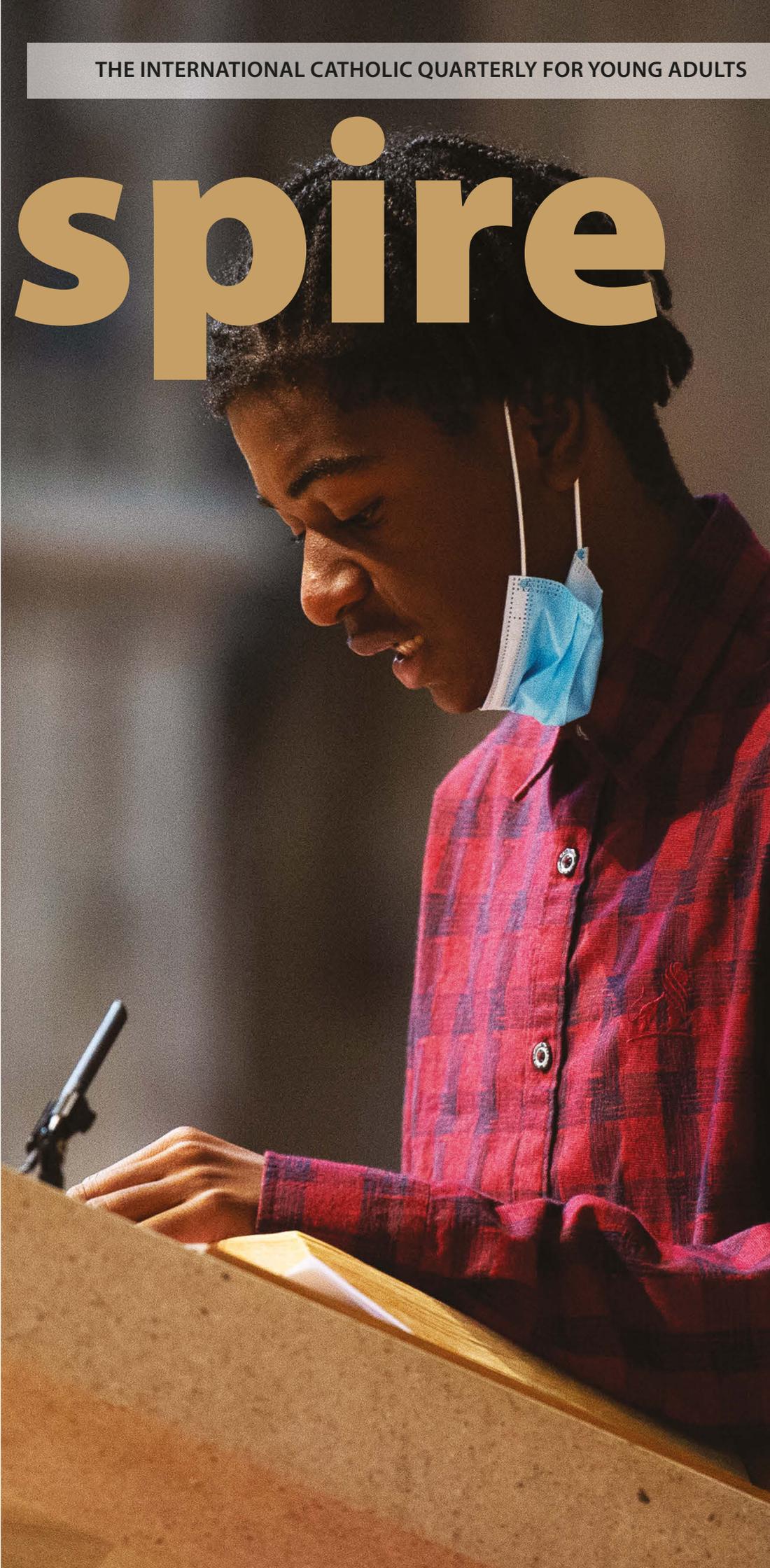


inspire



Let the Church be enriched by the diverse gifts of all of humanity

STEPHANIE MACGILLIVRAY

In search of the hope beyond hope

JAMES LAWSON

A fair wage for a fair day's work

MARC BESFORD

What need does the Earth have of us?

