

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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Be not afraid

A MOVING exchange of letters between Alexei Navalny, who died in a Russian gulag last week, and Natan Sharansky, who spent almost nine years in a forced labour camp, has been revealed.

Navalny wrote to Sharansky after reading his prison memoir *Fear No Evil*. “Your book gives hope because the similarity between the two systems – the Soviet Union and Putin’s Russia – their ideological resemblance, the hypocrisy that serves as their essence, and the continuity from the former to the latter – guarantees an equally inevitable collapse.”

The four handwritten letters are marked by resilience, dry humour and a ringing moral clarity grounded in each man’s religious faith. Sharansky was excited to get Navalny’s letter from prison “in a way that an old man would be excited, receiving a letter from his ‘alma mater’, the university where he spent many years of his youth ... I write to you the day before Passover. That is the start of our freedom and our history as a people,” Sharansky concludes. “I wish to you, Aleksei, and to all of Russia, an Exodus as soon as possible.”

“In your alma mater everything is as it was. Traditions are honoured,” Navalny wrote back.



“Everything according to *Ecclesiastes*: what was, will be.”

Why had Navalny decided to return to Russia from Germany in January 2021, after months of treatment following a near-fatal poisoning, knowing what was likely to happen? Navalny, a long-time atheist who had converted to Christianity, said he had been inspired by the words, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.”

Sharansky believed that Navalny was saying to the Russian people, “I am not afraid and you should not be afraid, either.”

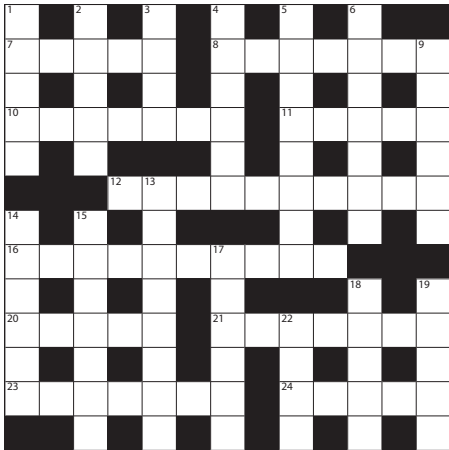
IF THERE’S one picture of the US Church that we can all agree on, it’s that it is broken, riven down the middle by ugly disputes. There are voices that say there is more common ground than Americans themselves recognise but it has taken a Catholic sociologist to draw a convincing map of this largely unexplored territory. Tricia Bruce’s academic research draws on in-depth interviews with hundreds of everyday Americans and has exposed the limitations of familiar labels, assumptions and boundaries.

A native of Texas, Dr Bruce lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, with her husband and their two children. She enjoys long-distance runs – there’s a half-marathon in the diary this weekend, and a full one the weekend after. She is one of the six new consultors appointed to the Synod’s permanent secretariat in Rome. They are obviously looking for people with a knack for healing fissures – and plenty of stamina.

“It’s an honour to be asked to serve the Church during this time of listening, learning and discerning,” she tells us. “I see this as less about me and more about an opportunity and obligation to hear, connect, amplify, and synthesise the diverse array of voices the Synod has cultivated globally. I’m a distance runner and this is a distance run. I’m ready to go all in, with gratitude to all who have done the same.”

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 892 Enigma



Across

- 7 Christian name of a slimy Dickensian hypocrite (5)
- 8 Russian writer, born 1828, called “a Christian anarchist” (7)
- 10 Domain of Pan in mythology (7)
- 11 County town of Tyrone (5)
- 12 Italian painter and murderer, who fled to Malta in 1607 (10)
- 16 “If statements A and B are true, C must also be true.” Such arguments are called ----- (10)
- 20 ----- Palace; a neoclassical palace in central Verona (5)
- 21 *Persea americana* is better-known as this (7)

- 23 ----- & *Lies*; film, 1996 (7)
- 24 She changed the companions of Odysseus into pigs (5)

Down

- 1 Author of *The Three Musketeers* (5)
- 2 About a robot on a post-apocalyptic earth (film, 2021) (5)
- 3 N’Djamena is its capital (4)
- 4 *La -----*; film directed by Fellini, 1954 (6)
- 5 “I saw it with my own eyes” is an example of this (8)
- 6 “----- Music” (from *Song of Norway*) (7)
- 9 Crude brutes in *Gulliver’s Travels* (6)

- 13 Dispenser that turns a liquid into a fine mist (8)
- 14 Patron saint of the Irish Diocese of Elphin (6)
- 15 Christian name of famous English ceramist, active 1922-1963 (7)
- 17 In 1962, Francesco Bracci became archbishop of this titular see (6)
- 18 Singer ----- Alan Pincus, born June 1943, changed his name to Manilow (5)
- 19 Mount Sinai; also called Mount ----- (5)
- 22 Black and white killer whale (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 24 February, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: 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 God, Miracles and Biblical Archaeology – from OUP’s Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

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SUDOKU | Easy

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

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

Solution to the 3 February puzzle

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

Solution to the 3 February crossword No. 889

- Across: 6 Lely; 7 Slavonic; 8 Restrictions; 9 Aristophanes; 11 Repercussion; 16 Photogeneity; 18 Truncate; 19 Heal.
Down: 1 Helena; 2 Eyot; 3 Laptop; 4 Cotopaxi; 5 Tissue; 7 Saint; 10 Icebound; 12 Empire; 13 Choral; 14 Speke; 15 Nathan; 17 Echo.