

## Francis in the garden

AUSTEN IVEREIGH tells us he was in his garden and just about to plant a large jasmine when the audio file arrived in his inbox. It was the voice of Pope Francis, who had agreed to record his answers to the questions Ivereigh had put to him about navigating our way through the coronavirus storm. Ivereigh decided to put his headphones on and listen to the Pope speaking to him while he was digging. By the time the plant was in the ground, watered and mulched, Francis was still only halfway through the third answer. "I checked the recording," Austen says, "46 minutes!"

"By the end I was stunned. This was one of the deepest, most personal, most heartfelt interviews of his pontificate: a spiritual route-map through the coronavirus crisis and into a new future, and the fruit of a deeply prayerful discernment. Sometimes it was obvious he was speaking from notes he had prepared but there were other moments where his voice slowed down and I could tell he was being taken by his own insights – by the spirit, one might say."



Ivereigh, who was deputy editor of *The Tablet* in the long winter of the John Paul II papacy, has produced two meaty papal biographies of Pope Francis, *The Great Reformer: Pope Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* in 2014 and, late last year, *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church*, both published by Henry Holt. It's fair to say Austen is a fan of Francis. He had approached the Pope a fortnight earlier with a request for an interview that would be published in *The Tablet* in the UK and *Commonweal* in

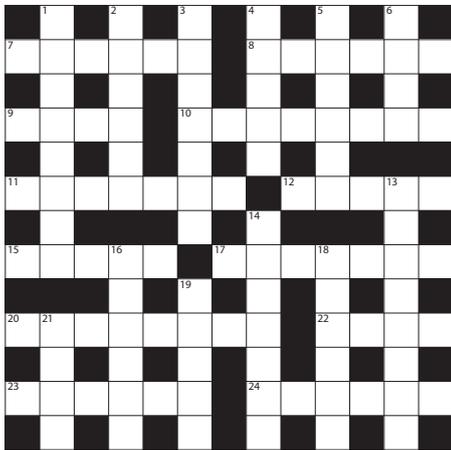
the US, rather than given to a big newspaper, so that Francis could address the people of God directly, unfiltered. He had been gently rebuffed. So the call from the Pope's Uruguayan priest secretary, Fr Gonzalo Aemilius, a week later was a delightful shock: "Would it be alright if the Holy Father recorded his answers to your questions?" The complete interview appeared in last week's Easter issue of *The Tablet*.

LAST YEAR Austen and his wife Linda and their dogs deserted south Oxfordshire for a small farm near Hereford, with charmingly decayed old barns and 15 acres of grass meadows, at the edge of a hamlet off a busy road to Wales. He blames *Laudato Si'*. The Brecon Beacons beckon from a far horizon; the Wye, swelled by fast Welsh rivers, courses close by; and Belmont Abbey is three minutes away in the car.

At the end of the interview, Francis says to Ivereigh: "These are things, dear brother, that occurred to me reading your questions. If they're of any use, great. If they aren't, please throw them into the secret archive – in other words, the waste paper basket. But one favour I ask, please: don't put too much effort into reworking this. Just take what's of use to you, and pray for me."

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 703 Enigma



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 18 April, *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 Paul, Theology and Christian Ethics – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

■ We cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.

#### Across

- 7 German code, first broken by Poles in early 1930s (6)
- 8 Smallest of Jupiter's Galilean moons (6)
- 9 First name of German film director who, after the Second World War, claimed ignorance of Nazi crimes (4)
- 10 Repetition of words in beginnings of several sentences, used for emphasis (8)
- 11 The American snack item chicharrón is made from this (3,4)
- 12 Small, fenced area of arable land (5)

- 15 The "old town" area of this city is called Gamla Staden (5)
- 17 Porch/antechamber in some early churches (7)
- 20 Centremost of seven hills of Rome (8)
- 22 "O ---- viatorum" (Latin hymn) (4)
- 23 Word meaning "found in many places throughout the text" (6)
- 24 A part of Christian theology concerned with reconciliation between different denominations and sects (6)

#### Down

- 1 Mother ----- was born Rita Antoinette Rizzo (8)
- 2 Welsh version of Cornish pasties (6)
- 3 In French literature, one of those who were

- Charlemagne's foremost warriors (7)
- 4 The official "state tree" of Texas (5)
- 5 If "fletching" and "nock" form part of your vocabulary, you are this (6)
- 6 Small, single-pointed support for ceramic ware in a kiln (4)
- 13 1950 western starring Joel McCrea and Shelley Winters (8)
- 14 Best friend of Virgilia in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (7)
- 16 Nigerian region in which Ahiara is situated, where there was controversy over a bishop in 2018 (6)
- 18 Site of the story of Oedipus (6)
- 19 They were silent until 1927 (5)
- 21 He and Odysseus fought the Trojans to recover the body of Achilles (4)

### SUDOKU | Tough

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

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

#### Solution to the 28 March puzzle

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

#### Solution to the 28 March crossword No. 700

Across: 1 Taking; 5 Gross; 8 Stock; 9 Neighed; 10 Veto; 11 Pam Ayres; 13 Hegel; 14 Adapt; 19 Diagonal; 21 Trio; 23 Two-ball; 24 Luger; 25 Erase; 26 Wagram. Down: 2 Apostle; 3 Inky; 4 Genoan; 5 Grimaldi; 6 Other; 7 Sadist; 8 Save; 12 Renovate; 15 Perugia; 16 Odette; 17 Fallow; 18 Poor; 20 Agora; 22 Oleg.

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