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The lost narrative

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Welcome to *inspire*: The international Catholic quarterly for young adults

"TIME IS running out," Pope Francis warned the delegates attending the recent climate-change summit in Glasgow, COP26. Listening to this stark, necessary and realistic warning one could be forgiven for telling the next generation to "abandon hope", all ye who are born on this planet. At a seminar of Catholics at COP26, Durham theology professor Carmody Grey said that "the Church must sing a song of hope at this time". What does this "song of hope" sound like? Perhaps it begins by believing that a different world, a different

society, a different working life, is possible, not just in the next life, but in this one. This is articulated strongly in *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis' vision of the post-pandemic world, in which people and nations look out for each other and speak up for those most in need. In the New Testament, we are told to speak and act "while there is still time", and that time, the time and the place to act on our hope, is now.

Natalie K. Watson
Editor

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Young women play an active role in the Church but their leadership must be made more visible today to inspire and give hope to those leaders of tomorrow, writes **Stephanie MacGillivray**

Let the Church be enriched by the diverse gifts of all of humanity

Photo: Stephanie MacGillivray



“Women, so often discriminated against and excluded from positions of responsibility, are seen in the Gospels to play a leading role in the history of revelation.”

THESE WORDS, taken from the opening lines of Pope Francis’ message for World Day of the Poor 2021, are a message of recognition, appreciation and hope for young women in the Church today.

My experiences as a young Catholic woman working for the Church have been full of surprises, challenges, joy and gratitude for the opportunities I have been given that have allowed me to grow spiritually and professionally. Perhaps the most fulfilling experience has been the gradual and ongoing process of coming to understand and deeply appreciate the Church’s many beautiful teachings about women’s

leadership, equality and participation, and their important role in and contributions to society and the Church.

In his encounters with women, Jesus affords them a space in which to participate in society through listening and dialogue (Luke 10:38-42), service (Mark 14:3-9) and leadership (Mark 16:1-11).

However, the role and place of women in society has not always reflected their equal God-given dignity. Historically limiting social structures have often prevented women from enjoying equal opportunities to participate in and contribute to society. Therefore, when we speak of women’s leadership, it is as part of the understanding of women as being equal and in fraternal relation to men as leaders, and the recognition that this is not yet a lived reality.

We know that cultural change and transformation is not easy to orchestrate or sustain; however, at the heart of ensuring that it can be effective and long-lasting, words must be accompanied by concrete actions. Indeed, Pope Francis seems to be pioneering this approach as we see the notable presence of the mention of women in the Pope’s words being matched by his promotion of women to leadership positions within the Church and its organisations.

The mission in my work as the Officer Promoting Women’s Leadership for Caritas Internationalis is to animate and mobilise the Caritas confederation to make the same active commitment to women’s leadership, equality and participation at all levels in the communities in which we serve.

The presence and representation of women from the grass roots right up to governance levels in the Church is crucial for promoting a culture of inclusivity and diversity, and nurturing a society that is enriched with the gifts of all of humanity.

People often joke about the slow pace of change within a 2,000-year-old organisation. However, my experiences as a young Catholic woman have shown me the significant roles that lay people, women, and young people are playing in the Church today. In particular, working with Caritas gives me a privileged position to witness how women all over the world are acting as leaders within their communities, despite often being worse affected by poverty and other barriers to equality. This leadership must be made visible so that women are afforded more opportunities to lead today, and so that the next generation of women leaders can be given hope, inspiration and ambition for tomorrow.

Not only is there room for young women in the Church; there is a fundamental need for them to play an active role in the Church and the world, and a palpable sense that the time is right for a genuine embrace of the spirituality that women bring to the full expression of the image of God.

Stephanie MacGillivray is the Officer Promoting Women’s Leadership for Caritas Internationalis in Rome.

James Lawson reflects on the way forward to the as yet unknown world ahead of us

In search of the hope beyond hope



IN 399 BC, the Athenian philosopher Socrates was condemned to death for crimes against the state. He had to wait for some time in prison before being executed. In his dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato describes the circumstances. Although he should have been executed on the day following his condemnation, Socrates was given a respite of 30 days. It was the time when a ship wreathed with garlands was sent to the holy island of Delos, and no criminal could be executed until that ship returned. But the day came when one of his friends brought him hard and grievous news in his prison cell. The returning ship had been sighted.

Perhaps all of us are now in Socrates' position. The ship with the black sails has been sighted. Catastrophic global ecological collapse is on the horizon.

Our temptation is to despair. And so we are all perhaps also in the position of the

prophet Job. Job lost almost everything, but he didn't lose his wife. As St John Chrysostom once preached, that became his greatest trial.

