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inspire

YOUNG CATHOLICS'
QUARTERLY

A world full of meaning



Queueing and praying in Lisbon
A good night's sleep • Dance, poetry and Scorsese

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COVER: UNSPLASH, SHANE ROUNCE

Welcome to inspire

SEOUL WILL host the next World Youth Day, in 2027, and its archbishop wants North Koreans to be there. Archbishop Peter Soon-Taick Chung's idea seems hard to fathom – why would Kim Jong Un's cowardly regime let its young people cross the demilitarised zone to see the Pope? North Korea remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. What kind of world does the archbishop think this is?

The unthinkable wars in Ukraine, Sudan and the Holy Land seem intractable enough. The 70-year armistice on the Korean peninsula – never formally ending the Korean War – is of a different order of magnitude, circumstances we have never known, and cannot imagine, to be otherwise. Until the world has thought its way to a comprehensive solution, gestures of reconciliation will always look anomalous, even futile.

But one day, we believe, peace will break out. Not with the signature of an exhaustive treaty or a handshake

between dignitaries, but with a simple interaction between human beings recognising one another's humanity. The photogenic cliché of old foes embracing across the barbed wire is part of that, but the reality goes further, into the really human experience of visiting each other's shops and travelling on the same buses, of annoying each other and that being all right.

As this edition's stories from Lisbon reveal, an invitation to World Youth Day is not a simple irenic prospect. If the North Koreans do make it in 2027, they will probably sleep uncomfortably and spend a lot of time in queues. That's all part of the logic of peace too. Faced with an apparently insurmountable problem, Archbishop Soon-Taick Chung can only make the invitation and pray that this is the flashpoint of reconciliation. Even if it is not, one day, God willing, the young North Koreans of today will be grateful to have been asked.

Patrick Hudson

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A world full of meaning

‘What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my time on this Earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work and effort?’ / By Patrick Hudson

NOT THE exclamation of some angst-ridden student but the words of an 87-year-old Jesuit you might expect to have his answers to these questions sorted out. I imagine that Pope Francis does – but these words in *Laudate Deum*, channelling the voice of the individual dispossessed and disillusioned by the ethical cavity of consumerist “meritocracy”, recognise that angst at large in the world.

Laudate Deum, Francis’ apostolic exhortation in anticipation of the current COP28 climate conference, is not an obviously “youthful” document. In fact, “youth” doesn’t crop up at all. It is really a well-argued harangue, a challenge to world leaders and international bodies who have failed to address the climate crisis in the eight years since *Laudato Si’* (which included the simple, essential assertion: “Young people demand change.”) At its heart is an old-fashioned call for humility, “for when human beings claim to take God’s place, they become their own worst enemies”.

By not attempting to address young people, Francis has found a certain resonance with them, true to the “intergenerational solidarity” that he has long advocated. He too is frustrated and impatient, trying for the umpteenth time to make individuals understand a message that shouldn’t need explaining. There are echoes of the anxieties – fears, even – of people interested in living past 2060, and the sense – embedded in those questions about “meaning” – that there might be something deeper at fault. I have friends whose lives have been interrupted by time spent just worrying about the environment. If we don’t complement concern with hope, we can’t do anything at all.

Posed the wrong way, the Catholic response to the climate crisis can seem at once petulant and grandiose, mixing self-righteous anger with highfalutin claims that most environment activists think a ridiculous irrelevance to the key question of survival. We’re probably not helped by Newman’s

remark about it being spiritually speaking better for the Earth to fail and millions to perish than for one soul to commit the least sin. It’s up to us to make the case (which Newman made too) that this stuff doesn’t exist in isolation: our biological and moral survival are not separate silos and the climate crisis is not a zero-sum game. In 2019, UN diplomats awkwardly applauded Greta Thunberg when she accused them of stealing her future but simply apportioning blame and demanding action from the same ineffective systems leave us at an impasse. If older generations fail to change, we will have to.

In the summer a new book, *Generation Laudato Si’*, launched what it calls a “global ecological conversation” with the voices of 40 people under 35 from across the world, addressing questions of leadership, education and economics in the context of the climate crisis. These individuals impress not only for having overcome the obstacles to youth participation in these fields but also in their liberated approach to them.

Br Benard Omukuyia CSC of the Laudato Youth Initiative in Uganda describes the “beautiful intersection of faith and activism” where our generation can recognise that change is not only be something to demand of COP delegates but a phenomenon we find emerging from ourselves, in unexpected forms. It can seem almost mundane. Individual deeds far from the centres of power are freighted with meaning.

