

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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The gift of love

ON FRIDAY 3 January, at the church of St Francis de Sales, Wash Common, Bishop Nicholas Hudson celebrated the funeral Mass of Mary Craig, author of *Blessings*, whose obituary appeared in the Christmas issue. Hudson had known Mary since he was a schoolboy, and so had a profound understanding of what she had lived through as the mother of two severely disabled sons, one of whom died in childhood.

Mary had planned almost every detail of the liturgy. The first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, proclaimed that “God has tested the virtuous like gold in a furnace and accepted them as a holocaust”. “Mary, more than most,” said Bishop Nicholas, “knew what it was to be refined in the refiner’s fire”, not only in what she had lived through as a mother, but as someone who devoted much of her life to helping survivors of “that other holocaust, the Nazi Holocaust”.

The other reading was from Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging



cymbal”. Mary Craig was an outstanding public speaker, Bishop Nicholas said, “but she wanted ... us to know that having that sort of gift means nothing if I am without love; nothing whatsoever.” Mary’s suffering had made her question her faith, he said; but had ultimately deepened it. As she concluded in *The Last Freedom*, “One day there will be a resurrection. I am absolutely certain of it.” The complete homily is on *The Tablet’s* website.

JON M. SWEENEY, author of the endearing *The Pope’s Cat* series for children, is unim-

pressed with recent research findings that indicate that atheists are more likely to own a cat than church-goers. “The cat is the pet of choice for the goddess?” asks an astonished Sweeney. “That’s ridiculous.”

According to Samuel Perry, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Oklahoma, whose research has been published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, his findings in part reflect that a cat can be a sort of “God substitute”.

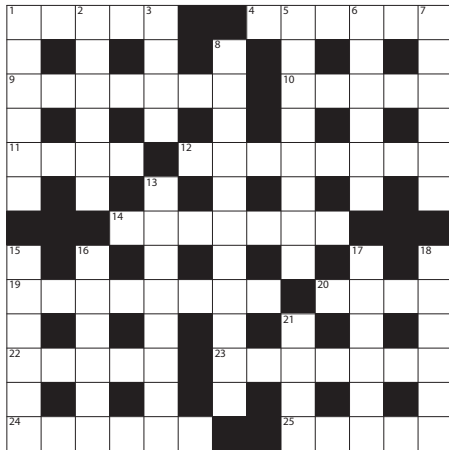
Perry points out that cats “want to interact with you but it’s always on their terms and it’s always about them. We want to always win their affections and it bothers us when we think they might be somehow displeased with us. Cats are very godlike in those characteristics”.

Sweeney acknowledges that, for some, a feline is a warm friend on the lap that replaces the need for the sacraments. But, he adds: “For me and many others (including my fictional Pope who talks a lot like the current Holy Father), a cat, or any animal companion, reminds us we are creatures, not gods, and teaches us to care for the Creation of the God we serve wholeheartedly.”

The fourth instalment in Sweeney’s series, *Margaret and the Pope Go to Assisi*, is due in March.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 689 Alanus



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 11 January, 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 Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP’s Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 24 January. The answers to this week’s puzzles and the crossword winner’s name will appear in the 1 February issue.

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Across

- 1 Timeless lines for actor producing old bag for pilgrims (5)
- 4 Marist in healthy retreats having fits (6)
- 9 Dutch artist to play role of mother with hot plate (7)
- 10 See 6 Down
- 11 & 13 Down: Sisters holding record and I’m with it back and forth, of Simeon’s canticle (4,8)
- 12 Sacramental bone placed before King from Our Lady (8)
- 14 Sulcus to be careful of if returning saint certain (7)
- 19 A torch is about to reveal transport in early Christian Rome (8)
- 20 Sound bit of Friday food for countryman of Sibelius (4)

- 22 Poor shot we hear for UK university founded 1824 merged with Manchester 2004 (1,1,1,1)
 - 23 Carmelite getting change of air with sodium instrument (7)
 - 24 Thanks for nothing with first follower of Chinese religio-philosophical tradition (6)
 - 25 Terns over a German surrealist painter and sculptor (5)
- Down**
- 1 Mythical creature with riddle of hothead in quick turn with cross (6)
 - 2 Polish artist with directions following Peter and Paul (6)
 - 3 Sound of bells for former PM (4)
 - 5 Approve the wine for foreign travel requirement (8)
 - 6 & 10 Acr: Upon which Church built originally

- following uncomplicated children’s rhyme (6,5)
- 7 Rose with an unusual presentation for Spanish lady (6)
- 8 Antisocial confusion about me leaving priesthood (11)
- 13 See 11 Across
- 15 Sub-sect following company backing pagan practices to engage the supernatural (6)
- 16 Saint leaves gambling den for thousand on route to Compostela (6)
- 17 A New Year measure seeing it’s perfect! (6)
- 18 South American with Bible to open plainsong (6)
- 21 Ceremonial spice? (4)

SUDOKU | Beginner

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

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

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

Solution to the 14 December crossword No. 687

Across: 7 Gehazi; 8 Achaia; 9 Holy; 10 Adriatic; 11 Beracah; 13 Devil; 15 Gaddi; 16 Serpent; 18 Chaldaea; 19 Gaal; 21 Cainan; 22 Cottus.
Down: 1 Nebo; 2 Mary Magdalene; 3 Gilalai; 4 Mamre; 5 The Areopagite; 6 Cilician; 12 Epaphras; 14 Penance; 17 Farne; 20 Amun.
Winner: Antony Sisley, of Beckenham, south-east London.