As Job sits in the ashes, his wife came to tempt him to curse God and die. She came to tempt him to despair. But Job refuses to despair. He glorifies the Lord. Scripture says despite all this, Job sinned not. Job suffers and he protests at his suffering, but he still hopes. He expresses a final, complete and unbroken confidence in God: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the Earth" Job 19:25.

As the prophetic theologian Jacques Ellul argued in his *Hope in Time of Abandonment*, this hope is not an embittered zeal or a futile rebellion. It is the resolute certainty, in spite of the apparent absence of God, and even his apparent unfaithfulness to his creation, that these perceptions do not represent the truth.

For Ellul, hope is the work that incites God to come and reveal himself in his glory. This work has three foundations. The first is perseverance. Hope involves a choice, a decision not to give up but to keep acting and to keep moving forward and trusting in the Lord. The second foundation is prayer. Without prayer there is no hope. Our loss of interest in prayer is the spiritual proof that we have no hope. But hope is born in those who pray. Prayer is a form of life, a life with God. In an age of almost constant communication and distraction, prayer will require a kind of withdrawal. The third foundation is realism. Without realism, hope has no reality. True hope is the existential force that allows us to fight after having looked unflinchingly at a situation that seems to offer no exit and no future.

One of England's greatest living writers increasingly seems to be practising this kind of hope. Paul Kingsnorth is an environmentalist who has recently become a Christian. He writes about feeling despair in the face of climate change, and the failure of the environmental movement to stop it. But he says he has not given up hope, only what he perceives as false hope. In the manifesto for his "Dark Mountain Project", he observes that the end of the world as we know it is not the end of the world full stop. He believes that together we can find the hope beyond hope, the paths that lead to the unknown world ahead of us.

Kingsnorth imagines and longs for this world. It is a world that belongs to those who have sustained the enclaves in which life and character and beauty and meaning could continue, and who protected them from destruction. He imagines a twenty-third century in which the rebellion of modern humanity against both creator and creation has finally failed. The future belongs to those who had always known it would fail: to the monks, the hermits, the anchoresses and the forest tribes, and to the earthworms and the shy hedgehogs, the plants and birds, foraging in the ruins of the latest fallen empire. In this future the Amish have bought up most of what was once New York State.

The truth is that at last God will stand upon the Earth and he will be favourable to us. So perhaps we too can dare to hope and pray and work for a future in which the meek – after a long detour – finally inherit the Earth.

James Lawson is Vicar of St Mary Magdalene, Enfield Chase, and the Edmonton Area Director of Ordinands.

St Joseph shows us the importance of dignified labour for young people, writes Marc Besford

A fair wage for a fair day's work



something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to human dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it.

That dignity needs to be restored as unemployment has once more become a burning issue, and is reaching record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity. There is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which St Joseph is an exemplary patron.

We need to look at ways in which we can train or re-train young people in order to give them hope and encouragement for their futures and those of their families.

Too many young people are leaving education with no prospects of work. Consequent lack of experience is being used against them and opportunities to remedy that lack seem to be scarce. The whole nature of apprenticeships is ripe for revamping, while firms are crying out for

skills that at the moment are in danger of being lost, maybe forever.

Young people are concerned about the increase in decreasing job security. Casual work with zero-hour contracts is not appropriate for many young people, who need to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be paid sufficiently for their work.

Young people need to be protected from having to be constantly available for work. A healthy balance between work and other parts of life is crucial for human well-being and the well-being of society.

Fair payment – that is wages people can actually live on – are a matter of justice and human dignity. Young people, too, need to be paid a real living wage, and as Catholics we need to speak out about this.

Marc Besford is the National President of Young Christian Workers (www.ycwimpact.com).

RISES IN the cost of living and changes in the working lives of many have raised significant questions around dignity, and fair and just payment of all in employment. Yet for Catholics, these are by no means new issues.

Since the publication in 1891 of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, "On Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour", Catholics have frequently called for human dignity in the workplace, and for a just and fair wage. In the 1931 encyclical "On the Reconstruction of the Social Order", published to mark the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Pius XI wrote that "every effort must therefore be made that the fathers (*sic*) of families receive a wage large enough to meet ordinary family needs adequately".

As Catholics today, we need to look at our current circumstances and to assess our economic system in order to allow everyone to have a fair wage for a fair day's work. This would ensure that parents can pay their bills and put food on the table for their families.