Laudato Si’ called for action on climate change by invoking an enriched vision of our relationship with the Earth, but the past eight years have revealed that too few of us share that vision. Indifference and alarmism can both sever the vital link between our lives and our environment. We need to be persuaded that what little we can do has a point. *Laudate Deum* shows that, no less than the 1.5°C target or defences against rising sea levels, rediscovering our sense of meaning is a matter of urgency.

Nor is this a peculiarly Catholic need. Speaking in London in November, the author Katherine Rundell – who has little else in common with the Pope – picked up on some strikingly resonant themes. Her writing about animals, she said, was intended to revive our sense of “wonder” in the natural world. We need to make creatures part of our lives again. A member of the audience asked: “How can you hope when we have lost so many species in just the last century, and are losing another every few minutes?” Her answer was Franciscanly brusque – we simply must hope, she said, indeed the fact we’re worrying is a cause for it. She said the scientists she knows are far more hopeful now than they were ten years ago because they no longer feel they are shouting into the void. Hoping and caring is the first step, but for it to lead somewhere we need to rediscover what it means to hope and care.

‘Something bigger than we could see’

Four pilgrims reflect on the heat, the crowds and the joys of World Youth Day 2023

ALAMY/ABACA/VATICAN MEDIA



Pope Francis meets some of the 25,000 WYD volunteers.

Ann-Marie: How exactly does God go about gathering His Church from the ends of the Earth to one city? I can only speak from where I was in it all. After a month spent journeying down France, I found myself at a bus stop in Pau, a commune near the border of Spain. I waited for hours and at about 4 a.m. it occurred to me that the bus wasn't coming. I noticed a girl who had been sleeping nearby. She asked me if I had anywhere to go. Seeing Our Lady in her eyes I took up her invitation to where she was staying. After a couple of hours sleep I woke up in a village with a reindeer and an upside-down house. We decided on hitchhiking to Lisbon and as we were making the cardboard sign I received a call from a friend. She said

she was in Lourdes and boarding the coach to Lisbon that evening. We made our way to Lourdes and as we embraced I felt the arms of Jesus around me. It was like doing a trust fall and finding Someone had caught me. The group we were with were Swiss. We prayed Compline on the coach in German and woke up the next morning in Portugal.

Hugo: It was early in the year when our vocations director mentioned that I was to accompany the WYD pilgrimage during the summer break, and at the time I filed the information away in my mind. I was either too busy or too distracted for the next six months, so it was a surprise to find myself in Portugal in July. I had no knowledge of the

country, and to be honest "pilgrimage" is not a theme that has ever resonated much with me. If I had a bucket list, it would be mainly comprised of things I could do seated comfortably somewhere in the West Country. I hoped I would be receptive to whatever God planned for me. Pray and live in the moment seemed to be the best course of action.

Ruthie: Lisbon 2023 was my first World Youth Day. Arriving in the city with 50 pilgrims from my diocese, we were surrounded immediately by thousands of young Catholics, clergy, and others from all corners of the world. I quickly lost count of how many different people I talked to, seeing the sights of Lisbon, taking selfies, swapping anecdotes, and sharing our faith.

Hugo: We had our first encounter with our fellow pilgrims from around the world while staying in Viana do Castelo. They were line dancing to "Cotton Eyed Joe", and they seemed a very cheery and well-coordinated bunch. In the nearby town of Ponte de Lima, we saw for the first time the full complement of pilgrims being hosted by this diocese. There was some vigorous flag waving going on: I was grateful to my fellow pilgrim who brought the Cornish flag, but we could really have used a Union Jack or two. Our flags sporting the Diocese of Plymouth logo are pallid and make it look like we're trying to surrender. We packed out the venue for a chaotic international Mass – the sort where it can be hard to block out the distractions and novelties and focus on what we are actually doing. I find it good at times like this to call to mind some of the weird and wonderful (and not so wonderful) situations in which the Church has carried out its commission. The Mass is always the Mass whatever is going on around; the still point of the turning world.

Ann-Marie: What was it like to be physically united with the Church throughout the world? Most of the time I had shivers down my spine. It was almost like God wasn't everywhere anymore, He was just there. There were crowds, but we were encouraged to find Him in the chaos. There was bound to be an order that was bigger than we could see. The Pope said there was a place for everyone in the Church, that each one of us has a face and a heart and is welcomed by God uniquely. I met a convert my age who said she read the Bible and thought "this is really good", and an aboriginal from Taiwan

who came to thank missionaries for letting her know she is a beloved child of God. Everyone I met had a story to tell like no other. Seeing old faces emerging from the crowd as well as new was like being reunited in Heaven.

