

# WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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## Witnesses to the gospel

ON THE morning of Friday 25 February, while we were trying to absorb the Russian invasion of Ukraine the previous day, we welcomed one of the first groups of visitors to the office since the lifting of the Covid restrictions. They were happy to make themselves coffee while we fielded calls and started a few hares running. Then we found an empty room, shut the door, and, after a minute or so of silence, we quietly listened as, one by one, each of these six men, all grey-haired now, told us of a stolen childhood.

Each had been abused by missionaries of the Comboni order – the Verona Fathers as they were popularly known at the time – when they were boarders at a junior seminary in Mirfield, West Yorkshire, in the 1970s; more than 40 years later, they are still waiting for the Combonis to agree to meet them without lawyers present and to apologise to each of them in person.

On Monday 13 June, as Christopher Lamb reports in the news pages, they met Pope Francis in Rome. He told him he would personally ask the leader of the Combonis to



meet them. However, the men we met have all but freed themselves from being controlled by what the Combonis do or don't do. They want the Combonis to do the right thing, of course, but what matters is their own sense of themselves and who they are, their loves and their friendships – popes or prelates or religious superiors do not pull the levers that determine these things. Their hope now, as one of the group, Bede Mullen, told me, "is that the Church will learn from its mistakes in dealing with our case and become a safer place for all".

Pope Francis is lucky Bede and his friends

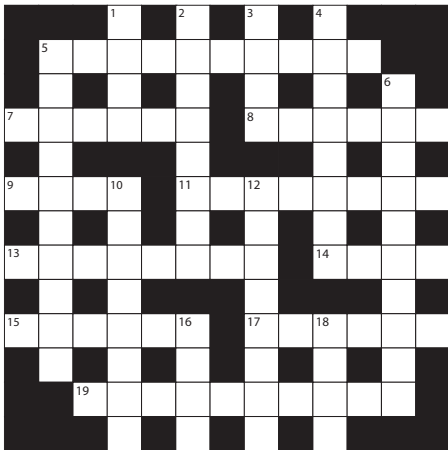
have found the time to see him. The renewal of the Church comes from the most surprising places, and often from the margins: in their courage and dignity and in their care for each other the victims and survivors of clerical abuse have become a lesson in how to witness to the gospel.

AN ANGRY, sulking, rebellious young teenager – in her own words – Pat Robb became an independent-minded Lambretta-riding nurse and midwife in 1950s London, before wrong-footing family and friends by entering the novitiate with the sisters from her old school, St Mary's in Cambridge. Always a free spirit, after 18 years as school nurse at St Mary's in Shaftesbury she found herself in Africa, working with refugees, people dying of HIV/Aids, and the victims of famine, war and conflict in Zimbabwe, Mozambique (from where she was expelled for denouncing corrupt local officials), Angola, Tanzania, the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Sierra Leone. Repatriated to England after a bout of cerebral malaria, she became an irrepressible campaigner for justice and peace.

Pat Robb CJ died peacefully at St Joseph's in York on 21 May. She was 85 and had spent 61 years in religious life.

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 810 Axe



#### Across

- 5 Town in Macedonia through which Paul and Silas passed from Philippi to Thessalonica ... (10)
- 7 ... and where Paul waited for Silas and Timothy after Berea (6)
- 8 Ammonite king, first victim of the united Israelites under Saul (6)
- 9 Egyptian Christian (4)
- 11 Sobriquet Matthew gave to the Messiah (KJV spelling) (8)
- 13 Territorial jurisdictions of bishops (8)
- 14 Roman province of west Turkey, which included Ephesus (4)
- 15 Holy antiquities, which have survived, at least in part, from the distant past (6)

- 17 Husband and brother of 18 Down (6)
- 19 Belief of Calvinists who wished to purify the Church of England of its Catholic aspects (10)

#### Down

- 1 Domed or vaulted recess or projection, especially the east end of a church (4)
- 2 Cathedrals or large churches originally connected to monasteries (8)
- 3 Legendary female "Pope", said to be elected c. 1100 (4)
- 4 Place where the "spirit of Jesus" would not allow Paul and his followers to enter (8)
- 5 Version of the Bible translated into English and completed in 1611 (10)

- 6 Doctrine of renunciation of worldly pleasures, so one can achieve a high spiritual state (10)
- 10 Brother along with Onesimus sent by Paul to Colossae (8)
- 12 Revised Hebrew Bible, with critical notes, from the sixth to the tenth centuries (8)
- 16 Branch of Islam that recognises Ali and his successors as the true imams (4)
- 18 In the ancient Egyptian religion, the mother of Horus (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 18 June The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: [thetablet@thetablet.co.uk](mailto:thetablet@thetablet.co.uk), with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. **■ We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.**

### SUDOKU | Moderate

	3		9		7		5	
9			1		8			4
		8				7		
4	9						8	6
5	6						7	1
		7				5		
3			6		1			9
	2		5		3		1	

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

#### Solution to the 28 May puzzle

3	5	9	8	6	1	4	7	2
8	1	4	9	2	7	5	6	3
2	6	7	5	3	4	8	9	1
4	3	2	1	7	5	6	8	9
1	9	6	2	4	8	3	5	7
5	7	8	3	9	6	1	2	4
7	8	5	4	1	2	9	3	6
6	4	3	7	5	9	2	1	8
9	2	1	6	8	3	7	4	5

#### Solution to the 28 May crossword No. 807

- Across:** 5 Benedicite, 8 Merari, 9 Sothic, 10 Wanderer, 12 Dune, 13 Zeph, 14 Ebenezer, 15 Gishpa, 17 Andrew, 18 Apollonius.  
**Down:** 1 Verandah, 2 Levi, 3 Dies Irae, 4 Diet, 6 Ezion-geber, 7 Sexagesima, 11 Rievaulx, 12 Dreadful, 16 Hook, 17 Anna.

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