Work is much more than a source of financial income; work is an integral part of human identity. It plays a significant part in people's lives, and consequently there is an imperative to promote decent employment for all. Pope St John Paul II's 1981 encyclical on human work, *Laborem exercens*, states that work is a good thing for humanity. It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being

Catholics must listen to and act on the many different warning signs our beleaguered planet is giving us, writes Max Dalzell

What need does the Earth have of us?

THAT IS the key question Pope Francis asks in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*: It is not a rhetorical question, but one that requires an answer.

You would be forgiven for thinking that the issue of climate change and caring for our world is a new idea, considering all the recent press coverage. This includes COP26, where world leaders gathered in Glasgow to discuss the urgent threat posed by climate change. This issue, however; dates back thousands of years: how can humanity sustain itself, while caring for the world around us? This question is addressed from the beginning – in Genesis 1:28, when God gives dominion of the Earth to humanity. God gives every individual a position of both power, and responsibility – to protect and to nourish God's creation. In the book of Job, we are told to be attentive to the world: "Ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you" (Job 12:7-10). As Catholics we must listen and act on the warning signs our planet gives us. These warning signs come in many different

shapes and sizes, from changing migration patterns to extreme and frequent weather events. The damage human activity is doing to the world, to God's creation, is now visible for all to see. In his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stressed the importance of our role to preserve and protect God's creation: "We must protect creation for it is a gift which the Lord has given us." Pope Francis leads by example, with the environmental efforts of the Vatican: eliminating single-use plastics, generating electricity with solar panels, and the Vatican committing to carbon-neutrality by 2050.

We all need to "care for our common home". We all have a responsibility to ensure that the poorest in society are not disproportionately impacted by our use of the world's resources. It is our responsibility to preserve our planet for future generations to live, and to thrive.

Max Dalzell is a student at English Martyrs' Catholic School in Leicester.

Sebastian Milbank wonders why modern pop culture is running out of stories

The lost narrative



YOU'RE WANDERING around London in the evening with some friends; boredom has set in and (with a surge of nostalgia for the early 2000s) somebody suggests going to see a film. So you make your way in and choose between the latest Star Wars, Bond or Marvel offering, and three hours of quips, CGI fight scenes, cod psychology and vague gestures towards diversity later, you're left £20 poorer and with a splitting headache. We're in the age of the franchise, and suddenly nobody has any new stories to tell. What's going on?

Commercial incentives are at play of course, but even on the many streaming services that have pushed studios down the road of caution, nostalgia and remakes dominate. The (admittedly excellent) *Stranger Things* was quite unashamedly a work of 1980s nostalgia, as was the resurrection of *The Karate Kid* in TV show form.

The "Golden Age of Television" is often considered to have brought innovation and creative freedom to the small screen: shows such as *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Lost* and *Mad Men* went beyond the more staid and conventional formulas that dominated many earlier TV shows. Television was now allowed to take the same kind of risks as theatre or film, it was "important" and "complex". But this well too appears to be drying up.

The old model of TV was episodic and moralistic, with each conflict or problem neatly resolved at the end, and a lesson derived by the audience. The more open-ended, allusory style of today, with its long narrative arcs and ethically ambiguous resolutions, seems more sophisticated. But what if that old morally structured model,

with its undoubted limits, also represented a renewable source of creativity, an engine that let new stories be told?

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, the purpose of drama is moral persuasion, and dramas make sense to us because they possess an essentially ethical logic that plays upon our emotions. Plot here is understood as *mythos* – a symbolic structure that defines the driving logic of the narrative and is necessarily informed by the nature of the protagonists. This question of character is seen in terms of *ethos* and is so literally ethical – through the interplay of good and bad characters, and the consistent portrayal of their habits and traits.

A spate of "dark" narratives and "complex anti-heroes" have given audiences the thrill of novelty, but the result has been a degradation of our collective ability to tell stories. Unable as we are to agree on the nature of the good, the stories we tell are now as contested and ambiguous as the society we live in. Even comedy has suffered, as nobody can agree on what is absurd or shameful without someone losing their job or staging a protest.

Until we again have a shared vision of the good, we can expect either moral relativism, or a slew of superheroes and creaky remakes from a more ethically coherent age.

Sebastian Milbank is a PhD candidate in Theology at Cambridge, completing a thesis on citizenship as a theological concept in the ancient world. He writes on religion, ethics, politics and church affairs. He is currently working for The Tablet, having been awarded the second Newman Internship.