Hugo: Walking about Lisbon was a slow business as we paused to exchange greetings and wristbands with the other groups of pilgrims who filled the streets, waving their countries' flags. Much sport in identifying the unfamiliar ones and looking out for rarities – a prize if you can find a New Zealander, first to get a wristband from every continent wins.

Ruthie: One memorable evening, my group went to a concert at the Benfica stadium. Masses of young people from different countries joined in singing together in many different languages. It was amazing to sit in one of the biggest football stadiums in Europe with more than 65,000 people and join in this unforgettable experience. Having never been to Lisbon before, it was lovely to explore it with my friends and visit many of the holy sites. The day we spent in Fátima was especially moving as we were able to have Mass there as well as viewing the original crown of Our Lady of Fátima!

Hugo: An annoying feature of these big crowds was that large groups tend to form into long human chains, each person clinging on to the rucksack of the one in front. These chains created chaos when their paths intersect, or even worse when they converged on a bottleneck with smaller groups and stragglers caught up in the middle and dragged along with them.

Lorcan: Starting with the opening Mass, the welcome ceremony for the Pope, then the Stations of the Cross, being among so many other young Catholics from across the world – it was wonderful to feel a sense of unity and pride and a collective closeness with the Pope and God. Despite the heat and the numbers and the queuing, it was fantastic. I had the honour to be one of 150 flag bearers at the welcome ceremony, carrying our national flags in witness to the breadth of the Church. It was a powerful moment to descend the high steps of the stage in Parc Eduardo with the huge crowds below and for a few moments I was within metres of the Holy Father.

Hugo: Travel about the city was a challenge. When we tried to make our way out to the City of Joy, where many of the talks and activities are set up, we found ourselves participating in a live stress test of Lisbon's public transport system, as several hundred thousand pilgrims attempt to make the same journey at the same time. The heat was intense. Everywhere we went the queues were preposterous. Long story short, it was two hours and another trauma-inducing bus

ride back to the centre of town before a group of us ended up sitting on the floor of a railway station with a makeshift meal of cold meats and doughnuts from the supermarket.

Ann-Marie: I had not expected to be as elated as I was to see the Pope. On the way to the welcome ceremony, the bus was so packed a few of our group didn't make it on. We passed every bus stop and watched the faces drop of everyone waiting. By the time we got into the park I was desperate for the loo. It seemed impossible to get to and if I went I wouldn't make it back in. When the Pope arrived, people were making their way towards the barriers and climbing up trees like Zacchaeus. At this point I had other priorities, but when I saw his little head floating past and the thrill of the crowd shouting "Papa!" I was flooded with joy. I imagined flocks of angels sweeping past and wondered if all the saints were here too. After that I went to the loo and missed the whole speech. The Gospel was about the harvest and the labourers and being sent out two by two. As we all made our way back down the hill together I saw that we were all together now but we were being sent out two by two. We might go home and only be one or two but that was OK because He had made it like that on purpose.

Hugo: It is always exciting to see a celebrity, and I have seen a few (Hanks, Wakeman, Agutter ... I could go on), but seeing Francis seems quite different. Reflecting on it later I thought first of the sense of oneness with a billion Catholics around the world who look to him as their spiritual father; but a simple shared identity would be to put us on a par with football fans. This is surely something more than that. What is it that makes the Pope so special to us? To me the answer seems simple and personal – it's Peter himself, that most loveable saint with no claim to leadership other than that the Lord called and he said yes (and then no, and then yes again).

Ruthie: The one thing I will definitely take away from Lisbon is the memory of the kindness of all the people I met. Everybody was so welcoming and excited to discuss our faith: the priests were happy to answer our questions about their work – including writing rock-style praise and worship songs and DJ-ing! Our bishop talked to us about Bl Pier Giorgio Frassati, whose relics we were venerating. It was different to hear about a recent blessed – someone we could relate and connect to.

Ann-Marie: At the culmination of it all we made our way to the site of the vigil on foot. Locals offered us water and oranges and a fire station drenched us. Our clothes dried straight away in the heat. The motorway was packed with pilgrims. I was enthralled by the crowds. His love is completely illogical, He

made all of us! And I, with all my joys and fears but one of these.

Hugo: Sleep was out of the question. Apart from the hard ground there was a film about the environment playing across all the big screens on repeat, or the omnipresent World Youth Day 2023 song, "Há Pressa no Ar", whose actions are now imprinted in my brainstem. There was also the surrounding groups of Spanish pilgrims whose antipathy for bedtime I know all too well from a year in Valladolid. I settled down to wait for the dawn, with a water bottle for a pillow and my rosary, and since I didn't entertain the possibility of sleep I felt oddly at peace with the situation. Strange thoughts pass through my mind; I thank God for the uncomfortable ground beneath me that keeps me from falling into the Earth's molten core.

