

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

The Sister of those on the edge

IN THE early days of the Aids pandemic, a time of panic, confusion and anguish, a nun in her fifties was in a hospital room with a 30-year-old man dying of Aids. His father was standing awkwardly at the foot of the bed, while his mother and his partner were sitting on either side of him at the top end, avoiding meeting each other's eyes. As the dying man gasped for breath, they instinctively reached behind his pillow, and their fingers touched. Claspng their hands together, they raised him up so he could breathe more easily. There and then, a reconciliation was established.

The nun was Eva Heymann. She had been born into what she described as a nominally Jewish family in Nazi Germany. She was always, she would say, something of a rebel. Just before the Second World War, at the age of 11, travelling alone, she left the Black Forest and came to Britain on the Kindertransport.

She experienced ostracization, alienation and deep depression. At one point she decided she would take her own life were she to fail



to pass a crucial exam. Gradually, there came the sense that "there was a being greater than the evil I had experienced". She moved towards the Catholic Church, and at the age of 30 she joined the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She said it was her response to a call from God but also an act of thankfulness. She had kept her life.

Eva trained as a teacher, psychiatric social worker, and family therapist. She fell naturally into work with those who had been elbowed into the shadows. She helped refugee families and women and children

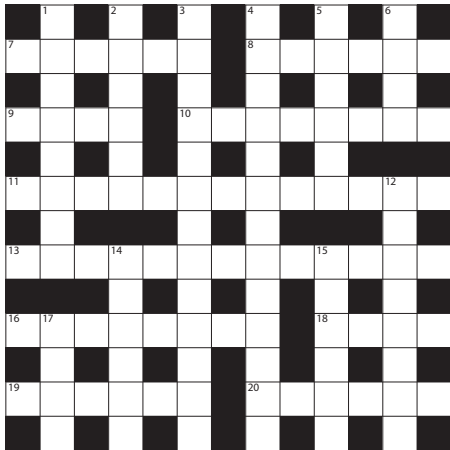
seeking asylum. She spent ten years with the Terrence Higgins Trust, the first HIV/Aids agency in Britain, and served as a volunteer at the Mildmay Mission Hospital. "Over and over again," Eva said, "those who were dying were the very people who were instilling in us their love. What I had experienced of alienation in my younger days enabled me to reach out and enter other people's lives, because I had been stigmatized for different reasons."

She felt close to creation and often spoke about trees: their stability, comfort, silence, and beauty. She loved the poetry of Herman Hesse. She came to be revered as a spiritual director. Her beloved friend, the writer and broadcaster Michael Ford, remembers Eva "as like a fourth century spiritual mother, an *amma*, at home in the desert of the city, among the unloved and rejected. Pilgrims would often ask the desert mothers and fathers for 'a word' and Eva always had something positive to offer. It usually focused on the need to believe in oneself."

Eva died on Friday 12 February at Apley Grange, Harrogate, aged 93. "My roots are deep in eternity," as she put it in the epilogue to *The Deeper Centre*, the wonderful book she wrote at the age of 80. "I grow beyond myself and sing with the eternal song of love."

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 744 Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 20 February, 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 cannot process entries or prizes at present. Please keep entering. Winners will be notified and prizes awarded as soon possible.**

Prizes kindly donated by

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com

Across

- 7 Clergy (cf. laity) (6)
- 8 Eldest son of Jacob by Leah (6)
- 9 One of the 19 (1478-1535), Lord Chancellor of England (4)
- 10 One of 13 popes between 402 and 1724 (8)
- 11 Isaac Watts and Lowell Mason carol owing much to Handel (and a text from Isaiah or the Psalms?) (3,2,3,5)
- 13 One of the 19, a sixteenth-century Spanish noblewoman and Carmelite nun (6,2,5)
- 16 First words of a medieval Latin hymn describing the Last Judgment (4,4)

- 18 One of the 19 (995-1030), King of Norway (4)
- 19 "For all the -----", processional hymn with words by William Walsham How to the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams (6)
- 20 Heavenly stuff, resting places for the angels! (6)

Down

- 1 One of the 19, of Tarsus, for instance (8)
- 2 7 Across worker (6)
- 3 *Helleborus niger*, a bloomer in Advent (9,4)

- 4 One of the sobriquets Isaiah gave to the Messiah (6,2,5)
- 5 Papal messenger (6)
- 6 Title given to the head of the Sacred College (4)
- 12 Wycliffian heresy (8)
- 14 Member of a Jewish ascetic sect (6)
- 15 Religious-orientated magic of the Caribbean (6)
- 17 Officer who leads the devotions in a mosque (4)

SUDOKU | Hard

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

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

Solution to the 30 January puzzle

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

Solution to the 30 January crossword No. 741

Across: 7 Eliashib; 8 Akan; 9 Israel; 10 Lystra; 11 Baladan; 13 Gebal; 15 Habor; 17 Eliahba; 19 Darius; 21 Arabah; 23 Gaza; 24 Aridatha.
Down: 1 Elisha; 2 Cana; 3 Chileab; 4 Abel; 5 Carshena; 6 Dabria; 12 Adonijah; 14 Albania; 16 Asaiah; 18 Baasha; 20 Star; 22 Agag.