Reviews



No Time to Die

No time to die? In fact, so much time you will wish you were dead, as this is two hours and forty-three minutes of a Bond plot so plodding, convoluted and absurd that you need to have seen the previous two films just to have a chance at working out what's going on. The first hour of the film occasionally shows signs of developing into something watchable, with some enjoyable and well-filmed scenes in Italy and Cuba. Just as things are starting to look promising, with the beautiful Ana de Armas clearly having great fun as a young CIA agent, the Bond girl is whisked away, Cuba recedes below the horizon, and we're plunged into the single most messy and tedious second half any Bond film has ever served up.

Starting out with some painful attempts at imitating a sitcom, not much helped by a rather wooden performance from Bond's successor, played by Lashana Lynch, it then lapses into bizarre melodrama. Poor Daniel Craig is asked to emote, which is rather like seeing a shark attempting to smile reassuringly, and even the usually brilliant Léa Seydoux is unable to salvage matters. Give it a miss.

Poussin and the Dance

A small blaze of sunlight awaits in the National Gallery. As the clocks go back and the evenings descend into darkness, there's no better time to enter the golden circle that is "Poussin and the Dance". Poussin has long been regarded as the embodiment of rationalism and rigour in art, a *peintre philosophe*, who composed paintings rich in both allegory and relentless attention to detail. The curators of the latest exhibition seek to shift this cold image by dedicating an exhibition entirely to Poussin's depictions of dance, revealing an artist who is "joyous, mischievous, and surprisingly fun".

This framing occasionally lapses into rather implausible attempts at popularising Poussin as a Dionysian, hedonism-loving fount of self-expression – which suits modern myths about the artist but doesn't fit the reality even a little bit. But what the exhibition does prove (even despite itself) is how the discipline and harmony of the most rational of French artists can give rise to works of unbounded joy. The lovely colour palette of the paintings evokes Mediterranean light, and the kinetic quality of the dancers is captured like rivers of frozen movement. So step into the dance, but maybe ignore the signage.

Events

It's winter, it's England (well statistically speaking, apologies to Welsh, Scottish and Irish subscribers currently frowning at the events pages), you might as well accept that December is going to be given over to relentlessly Christmas-themed events. So without further ado:

Christmas at Kew

Kew Gardens, 17 November 2021–9 January 2022

As usual, British city centres will be filled with lights, trees and Christmas markets, but for those who want the wonder but would rather avoid the packed crowds and enjoy at least a modicum of social distancing, you could do a lot worse than popping down to Kew sometime. The staff at Kew are promising huge light displays and installations, as well as music and projections, Christmas drinks and treats on sale along the paths, and Father Christmas himself in residence. And don't worry if you can't make it till after work – you won't be kicked out till 10pm.

Prophetic Imagination: Thomas Merton and Abraham Joshua Heschel

Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, online, 4 December 2021

For those looking to be intellectually challenged, but who don't want to leave the comfort of home (and its surprising how often those two go together), you could do a lot worse than sign up for this fascinating discussion of Jewish and Catholic theology hosted by Susanne Jennings & Dr Melanie Préjean-Sullivan.

Exploring the Experiences of Young Women in the Catholic Church

MillionMinutes, online, 7 December 2021

Pope Francis has frequently commented on the role of women within the Church and how crucial it is for communities to acknowledge the experiences of each person. This online panel event will be an opportunity for taking an honest, hopeful and loving look at the ways in which the Church could better minister to young women. The event is open and available to all, and the panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A.

Faith on Film: In the beginning

Art and Christianity, 70 Cowcross St, London, 9 December 2021

Further food for thought for those really getting into the proper spirit of Advent is available in person and online, with another in a series of excellent talks on religion and film. Jolyon Mitchell, professor of communications.

arts and religion at Edinburgh University, and Mark Dean, artist and chaplain of University of the Arts, London, will be leading the talk, which involve plenty of short films and extracts to keep one suitably stimulated.

Cafod Human Rights Day

Cafod, online, 10 December 2021

Just to add to the worthiness, spare a moment for this free online event hosted by Cafod, where they'll be discussing their progress over the year, the challenges they're facing, and their latest report.

Christmas with King's College Choir

Barbican Hall, London, 21 December 2021

While we're all familiar with hearing them over the radio or the TV on Christmas Eve, if you feel like catching the choirboys of King's College Cambridge live, book a ticket for the Barbican. Expect a reassuringly traditional repertoire – a perfect way to end a wearisome shopping trip London and restore your appetite for Christmas cheer.



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