelines. True amorality is demonstrated in our time by bankers who characterised the finance crisis of 2008 as a "natural disaster" indicating that they had no choice in their actions. This has been taken seriously enough to lead to the commissioning of a report to US Congress (Levin-Coburn, 2011). Faced with a moral vacuum (where there is clearly no appeal to morality), the lawmaker must resort to rules with sanctions in order to protect against the danger of deceit.

John-Paul Holmes
Munich, Germany

Blinkered attitude to science

Peter Stanford (22 October) danced a jig on learning of the appointment of a new head of the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School. I almost did the same on reading in a professional journal about a student from Cardinal Newman College in Preston "passionate about engineering".

I am exasperated with the blinkered attitude shown by many in the Church towards modern technology. This shows itself in various ways. The list you published before the papal visit of 100 top lay Catholics notably lacked those engaged in medicine, science or engineering. Then we learned of the German bishops, in the wake of the Japanese tsunami, pronouncing nuclear power evil. More recently you reported plans for a new independent Catholic university "offering a traditional liberal arts programme". By contrast, that same journal mentioned above included a feature on two nineteenth-century Italians, Nicolò Barsanti and Felice Matteucci, with a convincing claim to have developed the internal combustion engine in advance of Jean Lenoir. Apparently Barsanti was educated by the Piarist religious order, which was "particularly known for its interest in science". I wonder how far we have come since the nineteenth century – or even since Galileo's days.

Ian Berry
Enfield, Middlesex

Lost sense

On the forthcoming First Sunday of Advent, the priest will pray the new English version of the Prayer after Communion. It reads:

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Can it really be that we are asking that the "passing things" among which we "walk" can teach us to "love the things of heaven ..."? I was asked about this in a talk I gave recently, and thought that was indeed what it meant. Later, however, I grew more doubtful and rechecked with the Latin original.

The Latin for "as we walk ..." is the phrase *inter praetereuntia ambulantes*. In the Latin original it comes later on in the text, sandwiched between the phrase "you teach us" and "to love". This gives: " ... you teach us, who walk amid passing things, to love ..." So it is patently not the sense of this prayer that "passing things" lead us to love heavenly things.

The Latin is clear. It is "the mysteries in which we have participated" that teach us to love heavenly things. But in the approved version the position of the phrase, and the fact that it, like "the mysteries", is in the plural, achieves the opposite sense.

What can explain such a glaring howler? Why was it not spotted early on, rather than left to appear in a lavishly produced final text?

Are priests expected to read the prayer as printed? It would be truer to the "substantial unity of the Roman Rite" if they said:

Lord, may the celebration of these mysteries profit us, we pray,
since through them you teach us, on our journey through this passing world,
to love the things of heaven and hold fast to what endures.

To concretise *praetereuntia* as "this passing world" in the singular makes it clearer that it is the plural "mysteries" that teach.

This prayer comes right at the beginning of the liturgical cycle. What a way to start.

(Canon) Alan Griffiths
Alresford, Hampshire

Peter Briggs (Letters, 29 October) points out that the new translation has altered the tone and voice of the Mass, emphasising the power and lordship of God, rather than mercy and love.

Now we have been using these texts for a few weeks, we are becoming more aware of their awkwardness, the discomfort of using them, both in how they affect us, and in the proclamatory nature of the passages the celebrant uses, quite apart from problems with specific terminology: "consubstantial", "oblation", their exclusive, androcentric language.

The examinations to be taken by translators aspiring to become qualified members of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting, of which I am a fellow, are marked against a set of strict criteria, covering terminology, grammar, appropriate register and so on, and including the Single Grave Error category which leads to immediate failure of the text submitted.

If presented with the translation of the Missal, I am sorry to say, it would fail in almost every category, precisely because of the slavish adherence to the Latin vocabulary, sentence phrasing and fitness for purpose (reading aloud), which Vox Clara insisted on, as well as some odd, even incorrect translation choices, of specific terms ("became man" in the Creed, for instance, instead of "and was made man").

Joanna Waller
Whitstable, Kent

I was very grateful for Peter Briggs' moving letter about the now distant, monarchical and haughty God of the new translation. The foreboding some of us have about the future Church is, naturally, being aired privately and in letters and online. Politeness and respect for our priests and fellow parishioners, some of whom perhaps are equally unhappy, prevents much open dissent and yet honest, thoughtful views need to be expressed in an atmosphere of freedom which seemingly still doesn't exist.

Where are the bishops with courage and integrity who should be supporting us by listening and responding to these concerns? I hope they listened attentively to last Sunday's liturgy

Wendy Murphy
Burnley, Lancashire

Excluded laity

Paul D. Murray and Marcus Pound ("Lay participation is the key", 29 October) graphically describe the problems of the escalating dearth of priests. I wonder if the moment has come to redefine "the laity" as "the excluded", that is to say, that huge pool of talent, willing to serve, and increasingly with qualifications in theology, who are barred from the priesthood by marriage or gender.

There are also many excellent pastoral priests forced to resign because they realise, on meeting their spouse-to-be, that they have a vocation to marriage as well as priesthood.

The successor to Peter, mitred and dressed in gold, surrounded only by clerics, conducting liturgies concelebrated by many, centred in a city overflowing with seminarians, is possibly a high priest who has never experienced, or needed to understand, the problems described in this article. He silences, or even expels, any bishop who dares mention the use of that pool of talent mentioned above – mandatory celibacy is "a jewel in the Crown of the Church".

Is it not time the jewel was sold – to feed the hungry flock? Can the Pope be persuaded to see the potential of "the excluded"? I fear this can only be by a group of bishops too large to dismiss from office, who are prepared to add their voice to those brave priests of Austria and Ireland who cry for reform.

Elizabeth Price
Linton, Nr Maidstone, Kent

Moving fixture

I believe, contrary to the statement of the Vatican spokesman, Fr Federico Lombardi (Church in the World, 22 October), that there is indeed a medical reason for the Holy Father using a mobile platform to transport him down the lengthy aisle of St Peter's. At 84 years of age, Pope Benedict XVI, like the majority of men and women of his age, is afflicted with "annodominitis". *Ad multos annos!*

(Fr) Stephen Giles
Kroonstad, South Africa

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The living Spirit

Stay with me, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. The light, O Jesus, will be all from you. It will be you shines through me upon others. Give light to them as well as to me, light them with me, through me. Make me preach without preaching – not by words, but by my example and by the sympathetic influence of what I do – by my visible resemblance to your saints, and the evident fullness of the love which my heart bears to you.

Blessed John Henry Newman
A Newman Prayer Book
(Catholic Truth Society, 2010)

He is convinced that contemplative prayer "is the only work that by itself destroys the root and ground of sin". He declares that ... "however much you fasted, however long you stayed awake, however early you rose, however hard the bed you lay on ..." such self-sacrifices will never bring you into union with God ... There is one thing and one thing alone that brings you into unity with God and that is the "blind movement of love" ... it is this blind impulse of love towards God in the cloud of unknowing that opens us up to the real possibility of union with God ... A health-giving relationship to God bears the fruit of health-giving relationships with our fellow human beings. In contemplative prayer God works ... to bring healing to our fragmented, sick and damaged selves.

Graeme Watson
Strike the Cloud: understanding and practising the teaching of The Cloud of Unknowing
(SPCK, 2011)

Lowliness is assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that was incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other. He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours.

Pope St Leo the Great
(391-461)

Thursday is the memorial of Pope St Leo the Great