

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

'How marvellously human'

YOU CAN hear the tenderness and yearning, as well as the pain and grief, in Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's voice as she narrates her most recent book, *Notes on Grief* (Fourth Estate). Her beloved father, a university professor, died in June last year, and "for the rest of my life," she says, "I will live with hands outstretched for things that are no longer there".

This February her mother, the first female registrar of the University of Nigeria, died. "How does a heart break twice?" Adichie wrote. "To still be immersed in grief, barely breathing again, and then to be plunged callously back into a sorrow you cannot even articulate." It was in this state of emotional upheaval that Adichie turned to read Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. "It felt like a gift which, until I received it, I did not know I needed," she writes in a remarkable newspaper article published last week in *L'Osservatore Romano*.

The Nigerian writer, born in Enugu in 1977, whose novels include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, was a zealous youthful apologist, insisting on arguing about



transubstantiation with her Protestant school friends. "As a teenager, I wore my Catholic identity like a favorite dress, joyfully and reverently." But over the years, "my pious passion withered." As so often, it was an accumulation of little things. A gentle and devout couple banned from communion by her parish priest because their daughter had married an Anglican; poor people refused burials because they owed money to the church; the preoccupation of too many Nigerian priests and bishops with money. "I have seen church doors locked to prevent people from leaving during

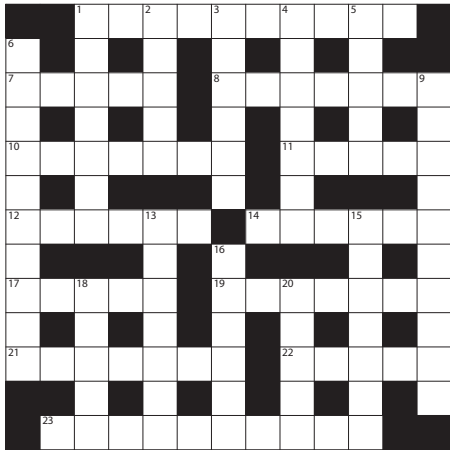
fundraisings. I have watched a priest announce his account details to a funeral congregation and then prance about the altar, phone in hand, waiting for alerts from the bank to appear on his phone screen."

NOW, "driven by grief's hunger", Adichie has begun again to regularly attend Sunday Mass. This "slow return" came from conversations with a priest and a bishop, which had shown her the truth of some words of Pope Francis: "We can choose to cultivate kindness. Those who do so become stars shining in the midst of darkness." And Pope Francis' invitation to "dream" has sparked the novelist's own imagination. "I imagine a change in the Church's relentless prioritizing of law over love," she writes. "I imagine a Church filled with respect for clergy but free of that ever-present cowering air. I imagine a Church where the warden is not mean-faced and does not bang joylessly on the pews, where children are not treated harshly, where the priest does not smack a Mass server at the altar during Mass. A place that might be described with these words, which Pope Francis uses in reference to people who care in concrete ways about others: 'How marvellously human'."

Notes on Grief by Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie is available from Audible Audiobooks.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 765 Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 17 July, 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 Jesus, Christian Art and Catholicism – 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.**

Prizes kindly donated by

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com

Across

- 1 Premier holy site is desecrated within, where all gods are believed (10)
- 7 Sophisticated name in the end is not used for pope (5)
- 8 Services 7 Across, for one, gets right into, having senior backing (7)
- 10 One who's beatified is one adored at heart (7)
- 11 CIA infamously detained South African patriarch (5)
- 12 English friars contracted for Texan capital? (6)
- 14 Tom's English; goddess is Greek (6)
- 17 One hit religion (5)

- 19 Gold wretched Haran pocketed in exchange for the thresher (7)
 - 21 Extra time needed for some versions of morning service? (7)
 - 22 Paul's missionary, American bird, is the trail blazer (5)
 - 23 Pain artist to compromise in a place named in honour of Herod's dad (10)
- Down**
- 1 Roman name of tavern – Latin one to you and me – venerated Maltese bishop (7)
 - 2 Pope's looking over ocean property (5)
 - 3 Anglican stole tenor from composer (6)
 - 4 Issue of Esau's over the little money poem raised (7)

- 5 Bachelor suppressed by female is "a worthless fellow", Samuel says (5)
- 6 Upset turn? Aspirin's needed for something one can't stomach in Rome (10)
- 9 Piece of land in South Dakota army's got under bread for the masses (6,4)
- 13 Ones protecting 17 Across' turbulent sect? (7)
- 15 Benefice's income's put up with Indian money on top (7)
- 16 From a tree surrounded by sheep, sounds like the usurper (6)
- 18 Tongue – the first among languages – ancient to Italian nomads (5)
- 20 Mass stand, a naval type following the French Revolution (5)

SUDOKU | Hard

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

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

Solution to the 26 June puzzle

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

Solution to the 26 June crossword No. 762

Across: 7 Chareas; 8 Ahaz; 9 Medina; 10 Aharah; 11 Beracah; 13 Galal; 15 Dinah; 17 Baladan; 19 Gishpa; 21 Azarel; 23 Arba; 24 Ahinadab.
Down: 1 Phoebe; 2 Levi; 3 Beraiah; 4 Asia; 5 Ramayana; 6 Gadara; 12 Amashsai; 14 Galatia; 16 Isidro; 18 Aretas; 20 Arad; 22 Agag.