

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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A breath of fresh air

ON SATURDAY afternoon, as we were listening to the English novelist Francis Spufford talking to us about his latest novel, *Light Perpetual*, by Zoom, he swivelled in his chair to give us a view out of his window onto Ely Cathedral, bathed in sunshine. The audience at *The Tablet's* inaugural spring festival were also joined over three days by Sir James MacMillan from north Ayrshire, Gloria Purvis from California, and Marilynne Robinson from Saratoga Springs, New York. Mary Colwell beamed at us from a cottage on the Hebridean island of Harris; Erik Varden, in his Cistercian monk's white robe and black scapula, was in his book-lined study in Trondheim in Norway; other speakers seemed to be in kitchens or stationery cupboards; the editor of *The Tablet* was alone in our office in Hammersmith, west London.

IT WAS what Pope Francis calls "the culture of encounter" brought to life: dialogue, discernment; silence, music; laughter, tears. The festival began with a chance for readers to meet some of the familiar names who put together the news pages every week – Ruth Gledhill, James Roberts, Liz Dodd, Christopher Lamb



and our Newman Intern this year, Sebastian Milbank – and to listen to them talking about their work. It ended with an extraordinary conversation between Erik Varden and Marilynne Robinson: not only a critic and a writer discussing themes in the *Gilead* series of novels, but two Christians in deep dialogue about some of the most compelling creations in contemporary literature. Robinson revealed at the end that she was too much in thrall to these characters to let them go: it appears there is another *Gilead* novel in the works.

In between, Sir James MacMillan and

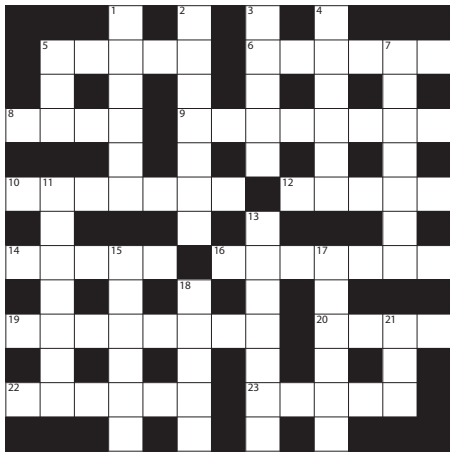
Michael Symmons Roberts shared some of the best moments in nearly thirty years of collaborative work; Chine McDonald and Gloria Purvis played songs that have been a source of liberation for them; Ruth Kelly and Rowan Williams picked their way through some thorny questions of Church and state; Sarah Sands and Christopher Jamison discussed what monasticism has to offer to those living busy lives; Jonathan Pryce spoke to Frank Cottrell Boyce about playing Pope Francis in *The Two Popes*; and, thanks to our sponsors, Sarasin and Partners and CCLA, we joined a seminar making an eloquent case for responsible, sustainable investment. The highlight for many was Nick Hamer's extraordinary film that took us inside the monastic community at Mount St Bernard Abbey. We ate with the monks, we prayed with them, and we saw them buried.

WE'VE BEEN moved by the feedback from readers. As one told us, "This must be one of the great outgrowths of the pandemic and the flight to Zoom. I hope that you will have the courage and energy to repeat this and to keep it at such a high level."

Our hope was that the festival would bring some of the sense of excitement and new growth at *The Tablet* to friends old and new. It has left us exhilarated, enriched and refreshed.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 759 Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 5 June, *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 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.**

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Across

- 5 Penitent makes a kind of trip to regret? (5)
- 6 Numbers individual among 34 with priest's father (6)
- 8 Ararite hasn't the heart to be at one (4)
- 9 Psalmist's mostly boring overture picks out one of the slaughtered at Susa (8)
- 10 Setback for city in 9 Across with Margaret ahead with a divine horse (7)
- 12 Dionysus' boy, most prominent of the hooligans on Athens' streets (5)
- 14 Jewish leader who took the tablets after doctor put drugs on board? (5)
- 16 One's all of a sudden about to meet an Ethiopian Jewish type ... (7)
- 19 ... female, hiding a snake, for the scattering of the people (8)

- 20 Son of Shem, one captured by division (4)
- 22 Chap Peter saved from seaplane crash tossed documentation and ejected (6)
- 23 Keturah's son, one reportedly seen at an auction (5)

Down

- 1 Canaanite general's small, relative to time (6)
- 2 Around fifty Americans give thanks, either way, to the King of Pergamum (7)
- 3 Tempting one who existed to return (5)
- 4 Tibni's dad gets a drink at first hotel he comes across (6)
- 5 Country within the domain of 3 Down in demagogue's protection (3)
- 7 Son of Japhlet's duty for instance at end of watch is to affix a lid of wood (7)

- 11 Is one who lived in the Negev meteoroid-affected, or not? (7)
- 13 King of Babylon experiments here on a flipping little book (7)
- 15 Religious celebration one Oriental found pointless (6)
- 17 Road graduate artist goes down to discover a biblical place (6)
- 18 Poor Joshua's not acceptable to become Judah's leader (5)
- 21 King of Judah in the guise of an American (3)

SUDOKU | Moderate

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

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

Solution to the 15 May puzzle

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

Solution to the 15 May crossword No. 756

- Across:** 5 Asia Minor; 8 Gadi; 9 Apostles; 10 Eliakim; 12 Gihon; 14 David; 15 Eliezer; 17 Mahanaim; 18 Gaal; 19 Canaanite.
Down: 1 Esli; 2 Galatia; 3 Simon; 4 Contrite; 6 Baal-hanan; 7 Besodeiah; 11 Abinadab; 13 Clement; 16 Gatam; 18 Gath.