

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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The Lady of the Pug

THERE'S nothing new under the sun (saith Qoheleth). Whether attributed to the Church's unchanging temporal mission – or just a dearth of original thinking – this seems nowhere truer than in the *Ecclesia Dei*. Last week's much-veiled papal *pronunciamento* on family life is a perfect case in point. The Pope has had, as Christopher Lamb wrote in a *Tablet* online piece this week, a bee in his mitre about couples choosing pets over progeny for a long time: before his name was Francis, in fact. Go back a decade and you'll find one Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio raising the alarm over Fido's long march through the nursery room.

"Whatever has happened, will happen again." Go back a century and Vincent McNabb OP – theologian, preacher, arch-distributist, *Tablet* contributor and possible saint (the last two aren't necessarily mutually exclusive) – was singing from the same hymn-sheet in 1926. Encountering a perambulator in Hyde Park, McNabb looked inside, expecting smiling sprogs within. But, to his horror, the pram was empty of offspring. Cross-eyed and unlovely, out peered – a pug.

Once the shock wore off, the footloose Irish



Dominican made a plea for clemency. "Do not condemn" he pleaded, "The Lady of The Pug". "Babylon-on-Thames" – as McNabb called London – "is so merciless to her citizens that many are doomed to remain unwed." It's the economy, stupid. When the system is the problem, it's hard to find solutions – and easy to be complicit. "The villains of the piece" McNabb concludes, "are you and I." Seek not to judge, saith the preacher.

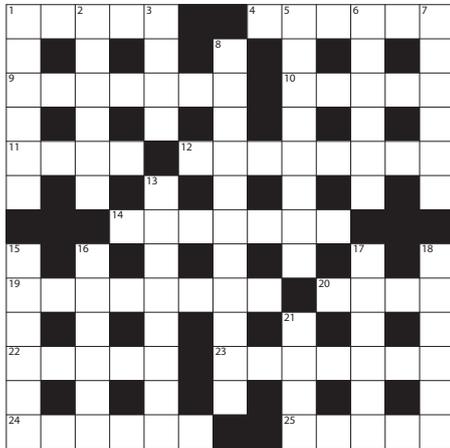
WHEN Sidney Poitier, who has died aged 94, won his Best Actor Oscar award in 1964, the competition included Albert Finney,

Richard Harris and Paul Newman. The youngest of seven children of a Catholic family – his parents were tomato farmers who worked on Cat Island in the Bahamas, where they had no running water or electricity – Poitier's historic Oscar win was not for his scorching performance in films such as *To Sir, with Love*; *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* or *In the Heat of the Night*, but for *Lilies of the Field*, an unpretentious black and white film in which he plays a good-natured travelling Baptist handyman who is cajoled by a community of exiled East German nuns to build them a new chapel in the Arizona desert. His sparring with the stern mother superior (played by Lilia Skala) – both struggle with pride – gives a likeable, easy-going film its psychological and spiritual clout.

In one joyous scene Poitier's character coaches the nuns to sing the Baptist spiritual "Amen". When the nuns offer him a single fried egg, he looks at it with an expression of dignified distaste that in later films we would see him turn on insouciant white prejudice, and asks: "Is that a Catholic breakfast?" After driving the sisters to a local outdoor Mass (there is no church or chapel in the area), he withdraws to a nearby diner for a proper Baptist breakfast.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 788 Alanus



Across

- 1 John -----, Italian explorer who discovered Newfoundland (5)
- 4 Baltic end of Churchill's "Iron Curtain" (6)
- 9 Carthusian Abbot Augustine, among the first of the Forty Martyrs to die (7)
- 10 Miss Peters, creator of the sleuthing monk Cadfael (5)
- 11 Guido ----, Italian painter of religious works in the Baroque period (4)
- 12 Wakeful rebel leader against the invading Normans (8)
- 14 Play by Seneca about the lustfulness of the wife of King Theseus (7)
- 19 The sprinkling of Holy Water at the beginning of High Mass (8)
- 20 Native of the Far East (4)

22 Short description of a work for promotional purposes (5)

- 23 Operetta by Bernstein based on work by Voltaire (7)
- 24 English version of city in whose cathedral French kings were crowned (6)
- 25 Agagite persecutor of Jews thwarted by Esther the King's wife (Esther 3:7) (5)

Down

- 1 Noel -----, playwright of such as *Blithe Spirit* (6)
- 2 For clavichord players a type of vibrato or "trembling" effect (6)
- 3 Recently deceased South African archbishop and Nobel prize winner (4)
- 5 Novella by Steinbeck; a particular earring in Vermeer's famous painting (3,5)

- 6 Native of Oklahoma's "Bible Belt" region (6)
- 7 Gianandrea -----, leading international conductor of orchestra and opera (6)
- 8 Showing disrespect for what is holy and sacred (11)
- 13 Spirit helpers of God often depicted as winged (8)
- 15 US composer who set the *Agnus Dei* to his own famous *Adagio* (6)
- 16 Type of Christmas tree, an annual Trafalgar Square gift from Norway (6)
- 17 Oil used for anointing (6)
- 18 He gave us the *Nunc Dimittis* prayer on greeting the baby Jesus and Mary (6)
- 21 Looped cross used by Coptic Christians from an Egyptian symbol (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 15 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 God, Miracles and Pilgrimage – 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.

SUDOKU | Challenging

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

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

Solution to the 18/25 December puzzle

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

■ Prize Acrostic, 18/25 December issue: The names of the winner and runners-up, together with the solution, will appear in next week's issue.

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