Lorcan: I admit I found the heat and the all-night vigil a challenge – but it was wonderful to be with so many young people, to be inspired by the energy and warmth of Pope Francis.

Ann-Marie: The next morning, I woke up to the moon above my head, the sun rising to my left, and the DJ set of Padre Guilherme. I can only imagine what a powerful prayer us all celebrating Mass there together was for the whole world.

Ruthie: The final Mass was the pinnacle of the week. We camped out overnight in a field by the water and were up with the sun. I was chosen to read in the Prayers of the Faithful. I sat on the main stage among the other readers and important clergy – and the Pope himself! It was such an honour to represent my country and my diocese in front of all those gathered in Lisbon, and all those watching at home. Despite only having two hours sleep the previous night, and being quite nervous, the reading went off without a hitch.

Hugo: What I remember more than the Mass is the night spent lying on rocks, the mobs of flag-waving youths charging about the Lisbon underground, the kindness and good cheer of my fellow pilgrims, the heat of Portugal in summer, and our time with our hosts in Viana. I thank God for these things and the little gifts, too many to list, sprinkled along the way. I have been a tiny part, a less than a millionth part, of a very great work of the Church.

Ann-Marie Cadell is a student at University College, London.

Ruthie Quinn is a parishioner at Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Peter the Apostle, Waterlooville.

Hugo Lomax is a seminarian for the Diocese of Plymouth.

Lorcan Poulston is a parishioner at St Francis of Assisi, Ascot.

Felicity Hudson



Sleeping giants

A BROWSE of an academic search engine today will tell you that sleep science is a big deal. On PubMed the topic of sleep comes up with almost 300,000 articles and papers, ranging from clinical trials on the impact of sleep deprivation on cognitive function, to studies of the socio-economical context of sleep. Our watches track how much of the previous night was spent in deep sleep or REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, and it is hard to imagine a world in which the words “circadian rhythm” and “body clock” hold no meaning. We have all seemingly become experts on sleep, with gadgets and popular science books offering us all the information we could possibly want to know about our sleeping selves.

How did we get to this point? Kenneth Miller’s new book *Mapping the Darkness* takes these now familiar concepts from sleep science and unfolds the history of the research field where they were found. Page

one feels like that moment when you wake up and have to refamiliarise yourself with surroundings that your still sleep-addled brain has not yet been able to place: the early ideas seem somewhat ridiculous viewed against everything we know now. And yet when the collection of characters and studies come together, somehow it makes sense.

Nathaniel Kleitman, a refugee from imperial Russia, was the father of modern sleep science, whose students ventured down untrodden paths. Some, like the development of the electroencephalogram, a machine by which brainwave activity is recorded during sleep, are still followed. Others, like the 1950s fixation on Freudian interpretations of dreams, didn’t lead anywhere. Some of the most recent studies by Mary Carskadon continue to change what we thought we knew about sleep, suggesting that adolescents are not kept

awake by social and academic pressures but by their own body clocks shifting during puberty.

As someone whose day-to-day is dominated by clinical trials and data entry, I was struck by the dedication of each researcher to the scientific method. However, with my academic background being in literature I was glad to find a more human side to the research – it was not just about gathering statistically significant results and developing accurate sleep measurement tools, it depended on people.

But there is a significant elephant in the bedroom of sleep science: the underlying question of why we do it. Sleep is not a passive process, as Kleitman first thought, but an actively regulated process which our bodies appear to need in order to survive. Theories abound as to what the real purpose of sleep could be. But this is a mystery we’ve yet to get our heads around. Sleep science is not so much an explanation as a slow awakening to what our gadgets and science books don’t explain.

Felicity Hudson is a research assistant with O-CAP (Oxford Clinical Approaches to Psychosis).



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Reviews

APPLE FILMS



Killers of the Flower Moon

FILM: A towering achievement

Keeping an audience engaged for three-and-a-half hours is no small thing. Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a deeply reflective, character-driven history of the murders of Osage Nation People in 1920s Oklahoma, achieves this with distinction.

The broader narrative of white opportunists stealing the wealth of the Osage, whose territories contain vast oil wealth, finds its emotional focus in the story of Mollie Kyle, an Osage woman who marries the white war veteran Ernest Burkhart, despite her awareness that his main motivation is her money. Ernest, a greedy and cowardly man, on the orders of his uncle (and self-professed friend to the Osage) "King" Bill Hale, murders Mollie's mother and sisters and attempts to poison her with tainted insulin in order to inherit her fortune.

Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro excel in their roles of Burkhart and Hale, De Niro balancing Hale's paternal affability with his thoroughly evil core. Yet it is Lily Gladstone's empathetic portrayal of Mollie that leaves the greatest impression. The story of her genuine love for Ernest, her growing fear that he is responsible for the murders and her agony as she tries to ignore it in her increasingly weakened state, is what really holds the audience through to the end of the film.

Against this, the film deserves criticism for the narrative weight given to Hale and Burkhart's eventual conflict as they turn on each other amid legal pressures. Scorsese's focus on this makes a valuable and chilling point about the unpleasantness from which much of modern American prosperity arises (neither Burkhart nor Hale suffered greatly for the atrocities they caused) yet within the film this feels less consequential that the effect of the murders upon Mollie and the wider Osage community.

DiCaprio's excellent performance extracts all it can from Ernest's character, but this weak and uninspiring man's dominance of the third act, when much of Mollie's emergence from her immediate trauma takes place off screen, feels like an opportunity missed. Nevertheless, this is a towering achievement.

Killers of the Flower Moon (15) is streaming on Apple TV+

DANCE: Contortion and emotion

The sight of Anna Spinks depicting three long-term conditions through contemporary dance would be impressive enough. But the music she danced to in *Feedback Loops* was being created as she moved.

Spinks was alone onstage with intermittent voiceovers from people with lived experience of long-term health conditions – multiple sclerosis, depression,

and epilepsy – guiding her movements. The music came from a wristwatch Spinks wore which translated her body data into sound. As such every note was unique to the performance, and Spinks had to dance to music that did not yet exist and anticipate how each movement would be reflected in the following chords.

The dance itself was spectacular. The sight of Spinks contorted on the floor and struggling to get to her feet prompted an emotional response from those in the audience who saw in it their own struggles to move when crippled with depression. It was also interesting to see a depiction of epilepsy that did not lean on the usual tropes of seizures and jerking movements, but in this example caused heightened anxiety and nervous checks over the shoulder.

The project was part of the Oxford Science and Ideas Festival which ran through October, and the producer Alina Ivan explained how the idea grew from work at King's College London, where she studied how body data from wristwatches could be used to monitor long-term health conditions. In the panel discussion after the dance she explained how this research has informed the project and the importance of including those with lived experience in the work.

Patrick, a panellist with MS, stood out throughout the discussion. When asked how accurate he felt the depiction of his condition was he acknowledged that it was compelling, but that this visual insight into his condition could not be equivalent to his daily experiences.

Ivan's efforts to combine art and science to platform these voices are commendable. However, it is important not to let either the artistry or the research it stems from overshadow what lies at the heart of the project – the people for whom these experiences are the everyday.

See more details of the Oxford Science and Ideas Festival at if-oxford.com.

POETRY: Writing in time

It's disarming to see your own times in poetry. If poems belong to a moment, they belong to history – War Poems, Epic Poems, Romantic Poems. Jack Wiltshire's poem *Enter the Water* belongs to the early months of 2022, and to read it is to find still-fresh memories preserved on the page. This is how the future will learn about the things we remember.

It is a story of a young man evicted from his Cambridge flat and walking into the turbulence. He is accompanied at intervals by a callous, honest character called Nature, sometimes feathered and sometimes a breeze, and finds more personality in Storm Eunice than in the people he meets or avoids: the friend who called grim February an interesting month "before she flew to Greece", his fellow swimmers at a municipal swimming pool – "i have noticed none of us are in / proper working order".

The wide world proves to be sublime and banal. Pigeons and blackbirds are unfussed by the howling winds and rain, by the outbreak of war in Ukraine. "i've just found out that Petits Filous isn't yoghurt / and that is my first realisation in a time of war". We're allowed to think that's funny and still feel the heart wrench at "all the people / crying this morning", carried from thought to thought. This is a political poem too.

Wiltshire fully and honestly wears his own mind, complete with scatological jokes and a faintly pretentious hinterland, as fully and honestly as he wears his "big gay coat". It is unmistakably somebody's experience of that time. He walks towards the sea, "no bird, no company, no own room / there's open sewage along the road / spilling from a bright purple pipeline / besides marsh rosemary / sea lavender / its leaves like fingers wipe up the waste". Those words aren't bound to their moment in history, but they belong to it.

Enter the Water is published by Corsair at £14.99.

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