

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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The hillbilly rector

“EVERYONE WHO’S read *Wise Blood* thinks I’m a hillbilly nihilist,” the virtuoso of the Southern Gothic novel, Flannery O’Connor, once wrote, “whereas ... I’m a hillbilly Thomist.” The phrase gave eight Dominican friars studying and playing music together at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC the perfect name for their band, which played informally for small groups in DC and New York City.

The music of the Hillbilly Thomists ranges widely – one track on their latest album is a cover of the African-American spiritual “Jacob’s Ladder” – but you could file most of it under the loose term “Americana”, with a strong influence of bluegrass – a frantic, high-pitched descendant of English, Scottish and Irish folk music. They released their first album in 2017. Their third, *Holy Ghost Power*, came out this summer. They’ve just completed a six-city tour, the friars, along with their banjos, guitars, washboards, spoons and cowbells, all fitting into a large hired van. On 1 August they performed at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee, where they were joined on the famous stage by Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia in



Nashville, who clapped, sang and laughed along with the friars.

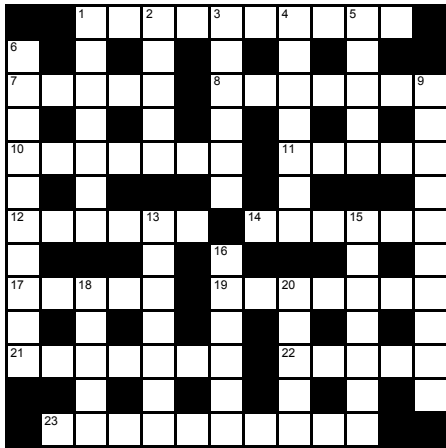
One of the Hillbillies, Thomas Joseph White OP, studied theology at Oxford. Fr White is the founding director of the Thomistic Institute in Washington, DC, which promotes all things Aquinas on every platform where it can secure a foothold, and last year he was appointed the new Rector Magnificus of the Angelicum in Rome. We have a vision of Fr White and his band returning to Oxford and packing out the Sheldonian. “The friars in the band have thought about playing in Europe,” Fr White told us. “Of course it would

be a more expensive venture and time-consuming. Naturally we all have jobs as priests that are difficult to get away from for any extended period. I’m hoping to find a way to have some or most of us play in Rome at the Angelicum eventually.”

FR WHITE WILL be among the guests at our Autumn Festival of online events which will run on Wednesday and Thursday evenings through October. We’ll ask him the all-important question of whether he will be able to continue playing the banjo and teaching Thomistic metaphysics. During the festival, *Tablet* luminaries such as Ruth Gledhill, Christopher Lamb, Joanna Moorhead and Maggie Fergusson will be talking to leading writers, thinkers, poets and musicians. As well as Fr White, they will include Abbot Christopher Jamison and the American publisher and writer Robert Ellsberg, whose latest book, *Dearest Sister Wendy*, is drawn from several hundred letters he exchanged on an almost daily basis with Sr Wendy Beckett during the last three years of her life. More details of speakers, dates and how to buy tickets will be in the next issue of *The Tablet*: forgive me for reminding you again that this will appear in two weeks’ time, on 3 September. Even *Tablet* editors need the occasional break.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 819 Axe



Across

- 1 Belief in multiple gods (10)
- 7 Name adopted by many popes, the first in 222 (5)
- 8 Services, etc., set apart for a particular day or occasion (7)
- 10 Spanish saint, Bishop of Seville from c.600 (7)
- 11 Father of well-known biblical twins (5)
- 12 Friars: state capital of Texas (6)
- 14 Greek goddess of witchcraft, daughter of the Titan Perses (6)
- 17 Monotheistic religion articulated by the Quran (5)
- 19 Jebusite from whom David bought the site of the future Temple (7)

- 21 One of the two Daily Offices in the Anglican Church (7)
- 22 Book of the New Testament (5)
- 23 Town where Paul spent a night on the run from Jerusalem (10)

Down

- 1 Maltese elder whose father Paul healed (7)
- 2 Pope, 913-14 (5)
- 3 Long scarf or stole worn ceremonially by clerics (6)
- 4 Descendant of Esau, whose people settled in the Negev (7)
- 5 Unnamed biblical queen: Yemen, perhaps, once (5)
- 6 Belief of extreme English Protestants who

- wished to purify the C. of E. of its Catholic aspects (10)
- 9 Body of Christ in the Eucharist (6,4)
- 13 Shiite Muslim sect whose current spiritual head is Aga Khan IV (7)
- 15 First year’s revenue of an ecclesiastical benefice paid to the Pope (7)
- 16 King who usurped the throne of Israel from Jeroboam’s sons (6)
- 18 Of or relating to the RC Church (5)
- 20 Part of church used originally as location to accomplish rituals (5)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 20/27 August, *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 Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion – 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 | Hard

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

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

Solution to the 30 July puzzle

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

Solution to the 30 July crossword No. 816

- Across:** 6 Magi; 7 Pharaohs; 8 Fishers of men; 9 The Ancestors; 11 Sabbatarians; 16 Garden of Eden; 18 Samaveda; 19 Anna.
- Down:** 1 Babist; 2 Sikh; 3 Salome; 4 Dalmatia; 5 Shinar; 7 Paran; 10 Ember day; 12 Aegean; 13 Thebes; 14 Rhoda; 15 Shebna; 17 Elam.

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