

## Law and delight

THE OBLIGATION to attend Mass on Sundays is set out with characteristic crispness in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (CCC 2181).

Although the public celebration of Mass resumes in England today, 4 July, considerable hesitations, constraints and cautions apply, and Catholics are still dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass. But at some point, the obligation will be reinstated. It will be tricky to get the timing right; and striking the right tone, too, will need a sure touch.

We asked Fr Ladislav Orsy if he had any words of advice for our bishops. No-one in the Catholic world is a better juggler of the letter of the law with the language of joy and



thanksgiving. Orsy once neatly described canon law as: “A system of structures and norms to secure freedom for the people so that they can receive, without impediment, the gifts of the Spirit.”

Orsy joined the Georgetown Law faculty at the age of 73 after (supposedly) retiring. That was 26 years ago. He was born in Hungary on 30 July 1921; he entered the Society of Jesus in 1943 and was ordained in 1951. He studied law at Oxford and at the Gregorian in Rome, where he was teaching during the Second Vatican Council. He worked

on the preparation of the new Code of Canon Law, adopted in 1983.

“I have tried more than once to write about the ‘obligation to attend Sunday Mass’ – but it is difficult to be both compact and comprehensive,” he told us. “When it is time for the bishops to give directions, I suggest their message should be framed *not* in legal terms but in the context of *thanksgiving* – the great and perpetual thanksgiving prayer of the Church that is the Eucharist – a blessing that should flow out into our daily life.

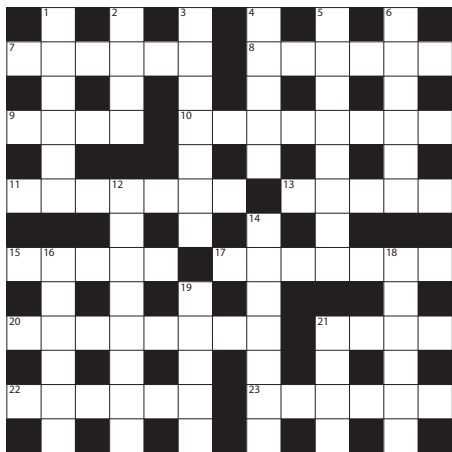
“It isn’t helpful to speak of the ‘obligation’ to attend Mass on Sunday ‘under the penalty of sin’”, Orsy gently insists. “Better to stress the sweet (*suavis*) expectation of our Redeemer. Then the personal responsibility of the faithful can be explained: each person should be generous and prudent, in particular parents taking care of their children or with responsibilities for the elderly or the sick.”

For Orsy, one might think of the “obligation” to attend Mass as the “obligation” we might feel to attend the birthday celebration of a beloved friend: an obligation that is serious, but which we fulfil out of love and delight, not out of fear of incurring a forfeit or penalty.

“A rescue operation is overdue,” Orsy told us. And perhaps the months after lockdown might be a good moment to launch it.

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 714 Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 4 July, 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 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. **We cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.**

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### Across

- 7 Jewish mother of Timothy (6)
- 8 Hittite who sold Abraham his cave for Sarah’s burial (6)
- 9 Philistine home city of Goliath (4)
- 10 Member of an order of monks noted for austerity (8)
- 11 Archangel, the messenger of God (7)
- 13 Woodland spirit of Greek myth (5)
- 15 Associate of Paul who “deserted” him to go to Thessalonica (5)
- 17 Ecclesiastic residence (7)
- 20 Joseph’s first master in Egypt (8)
- 21 English king of Danish origin (1016-35) who repaired and recompensed all churches violated in Viking raids (4)

- 22 Book of the Bible which describes the Israelite conquest of Canaan (6)
- 23 Charles -----, prolific Protestant hymn writer (6)

### Down

- 1 Roman province of southern Palestine at the time of Christ (6)
- 2 Son of Zibeon and brother of Anah who found the hot springs in the desert (4)
- 3 Not acknowledging the God of Christianity, Judaism or Islam (7)
- 4 Saul’s daughter promised to David, but given to another (5)
- 5 Clergyman ministering to some institution, e.g. the armed forces (8)

- 6 Cardinal Thomas ----- (1474-1530), widely blamed for failing to exact Henry VIII’s annulment from Anne Boleyn (6)
- 12 Passages of scripture recited in church (8)
- 14 NT book aimed at Christian Jews in danger of falling away from the faith (7)
- 16 Book of the Pentateuch perhaps covering the period between 1600 BC and 1200 BC (6)
- 18 Jacob and Leah’s eldest son (6)
- 19 “The Forbidden City”, the centre of Tibetan Buddhism (5)
- 21 Eldest son of Ham whose tribe settled in north-east Africa (4)

### SUDOKU | Beginner

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

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

### Solution to the 13 June puzzle

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

### Solution to the 13 June crossword No. 711

- Across:** 7 Semite; 8 Sirach; 9 Thee; 10 Adonijah; 11 Aramaic; 13 Javan; 15 Micah; 17 Babylon; 20 Nazarene; 21 John; 22 Hanani; 23 Trajan.  
**Down:** 1 Zethar; 2 Nile; 3 Denarii; 4 Assos; 5 Ordinary; 6 Achaia; 12 Mt Ararat; 14 Talents; 16 Isaiah; 18 Ophrah; 19 Media; 21 Joab.